THE WORKS OF THOMAS MANTON, D.D. VOL. VI

by Thomas Manton

Thomas Manton's theological work addressing church and Christian living.

56 Chapters

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The Works of Thomas Manton, D.D. Vol. VI

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THE COMPLETE WORKS

OF

THOMAS MANTON, D.D.

VOLUME VI.

CONTAINING

SEVERAL SERMONS UPON THE CXIX. PSALM.

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Chapter 2

TO THE READER.

IT is the honour of the evangelical ministry, that it was principally instituted for the service of God, not as he is the governor of the earth, but the Lord of heaven, and to prepare men by holiness for his eternal kingdom. And it is an excellent favour of God to his ministers when their labours are eminently useful for this blessed end. This singular grace and privilege God was pleased to confer upon his faithful servant Dr Manton, whose life was spent in the most precious work of converting souls to Christ, and preparing them for the celestial paradise; and since his retiring from the world by death, his soul now enjoying the blessed rest above, yet he remains with us in what was most valuable of him, his excellent sermons, the productions of his holy mind and heart; and the pen having a larger extent than the tongue in communicating them, may be more beneficial to the church than before.

The following sermons were preached by him in his usual course of three times a week, which I do not mention to lessen their worth, but to show how diligent and exact he was in the performance of his duty. Indeed, his ordinary sermons, considering the substantial matter, clear order, and vigorous full expressions, may well pass for extraordinary. I cannot but admire the fecundity and variety of his thoughts, that the same things so often occurring in the verses of this psalm, yet by a judicious observing the different arguments and motives whereby the Psalmist enforces the same requests, or some other circumstances, every sermon contains new conceptions, and proper to the text. Some few verses were not handled by him. I earnestly pray that those who shall read these sermons may taste the sweetness of the divine truths opened

in them, and may be transformed into the spirit of David, by an inward feeling of the affections, and verifying in their own breasts the words of the holy prophet.

W. Bates.

Chapter 3

TO THE READER.

CHRISTIAN READER,--It is somewhat difficult not to applaud that excellency which has first approved itself to our judgment. Hence is it that, though this work needs it not, I will so far gratify my own affections, and comply with obtaining custom, as to acquaint thee that, if thou hadst my eyes and taste, thou must admire its beauty, and confess its sweetness; much more when thou shalt use thy own more discerning eye and judicious palate.

The matter of these sermons is spiritual, and speaks the author one intimately acquainted with the secrets of wisdom. He writes like one that knew the Psalmist's heart, and felt in his own the sanctifying power of what he wrote. Their design is practice; beginning with the understanding, dealing with the affections, but still driving on the advancement of practical holiness. They come home and close to the conscience; first presenting us a glass, wherein we may view the spots of our souls, and then directing us to that fountain wherein we may wash them away. They are of an evangelical complexion, abasing proud corrupt nature, and advancing free and efficacious grace in the conversion of sinners. The exhortations are powerful, admirably suited to treat with reasonable creatures, yet still supposing them to be the vehicle of the Holy Spirit, through which he communicates life and power to obey them.

The manner of handling is not inferior to the dignity of the matter; so plain as to accommodate the most sublime truths to the meanest spiritual capacity, and yet so elevated as to approve itself to the most refined understanding. He knew how to be succinct without obscurity, and where the weight of the argument required it, to enlarge

without nauseous prolixity. He studied more to profit than please, and yet an honest heart will then be best pleased when most profited. He chose rather to speak appositely than elegantly; and yet the judicious do account propriety the choicest elegancy. He laboured more industriously to conceal his learning than some others to ostentate theirs: and yet, when he would most veil it, the discerning reader cannot but discover it, and rejoice to find such a mass, such a treasure of useful learning, couched under a well-studied and artificial plainness. But let the reader take a taste of, let him concoct and digest, these spiritual discourses, and he shall say with the Sabean queen, It was a true report I heard in my own land; but behold the one-half was not told me!' Or with the men of Sychar, Now we believe, not because of thy saying, but because we ourselves have proved and experienced' their delicacies; as one taste of honey will more effectually commend its sweetness than the most elaborate oratory. Those ancients that had seen the first temple wept bitterly when they saw the foundation of the second laid. And perhaps some pious souls who have sat with great delight' under the author s ministerial shadow, and have found his fruit sweet to their taste,' may secretly shed a tear, that though they here meet also the same divine truths, the same spiritual matter, yet they want the living voice, the grateful elocution, the natural eloquence, in which that heavenly matter dropped, or rather flowed, from his gracious lips. But let the same consideration which quieted the spirits of those Jews of old satisfy theirs: God can fill this house also with his glory; and though the second edition of the temple fall short of the former in the beauty and symmetry of the structure, yet can the Spirit flow from the press as well as the pulpit; with this advantage, that they may here in safety read what with great danger they formerly heard.

I have admired, and must recommend to the observation of the reader, the fruitfulness of the author's holy invention, accompanied with solid judgment; in that whereas the coincidence of the matter in this psalm might have superseded his labours in very many verses, yet, without force or offering violence to the sacred text, he has, either from the connection of one verse with its predecessor, or the harmony between the parts of the same verse, found out new matter to entertain his own meditation and his reader's expectation; nor do I observe more than twelve verses in this large psalm wholly omitted, if at least they may be said to be omitted, whose subject-matter is elsewhere copiously handled.

Had the reverend author designed these papers for public view, he could not have flattered himself, in a cavilling age, that he should escape the severe lashes of envy and malice (those fiends that haunt all things and persons excellent); he must have expected a snarl from the wolf's black mouth, or a kick from the dull ass's hoof. Yet on his behalf I demand this justice, that he be not condemned for the printers' crimes. Their venial errors will receive a pardon of course from the ingenuous reader; and for their mortal transgressions, whereof they are sometimes guilty, either clouding, altering, or perverting the scope of the author, enjoin them, gentle reader, a moderate penance, and then receive them to full absolution, who have voluntarily offered themselves to confession.

Thus much, Christian reader, it was thy interest and mine to have spoken; the rest must be to the God of all grace, that he would give thee and this book his blessing; which is the prayer of thy affectionate friend and faithful servant in our Lord Jesus,

V. A. [1]

December 13, 1680.

Chapter 4

SEVERAL SERMONS UPON THE CXIX. PSALM.

SERMON I.

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk m the law of the Lord.--Ver. 1.

THIS psalm is a choice piece of Scripture. In the Hebrew there is much exactness of composure to be observed. It is divided into twenty-two parts, according to the number of the Hebrew letters; every part containeth eight verses, all beginning with one and the same letter; in which I should think there is nothing of mystery intended, only a help to attention and memory. I shall go over the several verses in their order, the Lord giving life and assistance. And because the same matter will be of frequent recourse, I shall endeavour to discuss each verse in a sermon.

The Psalmist beginneth with a description of the way to true blessedness, as Christ began his Sermon on the Mount, and as the whole Book of Psalms is elsewhere begun. Blessedness is that which we all aim at, only we are either ignorant or reckless of the way that leadeth to it; therefore the holy Psalmist would first set us right in the true notion of a blessed man: Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.'

In the words you have--

1. The privilege, blessed.

2. The manner and form of its consideration; not so much in the nature and formality of it, as the way that leadeth to it. Or,

First, Here is a way spoken of in the general.

Secondly, This way specified, the law of the Lord.

Thirdly, The qualification of the persons' sincerity, the undefiled;

and constancy, who walk.

Doct. 1. That it standeth us much upon to have a true notion of blessedness and blessed men. David beginneth with that.

1. All desire it; Christians, pagans, all agree in this. When Paul was dealing with the heathens, he urgeth two notions wherein God might be taken up. That of a first cause: Acts xiv. 17, Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' And a chief good, Acts xvii. 27. As in the one place, there must be a cause of showers of rain and fruitful seasons; so in the other, there must be a universal good, or else the inclinations of nature were in vain. Among Christians, the good and bad, that do so seldom agree in anything, yet agree in this, every man would be happy, and not miserable: Ps. iv. 6, There be many that say, Who will show us any good?' Good, good, is the cry of the world. It is intended in the very nature of desire; for everything that is desired is desired as good, sub ratione boni. As God implanted in us affections of aversation to avoid what is evil, so affections of choice and pursuit to follow after what is good. Well, then, out of a principle of self-love, all would be happy; they would have good, and they would have it for ever. Inanimate creatures are, by the guidance and direction of Providence, carried to the place of their perfection. The brute beasts seek the preservation and perfection of that life which they have; so do all men hunt about for contentment and satisfaction. To ask whether men would be happy or not, is to ask whether they love themselves, yea or nay; but whether holy, is another thing.

2. All without grace are much mistaken in it. (1.) Some mistake in the end. They desire good in common, not that which is indeed the true good; they seek happiness in riches, honours, pleasures; and so they

fly from that which they seek, whilst they seek it. They intend happiness, but choose misery: Luke xvi. 25, Thy good things;' and Ps. iv. 7, Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased.' Their corn, wine, and oil, not only possessed by them, but chosen by them as their felicity and portion.

(2.) They fail in the means. They know them not, like them not, or else faint in the prosecution of the end by them. They discern them but weakly, as a spire at a distance; they see it so as they know not whether they see it, yea or nay, as the blind man saw men walking as trees. The light of nature being so dim, they consider them but weakly; the mind being diverted by other objects, they desire them but weakly; the affections being prepossessed and intercepted by things that come next to hand, velleities and cold inclinations they may have, but no serious volition or firm bent of heart. Or suppose a man under some conviction, both as to end and means, yet his endeavours are very cold and slack; they do not pursue it with that earnestness, exactness, and uniformity of endeavour which is requisite to obtain their happiness. They are like children that seem to desire a thing passionately, but are soon out of humour: The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing, for his hands refuse to labour.' When true happiness is sufficiently revealed, we like it not upon God's terms, John vi. 34. The Jews, when our Saviour told them of the bread of God that came down from heaven to give life to the world, said unto him, Lord, evermore give us of this bread.' But it is said, upon hearing the conditions of obtaining it, ver. 66, they murmured, went back, and walked no more with him.' All would live for ever; but when they must follow a despised Christ up and down the world, and incur censures and dangers, they like none of that: Ps. cvi. 24, Yea, they despised the pleasant land, and believed not his word.' The land was a good land, but the way

to it was through a howling wilderness. When they heard of the strength and stature of the men, their fortifications, they fell into passion and murmur, and gave over the pursuit of Canaan. Heaven is a good place, but men must get to it with such difficulty, therefore they are loath to be at the cost. Men would be happy with that kind of happiness which is true happiness, but not in the way which God propoundeth, being prepossessed with carnal fancies. It is counted a foolish thing to wait upon God in the midst of straits, conflicts, and temptations: 1 Cor. ii. 14, The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' More prejudices lie against the means than the end; therefore, out of despair, they sit down with a carnal choice, as persons disappointed in a match take the next offer. Since they cannot have God's happiness, they resolve to be their own carvers, and to make themselves as happy as they can in the enjoyment of present things.

3. Our mistakes about it will cost us dear. God is very jealous of what we make our happiness, and therefore blasteth the carnal choice. Those that will try experiments, smart for it in the issue. Solomon came home by weeping-cross: Eccles. i. 14, I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.' He hath proved it to our hands. He had a large heart, and a large estate, and gave himself to pleasures, to extract happiness from the creatures, to hunt after worldly satisfactions in a more artificial way than brutish sots, that merely act according to lust and appetite: Eccles. ii. 1, I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold, this also is vanity.' He gave himself to pleasures, not merely upon sensual, but curious and artificial aims, yet found his heart secretly withdrawn from God.

Whoever maketh trial will either run into utter mischief, or must come home again by a sound remorse. And so they learn it, and dearly to their cost.

Use. Let us study this point well.

1. That we may not take up with a false happiness, or set up our rest in temporal enjoyments, as height of honour, abundance of riches, favour of great men, &c.; things useful in their sphere, and beneficial to sweeten and comfort the life of man, who hath placed his happiness in God. Pleasures being enjoyed, they do not satisfy; being loved, they defile; being lost, they increase our trouble and sorrow.

[1.] They cannot satisfy, because of their imperfection and uncertainty. They do not answer the whole desire of man, carry no proportion with the conscience. That which maketh a man happy must bear a thorough proportion with all the wants, desires, and capacities of the soul, so as conscience and heart and all may say it is enough. But, alas! these things cannot give us solid peace and contentment: Isa. lv. 2, Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?' Till an hungry conscience be provided for, we cannot be happy. But besides their low use, consider the uncertainty of enjoyment. Nothing can give us solid peace, but what doth make us eternally happy. These flowers our hands while we smell at them. Nothing but the favour of God is from everlasting to everlasting. We have not a sure possession of these things in the world. They are possessed with fear, 1 Cor. vii. 30, 3l. It is me apostle's counsel, that they that buy' should have such remiss affections to the world, as though they possessed not; and that they use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away.' A man must look for changes, and lay forth for several conditions in the world: Ps. xxxix 11, When thou with rebukes dost

correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth. Surely every man is vanity. Selah.' Like glass, brittle when most glistering.

[2.] Being inordinately loved, they defile. There is not only gall, but poison in them. They cannot make us better, but may easily make us worse, as they defile and draw the heart from God, and enslave us to our own lusts: 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.'

[3.] Being lost, they increase our trouble and sorrow. A man that hath not learned to be abased, as well as to abound, his abundance maketh his case the more miserable. It is hard to go back a degree or two. They are apt to bring much trouble upon the heart of him that is conversant about them: All is vanity and vexation of spirit.' The more we make them our happiness, when lost they increase our trouble.

2. That we may not be prejudiced against the true happiness. Men think it a happiness to live without the yoke of religion, to speak, and think, and do what they please without restraint; but to be always in bonds, and held under the awe of the word, that they count unreason able and grievous: Ps. ii. 3, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.' In studying this point--(1.) Lean not to thine own understanding;' Prov. xxiii. 4, Labour not to be rich; cease from thy own wisdom;' but seek direction from God by his word and Spirit. God only can determine who is the blessed man, in whose hand alone it is to make us blessed. (2.) Take the light of faith; sense and carnal reason will deceive you. Blessedness is a riddle which can only be found out by faith, which is the evidence of things not seen,' Heb.

xi. 1. That a poor godly man, who is counted the filth and offscouring of all things, should be the only happy man, and that the great men of this world, who have all things at will, should be poor, blind, miserable, and naked,' is a paradox will never enter into the heart of a natural man, that hath only the light of sense and carnal reason to judge of things, for to sight and reason it is nothing so. (3.) Wait for the light and power of the Spirit to incline and draw thy heart to God. Many times we are doctrinally right in point of blessedness, but not practically; we content ourselves with the mere notion, but are not brought under the power of these truths; that is the work of the Spirit. It is easy to prove that it is the beasts' happiness to enjoy pleasure without remorse; easy to prove the uncertainty of riches, and what unstable foundations they are for the soul to rest on; but to draw off the heart from these things to God is the work of the Holy Ghost: Ps. xlix. 13, This their way is their folly, yet their posterity approve their sayings.' Many a man who stands over the grave of his ancestors will say, Ah! how foolish were they to waste their time and strength in pleasure, and in hunting after worldly greatness and esteem and favour with men; what doth it profit them now? And yet their posterity approve the same--that is, they live by the same principles, are as greedy upon worldly satisfactions as ever those were that have gone before, that neglected God and heavenly things, and went down to the grave, and their honour was laid in the dust. Until the Lord take off our heart by the light and power of his grace, we remain as sottish and foolish and worldly as they. Thus you see how much it concerns you to be right in the notion of true blessedness.

Doct. 2. That sincere, constant, uniform obedience to God's law is the only way to true blessedness.

This is called a way, and this way is said to be God's law, and m this

way we must be undefiled; which implies not absolute purity and legal perfection, but gospel sincerity; and in this way we must walk, which notes both uniformity and constancy; it must be our course, and we must persevere therein.

Three things need to be opened:--

1. Speak to the rule.

2. Of conformity to the rule; that it must be sincere, uniform, and constant.

3. How this is the way to true happiness; what respect it hath to true blessedness.

First, The rule is the law of God. All created beings have a rule. Christ's human nature was the highest of all creatures, and yet it is to be in subjection to God; he is under a rule: Gal. iv. 4, Made of a woman, made under the law.' The angels they have many immunities above man; they are freed from death, from the necessities of meat and drink; but they are not free from the law; they are not sui juris, at their own dispose; they obey his commands, hearkening unto the voice of his word,' Ps. ciii. 20. Inanimate creatures, sun, moon, stars, are under a law of providence, under a covenant of night and day: Ps. cxlix. 6, He has also stablished them for ever; he hath made a decree which shall not pass.' They have their courses and appointed motions, and keep to the just points of their compass. All creatures are under a law, according to which they move and act. Much more now is man under a law, because he hath election and choice. But if the law were not a rule to a Christian (as some Antinomians have that opinion), if it were not in force, then there should be no sin or duty; for where there is no law, there is no transgression;' for the nature of sin is the transgression of the law,' 1 John iii. 4; Rom. iv. 15. Certainly the law as a rule is a very great privilege; and surely Christ did not come to lessen or

abolish the privileges of his people: Deut. iv. 4, There is no nation hath such statutes;' Ps. cxlvii. 20, He hath made known his statutes to Israel,' was their prerogative. If the law might be disannulled as to new creatures, then why doth the Spirit of God write it with such legible characters in their hearts? This is promised as the great blessing of the covenant of grace, Heb. viii. 10. Now, that which the Spirit engraves upon the heart, would Christ come to deface and abolish? The law was written upon tables of stone, and the great work of the spirit is to write it upon the table of the heart; and the ark was a chest where the law was kept, and with allusion to it God saith, I will put my law into their heart.' Clearly, then, there is a rule, and this rule is the law of God. Now, this rule must be consulted with upon all occasions, if we would obtain true blessedness, both to inform us, and to awe us.

First, To inform us, that we may not act short or over.

1. Not short. There are many false rules with which men please themselves, and are but so many byways that lead us off from our own happiness. For instance, good meaning, that is a false rule; the world lives by guess and devout aims. But if good meaning were a rule, a man may oppose the interest of Christ, destroy his servants, and all upon good meaning: John xvi. 2, Those that kill you will think they do God good service.' Men may grossly err that follow a blind conscience. Custom, that is another. It is no matter what others have done before us, but what Christ did before them all. If custom carried it, most of Christ's institutions would be out of doors. Example of others; that is no good rule. It is not for us to go where others have gone before; but what is the true way: Mat. vii. 14, The broad way, that leads to destruction, and many walk therein.' The path to hell is most beaten; we are not always to follow the track; they are dead fishes which swim

down the stream: we are not to be led away with custom and example, and do as others do. Our own desires and inclinations are not our rule. Oh, how miserable should we be if our lust were our law, if the bent of our hearts were our rule! Jude 16, Walking after their own lusts,' is the description of those that were monsters of men, that had outgrown all feelings of conscience. The laws of men are not our rule. It is too narrow and short to commend us to God, to be punctual to the laws of men and no more: Ps. xix. 7, The law of God is perfect, converting the soul.' To convince us of sin, to humble the heart, to reduce and bring us back to God, there is no rule for this but the law of God. Men make laws as tailors do garments, to fit the crooked bodies they serve for, to suit the humours of the people to be governed by these laws; surely they are not a sufficient rule to convince us of sin, and to guide us to true happiness. A civil orderly man is one thing, and a godly renewed man another. It is God's prerogative to give a law to the conscience and the renewed motions of the heart. Human laws are good to establish converse with man, but too short to establish communion with God; and, therefore, we must consult with the rule, which is the law of the Lord, that we may not come short of true blessedness.

2. That we may not act over. There is a superstitious and apocryphal holiness which is contrary to a genuine and scriptural holiness, yea, destructive to it: it is like the concubine to the wife: it draws away respects due to the true religion. Now, what is this kind of holiness? It is a temporary flesh-pleasing religion, which consists in a conformity to outward rites and ceremonies and external mortifications, such as is practised by the Papists and formalists, after the commandments and doctrines of men:' Col. ii. 23, Which things indeed have a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.' God will

not thank them that give more than he requireth. These things have a show of wisdom. As brass money may be fairer than true coin, though not of such a value, so this will-worship and superstitious holiness may seem to make a fair show, but it is destructive to true godliness and scriptural holiness, which guide us to communion with God. When men's zeal boils over in a false pretended holiness, it quencheth the fire and destroys true godliness and religion. Excess is monstrous, as well as defect. Therefore still we must consult with the law and rule, that we may not come short or over.

Secondly, As the law must be consulted with, that it may inform us, so that it may awe us, and hold us under a sense of our duty to God: By the law is the knowledge of sin.' Rom. iii. 19. Usually most Christians live by rote, and do not study their rule. Would a man worship God so coldly and customarily, if he did consider the rule which requires such heedfulness of soul, fervency of spirit, diligent attendance upon God in his ordinances? Would a man allow himself liberty of vain speeches, idle talk, and suffer his tongue to run riot, if he did consult with the rule, and remembered that light words would weigh heavy in God's balance? These are condemned by the law of liberty: James ii. 12, So speak, and so do, as those that shall be judged by the law of liberty.' Would a man be so slight in heavenly things? so disorderly and intemperate in the use of pleasure and pursuit of worldly profit, if he did consider the rule, and what a holy moderation God hath required of us upon all occasions? This is the first thing, namely, the rule, which is the law of God.

Secondly, There is a conformity to this rule. If you would be blessed, there must be a sincere, constant, uniform obedience. The will of God must not only be known but practised. Many will conclude that God's law in the theory is the only direction to true blessedness; but now, to

take it for their rule, to keep close to it, not one of a thousand doth that.

1. Then, sincere obedience is required: Blessed is the undefiled in the way.' At first hearing of these words, a man might reply, Oh, then, none can be blessed, if that be the qualification; for who can say, My heart is clean?' Prov. xx. 9. I answer--This undefiledness is to be understood according to the tenor of the second covenant, which doth not exclude the mercy of God and the justification of penitent sinners: Ps. cxxx. 3, 4, If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, who shall stand? But there is mercy with thee.' There is no escaping condemnation and the curse, if God should deal with us according to strict justice, and require an absolute undefiledness. Well, then, this qualification must be understood, as I said, in the sense of the second covenant; and what is that? Sincerity of sanctification. When a man doth carefully endeavour to keep his garments unspotted from the world, and to approve himself to God; when this is his constant exercise, to avoid all offence both towards God and man, Acts xxiv. 16, and is cautious and watchful lest he should be defiled; when he is humbled more for his pollutions; when he is always purging his heart, and doth endeavour, and that with success, to walk m the way of God,--here is the undefiledness in a gospel sense: Ps. lxxxiv. 11 The Lord will be a sun and a shield,' &c. To whom? To those that walk uprightly.' This is possible enough; here is no ground of despair. This is that will lead us to blessedness, when we are troubled for our failings, and there is a diligent exercise in the purification of our hearts.

2. A constant obedience. Wicked men have their good moods and devout pangs in the way to heaven, but they are not lasting. They will go with God a step or two. But it is said, He that walketh in the law of the Lord.' A wicked man prays himself weary of prayer, and professeth

himself weary of holiness. A man is judged by the tenor of his life; not by one action, but as he holdeth on his way to heaven, Job xxvii. 10. Many run well for a while, but are soon out of breath. Enoch walked with God three hundred and sixty-five years.

3. A uniform and an entire obedience: Exod. xx. 1, God spake all these words.' He commandeth one thing as well as another, and conscience takes hold of all. To single out what pleaseth us is to make ourselves gods.

A servant doth not choose his work, but the master. A child of God is uniform in one place as well as another, at home and abroad, in all the passages of his life, in prosperity and adversity, whether he abound, or whether he be abased,' Phil. iv. He is not like Ephraim as a cake not turned;' but there is a uniformity. Doth he make conscience of piety and worship, and will he not make conscience of honesty and just dealing with men? Will he make conscience of his actions, and will he not of his words? He doth not give up himself to idle speech and vain discourse. A hypocrite is best when he is taken in pieces, but a sincere man is best when he is taken altogether. A Christian is always like himself. It is notable in the story of the creation that God views every day's work, and God saw that it was good;' he viewed it altogether, and God saw all things that he had made, and behold it was very good.' When he did consider the whole correspondence of his works, how they answered one another, then God was delighted in it. So a Christian is most delighted in the review of his course and walking according to the commandment.

Thirdly, What respect hath this to true blessedness? It is the way to it: Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.' This will appear in two respects--(1.) It is the beginning of blessedness. Likeness to God is the foundation of glory. Conformity to

him will be carried on from glory to glory,' 2 Cor. iii. 18. And as conformity unto, so communion with, God in the beauties of holiness is the beginning of happiness: As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness,' Ps. xvii. 15. (2.) Sincere and constant obedience is the evidence of our right to future blessedness. A man hath somewhat to show for it, Mat. v. 8. It is an inclusive evidence: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;' and it is an exclusive evidence: Heb. xii. 14, Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Well, then, when this is our way and course, we may expect happiness hereafter.

The uses are--

1. To show you that carnal men live as if they sought misery rather than happiness: Prov. viii. 36, He that sins against me wrongs his own soul; all that hate me love death.' If a man were travelling to York, who would say his aim was to come to London? Do these men pursue happiness that walk in such defilement? It is the way of God's law that leads to true blessedness.

2. To press you to walk according to this rule, if you would be blessed. To this end let me press you to take the law of God for your rule, the Spirit of God for your guide, the promises for your encouragement, and the glory of God for your end.

[1.] Take the law of God for your rule. Study the mind of God, and know the way to heaven, and keep exactly in it. It is an argument of sincerity when a man is careful to practise all that he knows, and to be inquisitive to know more, even the whole will of God, and when the heart is held under awe of God's word. If a commandment stand in the way, it is more to a gracious heart than if a thousand bears and lions were in the way--more than if an angel stood in the way with a flaming sword: Prov. xiii. 13, He that feareth the commandment shall be

rewarded.' Would you have blessings from God?--fear the commandment. It is not he that fears wrath, punishment, inconveniences, troubles of the world, molestations of the flesh; no, but he that dares riot make bold with a commandment. As Jer. xxxv. 6, Go, bring a temptation, set pots of wine before the Rechabites. Oh, they durst not drink of them. Why? Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine.' Thus a child of God doth reason when the devil comes and sets a temptation before him, and being zealous for God, dares not comply with the lusts and humours of men, though they should promise him peace, happiness, and plenty. A wicked man makes no bones of a commandment; but a godly man, when he is in a right posture of spirit, and the awe of God is upon him, dare not knowingly and wittingly go aside and depart from God.

[2.] Take the Spirit of God for your guide. We can never walk in God's way without the conduct of God's Spirit. We must not only have a way, but a voice to direct us when we are wandering: Isa. xxx. 21, And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk in it.' Sheep have a shepherd as well as a fold, and children that learn to write must have a teacher as well as a copy; and so it is not enough to have a rule, but we must have a guide, a monitor, to put us in mind of our duty. The Israelites had a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. The gospel church is not destitute of a guide: Ps. xxxvii. 24, Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.' The Spirit of God is the guide and director to warn us of our duty.

[3.] The promises for your encouragement. If you look elsewhere, live by sense, and not by faith, you shall have discouragements enough. How shall a man carry himself through the temptations of the world with honour to God? 2 Pet. i. 4, Whereby are given unto us exceeding great

and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruptions that are in the world through lust.' When we have promises to bear us up, this will carry us clear through temptations, and make us act generously, nobly, and keep close to him.

[4] Fix the glory of God for your aim; else it is but a carnal course. The spiritual life is a living to God, Gal. ii. 20, when he is made the end of every action. You have a journey to take, and whether you sleep or wake, your journey is still a-going. As in a ship, whether men sit, lie, or walk, whether they eat or sleep, the ship holds on its course, and makes towards its port , so you all are going into another world, either to heaven or hell, the broad or the narrow way. And then do but consider how comfortable it will be at your journey's end, in a dying hour, to have been undefiled in the way; then wicked men that are defiled in their way will wish they had kept more close and exact with God. Even those that now wonder at the niceness and zeal of others, when they see that they must in earnest into another world, oh, then that they had been more exact and watchful, and stuck closer to the rule in their practice, discourses, compliances! Men will have other notions then of holiness than they had before. Oh, then they will wish that they had been more circumspect. Christ commended the unjust steward for remembering that in time he should be put out of his stewardship. You will all fail within a little while; then your poor, shiftless, naked souls must launch out into another world, and immediately come to God. How comfortable will it be then to have walked closely according to the line of obedience!

Doct. 3. That a close walker not only shall be blessed, but is blessed, in hand as well as in hope.

How is he blessed?

1. He is freed from wrath. He hath his discharge, and the blessedness of a pardoned man: John v. 24, He that believeth on Christ hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, for he hath passed from death to life.' He is out of danger of perishing, which is a great mercy.

2. He is taken into favour and respect with God: John xv. 14, Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.' There is a real friendship made up between us and Christ, not only in point of harmony and agreement of mind, but mutual delight and fellowship with each other.

3. He is under the special care and conduct of God's providence, that he may not miscarry: 1 Cor. iii. 23, All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' All the conditions of his life are overruled for good; his blessings are sanctified, and his miseries unstinged: Rom. viii. 28, And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.'

4. He hath a sure covenant-right to everlasting glory: 1 John iii. 1, Behold, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be,' &c. Is a title nothing before we come to enjoy the estate? We count a worldly heir happy, as well as a possessor; and are not God's heirs happy?

5. He hath sweet experiences of God's goodness towards him here in this world: Ps. xvii. 15, As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.' The joy of the presence and sense of the Lord's love will counter balance all worldly joys.

6. He hath a great deal of peace: Gal. vi. 16, And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.' Obedience and holy walking bringeth peace: Great peace

have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them,' Ps. cxix. 165; as there is peace in nature when all things keep their place and order. This peace others cannot have. There is a difference between a dead sea and a calm sea. A stupid conscience they may have, not a quiet conscience. The virtue of that opium will soon be spent; conscience will again be awakened.

Use. Oh, then, let us put in for a share of this blessedness! There are two encouragements in the service of Christ--our vails and our wages. Our wages should be enough, the eternal enjoyment of himself. But oh! we cry out of the tediousness of the way. We have our vails also, that are not contemptible. If a man should offer a lordship or farm to another, and he should say, The way is dirty and dangerous, the weather very troublesome; I will not look after it--would you not accuse this man of folly, that loves his ease and pleasure? But now, if this man were assured of a pleasant path and good way, if he would but take a little pains to go over and see it, this were gross folly indeed to refuse it. Our Lord hath made over a blessed inheritance to us upon gospel terms; but we are full of prejudices, in that to keep close to the rule may bring trouble, and deprive us of many advantages of gain; and we think we shall never see good day more. But we are assured there is a great blessing goeth along with God's yoke; and we having a promise of the enjoyment of God's presence where there are pleasures for evermore, this should make us rouse up ourselves in the work of the Lord.

SERMON II.

Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, that seek him with the whole heart.--Ver. 2.

IN this psalm the man of God begins with a description of the way to true blessedness. In the former verse a blessed man is described by the course of his actions, Blessed are the undefiled in the way.' In this, by the frame of his heart, Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, that seek him with the whole heart.' The internal principle of good actions is the verity and purity of the heart.

Here you may take notice of two marks of a blessed man:--

1. They keep his testimonies.

2. They seek him with the whole heart.

Doct. 1. They that keep close to God's testimonies are blessed.

By way of explication, two things take notice of:--

1. The notion that is given to precepts and counsels in the word: they are called his testimonies.

2. The respect of the blessed man to these testimonies, to keep them.

First, The notion by which the word of God is expressed is testimonies, whereby is intended the whole declaration of Gods will, in doctrines, commands, examples, threatenings, promises. The whole word is the testimony which God hath deposed for the satisfaction of the world about the way of their salvation. Now, because the word of God brancheth itself into two parts, the law and the gospel, this notion may be applied to both. First, To the law, in regard whereof the ark is called the ark of the testimony,' Exod. xxv. 16, because the two tables were laid up in it The gospel is also called the testimony, the testimony of God concerning his Son:' Isa. viii. 20, To the law, and to

the testimony;' where testimony seems to be distinguished from the law. The gospel is so called, because there God hath testified how a man shall be pardoned, reconciled to God, and obtain a right to eternal life. We need a testimony in this case, because it is more unknown to us. The law was written upon the heart* but the gospel is a stranger. Natural light will discern something of the law, and pry into matters which are of a moral strain and concernment; but evangelical truths are a mystery, and depend [2] by the mere testimony of God concerning his Son. Now, from this notion of testimonies we have this advantage:--

[1.] That the word is a full declaration of the Lord's mind. God would not leave us in the dark in the matters which concern the service of God and man's salvation. He hath given us his testimony, he hath told us his mind, what he approves and what he disallows, and upon what terms he will accept of sinners in Christ. It is a blessed thing that we are not left to the uncertainty of our own thoughts: Micah vi. 8, He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.' The way of pleasing and enjoying God is clearly revealed in his word. There we may know what we must do, what we may expect, and upon what terms. We have his testimony.

[2.] Another advantage we have by this notion is the certainty of the word; it is God's testimony. The apostle saith, 1 John v. 9, If we take the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.' It is but reason we should allow God that value and esteem that we give to the testimony of men, who are fallible and deceitful. Among men, in the mouth of two or three witnesses everything is established,' Deut. xix. 15;' Now there are three that bear witness in heaven, and three that bear witness on earth,' 1 John v. 8. We are apt to doubt of the gospel, and have suspicious thoughts of such an excellent doctrine; but now there are three witnesses from heaven, the Father, Word, and Spirit;

the Father by a voice: Mat. iii. 7, And lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son,' &c. And the Son also by a voice, when he appeared to Paul from heaven, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' And the Holy Ghost gave his testimony, descending upon him in the form of a dove, and upon the apostles in cloven tongues of fire. And there are three that bear record on earth;' for he saith, 1 John v. 10, He that believeth, echei ten marturian he hath the testimony in himself.' What is that? The Spirit, water, and blood in the heart of a believer; these give testimony to the gospel. The Spirit bears witness to the gospel when it illuminateth the heart, enabling us to discern the doctrine to be of God, to discern those signatures and characters of majesty, goodness, power, truth, which God hath left upon the gospel; and water and blood testify when we feel those constant and sensible effects of God's power coming with the gospel (1 Thes. i. 5), both by pacifying the conscience, and bringing joy and satisfaction, and by sanctifying and freeing a man from the bondage of sin. Water signifies sanctification: John xvii. 17, Sanctify them by thy truth.' The sanctifying power of God, that goes along with the gospel, is a clear confirmation of the divine testimony in it: John viii. 32, The truth shall make you free.' By our disentanglement from lust we come to be settled in the truth. God's testimony is the ultimate resolution of our faith. Why do we believe? Because it is God's testimony. How do we know it is God's testimony? It evidenceth itself by its own light to the consciences of men; yet God for the greater satisfaction to the world, hath given us witnesses, three from heaven and three on earth. Every manifestation of God hath sig natures and characters of God enough upon it to show from whence it came. The creation is a manifestation of God; now, whoever looks upon it seriously and considerately, may find God there, may track him by his footprints, By the things which are made,

his invisible being and power.' Rom. i. 20. The creation discovers itself to be of God; and if the lower testimony hath plain evidences, much more the gospel. Why? For he hath magnified his word above all his name,' Ps. cxxxviii. 2. The name of God is that by which he is made known. Now, there are more sensible characters and impressions of God left upon the word, that doth evidence it to be of God, than upon any part of his name.

[3.] This advantage we have by this notion, a testimony is a ground of self-examination, or a rule whereby we may judge of our state and actions; for it witnesseth not only de jure, what we must do; or de eventu, what we may expect; but de facto, whether we do good or evil, what we are, and what we may look for from God upon our obedience or disobedience: Mat. xxiv. 14, The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, eis marturion , for a witness unto all nations;' first to them, next against them, Mark xiii. 9. The word is a testimony to them of God's will in Christ, if they receive it; against them if they reject, neglect, or believe it not. Hereby we may judge of our condition by our conformity, or difformity and contrariety, to the word of God. Christ saith at the day of judgment Moses will accuse you: John v. 45, There is one that accuseth you, even Moses in whom ye trust.' The gospel will accuse. What is now an offer will then be an accusation. God will not be without a witness at the day of judgment. The creatures, which had an evident impression of God upon them, they will witness against the Gentiles, so that they are without excuse.' Rom. i. 20; and the Jews, that were under the dispensation of Moses, he will accuse them; there was light sufficient to convince them. So the gospel, which is God's testimony concerning his Son, will accuse you if it be not received. Therefore it is good to see what the word doth witness or testify; doth it testify good or evil? for accordingly shall

we be treated with in the day of judgment. It is sad when we can only say of the scripture as that kin of the prophet of the Lord, He witnesseth nothing but evil against me,' 1 Kings xxii. 8. Let us see what God's testimony speaks, whether it will plead for us or against us at the great day of the Lord.

[4.] It upbraids our unbelief, that when God hath not only given us a law, but a testimony, still we are backward and careless, word of God were no more but a law, we were bound to obey it, be cause we are his creatures; but when it is his testimony, we should regard it the more, for now God stands not only upon the honour of his authority, but of his truth: 1 John v. 10 He that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he believeth not the testimony which (rod hath given concerning his Son.' We may urge it thus upon our hearts--What! shall we make God a liar, after he hath so solemnly given his word, that word which hath many signatures, characters, and stamps of God upon it? Carelessness now is not only disobedience, but unbelief; it puts the highest affront upon God, to question his veracity and truth, and does not only unlord him, but ungod him, by making him a liar.

So much for the first thing, the testimony of the Lord.

Secondly, The respect of the blessed man to these testimonies; they keep them. What is it to keep the testimonies of God? Keeping is a word which relates to a charge or trust committed to us. Christ hath committed his testimonies to us as a trust and charge that we must be careful of. Look, as on our part we commit to Christ the charge of our souls to save them in his own day, 2 Tim. i. 12, so Christ chargeth us with his word--(1.) To lay it up in our hearts. (2.) To observe it in our practice. This is to keep the word.

[1.] To lay it up in our hearts. In the heart two things are considerable--the understanding and the affections. God undertakes in

the covenant for both: Heb. viii. 10, I will put my law in their mind, and write it in their hearts.' The meaning is, that he will enlighten our minds for the understanding of his will, and frame our affections to the obedience of it. Well, then, you must keep it in your minds and affections.

(1.) In your minds. We must understand the word of God, assent to it; we must revolve it often in our thoughts, and have it ready upon all occasions. Understand it we must if we would be blessed: He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me,' John xiv. 21. We cannot make conscience of obedience till we know our duty. He that would keep a thing must first have it; we have the law in possession when we get knowledge of it: Mat. xiii. 23, He that receiveth the word into good ground is he that heareth the word and understands it;' and Luke viii. 13, They that hear the word and keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.' It is not enough to hear the word, but we must understand it; and yet that is not all: an adversary may understand a truth, or else he cannot rationally oppose it. There is assent required, that we believe it as God's testimony, and accordingly embrace it, and give it place in the heart. Faith is a receiving of the word, Acts ii. 41; nay,' we must have it ready upon all occasions. Rational memory belongs to the mind or understanding; therefore we keep the word in our minds when it is ever ready with us, either to check sin, or warn us of our duty, Ps. cxix. 9. Forgetfulness is an ignorance for the time: Prov. iii. 1, My son, forget not my law; and let thine heart keep my commandments.' We should be ready to every good word and work, as occasion is offered to us.

(2.) To keep it in our hearts is to have an affection to it. Keeping the word relates to our chariness and tenderness of it, when we are as chary of the word as a man would be of a precious jewel: Prov. vi. 20,

21, My son, keep thy father's commandments; bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.' Sometimes it alludes to the apple of the eye: Prov. vii. 2, Keep them as the apple of thine eye.' Such tender affections should we have to the testimonies of the Lord, as a man has for his eye. The least offence to the eye is troublesome; a man should be as chary of the commandment as he would be of his eye. Sometimes it implies the similitude of keeping a way: Josh. i. 7, Turn not to the right hand or to the left.' A traveller is very careful to keep his way; so when we are thus careful, tender, chary of God's commandments and testimonies, this is an argument of a blessed condition. Thus we are to keep it in the heart.

[2.] We are to observe it in practice; Luke xi. 28, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it;' that is, not only that hear it, but do it. Many have this word in their mind and memory, but not in their lives. Without this, hearing is nothing; liking, knowing, assent, pretended affection is all in vain: 1 John ii. 4, He that saith I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' Our actions are a better discovery of our thoughts than our words. When we get a little knowledge, and make a little profession, we think we observe his commands; but he is a liar if he be not exact, and walk close with God. It is not enough to understand the word, to be able to talk and dispute of the testimonies of God, but to keep them. It is not enough to assent to them that they are God's laws, but they must be obeyed. The laws of earthly princes are not obeyed as soon as believed to be the king's laws, but when we are punctual to observe them. This is to keep the commandment of God; it implies both exactness and perseverance: Rev. iii. 8, Thou hast kept my word;' that is, thou hast not apostatised as others have done; and Prov. vi. 20, Keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of

thy mother,' that is perseverance. You see by the first note who are the blessed men; they which own God's testimony in his word, and accordingly look upon it as a great charge and trust Christ hath reposed in them and given to them that they should keep his law. Now, certainly these are blessed. Why?

(1.) They are blessed or cursed whom Christ in the last day will pronounce blessed or cursed. Now, in the last day to some he will say, Come, ye blessed of my Father;' to others, Go, ye cursed;' and he hath told us beforehand, that it is he that keepeth his testimonies whom he will own in that day, Mat. vii. 20-22. Many will come and challenge acquaintance with Christ: Lord, we have prophesied in thy name,' &c.; Thou hast taught in our streets' (so it is in Luke); but Christ will disown them: I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.' Many will pretend to be of Christ's side, take up the opinions of the country wherein they live, frequent ordinances, &c.; but because they kept not his testimonies, Christ will not own them. When men are to be posed, they count it a favour to know the questions aforehand. God hath told us what will be the great evidence according to which he will proceed in the day of judgment--Have you kept my testimonies He that keeps close to God's word will find acceptance.

(2.) They are blessed for whom Christ mediateth. Now, Christ mediateth for those that keep his word: John xvii. 6, They have kept thy word.' It is a grief to your advocate when he cannot speak well of you in heaven. But as soon as he seeth any fruits of obedience, where they consult often with God's testimony, though they have many failings, yet are careful as much as in them lies, then he goes to the Father and acquainteth him with it.

(3.) Those that are taken into sweet fellowship and communion with God certainly they are in a blessed condition. Those to whom God will be

intimate, and manifest himself in a way of gracious communion, are blessed. Now thus he doth to those that keep his testimonies: If any man love me and keep my commandments, my Father will love him, and we will make our abode with him.' The whole Trinity will come and dwell in his heart.

But now you must know, there is a twofold keeping of God's testimonies--legal and evangelical. Legal keeping is in a way of perfect and absolute obedience, without the least failing; so none of us can be blessed. Moses will accuse us; there will be failings in the best. But now evangelical keeping--that is, a filial and sincere obedience--is accepted, and the imperfections Christ pardoneth. If God's pardon help us not, we are for ever miserable. The apostles had many failings; sometimes they manifested a weak faith, sometimes hardness of heart, sometimes passionateness when they met with disrespect, Luke ix.; yet Christ returns this general acknowledgment of them when he was pleading with his Father, Holy Father, they have kept thy word.' When the heart is sincere, God will pass by our failings, James v. 11, Ye have heard of the patience of Job.' Ay! and of his impatience too, his cursing the day of his birth; but the Spirit of God puts a finger upon the scar, and takes notice of what is good. So long as we bewail sin, seek remission of sin, strive after perfection, endeavour to keep close and be tender of a command, though a naughty heart will carry us aside sometimes, we keep the testimony of the Lord in a gospel sense. Bewailing sin, that owns the law; seeking pardon, that owns the gospel; striving after perfection, that argueth sincerity and uprightness. Well, then, here is the discriminating note; if we would know whether we come within the compass of David's blessed man, if we have a dear and tender esteem of God's testimonies, when we would fain have them impressed upon our hearts, and expressed in our lives

and conversations, They keep his testimonies.'

The next now is:--

2. They seek him with the whole heart.

This is fitly subjoined to the former for a double reason; partly, because the end of God's testimonies is to direct us how to seek after God, to bring home the wandering creature to its centre and place of rest; partly, because whoever keeps the commandments of God, he will be forced to seek God for light and help.

Obedience doth not only qualify us for communion with God, but (where it is regarded in good earnest) necessitates us to look after it; for we cannot come to God without God; and therefore, if we would keep his testimonies, we must be seeking of God. Well, then--

Doct. 2. Those that would be blessed must make this their business, sincerely to seek after God.

1. Observe the act of duty; they seek the Lord.

2. The manner of performance, with the whole heart.

First, What it is to seek the Lord.

1. To seek the Lord presupposeth our want of God: for no man seeks what he hath, but for what he hath not. All that are seeking are sensible of their want of God. For instance, when we begin to seek him at first, it begins with a sound remorse and sense of our natural estrangement from him. The first work and great care of returning penitents is to inquire after God. So long as men lie unconverted, they are wholly neglectful of him, and think they do not want God: Ps. xiv. 2, There is none that understands and seeks after God.' They have no affection or desire of communion with God. They seek such things as their hearts lust after, but it is not their desire or care to enjoy God. But when the conversion of the Jews is spoken of, Hosea iii. 5, it is said, They shall return and seek the Lord their God.' At first conversion men are

sensible of their great distance from God, and are troubled they have been so long strangers to him. Go to another sort of seekers, they are sensible of the same thing; in case of desertion it is clear: Cant. v. 6, My beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; I sought him, but I could not find him.' They never begin to recover until they are first sensible of their loss; when they see Christ is gone, they are left dead and comfortless; yea, all believers, their seeking or looking after communion with God is grounded upon a sense of want in some degree and measure; it is little they have in comparison of what they want and expect; and therefore still the children of God are a generation of seekers, that seek after God,' Ps. xxiv. 6; whatever they enjoy, they are still in pursuit of more. They are always breathing after God, and desire to enjoy more communion with him. A wicked man is always running from God, and is never better than when he is out of God's company, when he is rid of all thoughts of God. He runs from his own conscience, because he finds God there; he runs from the company of good men, because God is there--holy conference is as a prison; he runs from ordinances, because they bring God near to his conscience, and put him in mind of God: he avoids death, because he cannot endure to be with God. But men that have a sense and want of God upon them, will be inquiring and seeking after him.

2. This seeking may be known by the things sought. What do we seek for? Union and communion with God: Ps. cv. 4, Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his face for evermore.' It is an allusion to the ark, which was a pledge of God's favourable and powerful presence; so that which we seek after is God's favourable and powerful presence, that we may find the Lord reconciled, comforting and quickening our heart. Communion with God is the main thing that we seek after, as to the enjoyment of his favour in the acceptance of our persons and pardon of

our sins. This is that the man of God expresseth, in his own name and in the name of all the saints: Ps. iv. 6, 7, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;' that God would display his beams of favour upon the soul. So Ps. lxiii. 3, Thy favour is better than life.' And then his strength too, that he may subdue our corruptions, temptations, enemies, Micah vii. 19; and that he may supply our wants inward and outward by his all-sufficiency, Phil. iv. 19. God telleth Abraham, I am God all-sufficient; walk before me, and be thou perfect.'

3. The formality of the duty may be explained with respect to graces and ordinances. It consists in the exercise of grace, and in the use of ordinances.

[1.] The exercise of grace--faith and love. (1.) Faith is often expressed by terms of motion--coming, running, going, seeking. Thus is the whole tendency of soul towards God expressed by terms that are proper to outward motion. Coming notes our serious resolution and purpose to make after God. Going notes the practice or progress in that resolution. Running notes the fervour and earnestness of the soul to enjoy God. And seeking, that notes our diligence in the use of means. That faith is implied in seeking appears by comparing these two scriptures: Isa. xi. 10, To it shall the Gentiles seek.' Now when this is spoken of in the New Testament, it is rendered thus, Rom. xv. 12, In him shall the Gentiles trust.' So that it notes confidence and hope.

(2.) It notes love, which is exercised herein, which puts upon sallies and earnest egressions of soul after the party loved: Ps. lxiii. 8, My soul follows hard after thee.' It is grievous to those who love God to think of separation from him, or to forbear to seek after him. The great care of their souls is to find God, that he may direct, comfort, strengthen, and sanctify them, and to have sweet experience of his grace. Thus the spouse sought him whom her soul loved,' and gave not

over till she found him.

[2.] Again, it is exercised in the use of the ordinances, as the word and prayer. God will be sought in his own ordinances. Christ walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. If you would find a man, mind where is his walk and usual resort. When Christ was lost, his parents sought him in the temple; there they found him. If you would find Christ, look to the shepherds' tents in the assemblies of his people, Cant i. 7, 8; there shall you meet him. Only let me tell you, in these ordinances it is not enough to make Christ the object of them, to worship Christ, but he must be made the end of them. To serve God is one thing, to seek him another. To serve God is to make him the object of worship, to seek God is to make him the end of worship, when we will not go away from him without him: Gen. xxxii. 16, I will not let thee go unless thou bless me.' It is not enough to make use of ordinances, but we must see if we can find God there. There are many that hover about the palace, that yet do not speak with the prince; so possibly we may hover about ordinances, and not meet with God there. To go away with the husk and shell of an ordinance, and neglect the kernel, to please ourselves because we have been in the courts of God, though we have not met with the living God, that is very sad. A traveller and merchant differ thus:--A traveller goes from place to place only that he may see; but a merchant goes from port to port that he may take in his lading, and grow rich by traffic. So a formal person goes from ordinance to ordinance, and is satisfied with the work; a godly man looks to take in his lading, that he may go away from God with God; that he may meet God here and there, in this duty and in that, and go away from God with God. A man that makes a visit only by constraint, and not by friendship, it is all one to him whether the person be at home or no; but another would be glad to find his friend there: so, if

we from a principle of love come to God in these duties, our desires will be to find the living God.

Again, if God be not found in an ordinance, yet we must continue seeking; you may find him in the next. Sometimes God will not be found in public, that he may be found in private ordinances. The spouse sought him upon her bed,' then in every street of the city: Isa. lv. 6, Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.' In prayer we come most directly to enjoy God, and do more especially call him in to our help and relief; there all graces are acted. If you cannot find God in prayer, look for him in the supper, and in the word; if he be not comfortably present in the word, seek him by meditation: Cant. v. 6, My soul failed when he spake;' that is, when I considered his speaking, for his wooing was over, my be loved was gone; but when I thought of his speaking my soul failed David consults with Nathan, but he could give him no clear answer; what then? 2 Sam. vii. 4, The word of the Lord came that night unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David,' &c. So when we have been inquiring after God all day in public worship, all this while the oracle is silent; but at night, when going over these things again, God may be found. Acts xvii. 12, it is said, Therefore many of them believed.' How?--when they searched the word; though in the hearing they did not discern the impressions of God upon the word; but when they searched and studied, going over them in private duties, God appeared. Heb. xi. 11, it is said, She judged him faithful that had promised.' How so? at first hearing? No; Sarah laughed when God promised her a son (for it was the Son of God that was in company with the angels, Gen. xviii.); but afterwards, when she considered of it, she judged him faithful.

Thus we must follow God from ordinance to ordinance. It argues a great deal of pride in carnal men, that if God doth not meet them presently

they throw off all. Now and then they will see what they shall have for calling upon God; but if God do not answer at the first knock, they are gone.

SERMON III.

Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, that seek him with the whole heart.--Ver. 2.

Use 1. To press you to seek God. The motives are:

1. It was the end of our creation. We do not live merely to live; but for this end were we sent into the world, to seek God. ^Nature is sensible of it in part by the dissatisfaction it finds in other things; and therefore the apostle describes the Gentiles to be groping and feeling about for God, Acts xvii. 27. God is the cause of all things, and nature cannot be satisfied without him. We were made for God, and can never enjoy satisfaction until we come to enjoy him; therefore the Psalmist saith, Ps. xiv. 2, We are all gone aside, and altogether become filthy.' Nature is out of joint; we are quite out of our way to true happiness. We are seeking that for which we were created, when we seek and inquire after God.

2. We seek other things that we want with great solicitude and care; we are cumbered with much serving to obtain the world: and shall' any thing be sought more than God? We can least spare him. The chiefest good should be sought after with the chiefest care, and chiefest love, and chiefest delight; nothing should be so precious to us as God. It is the greatest baseness that can be, that anything should take up our time, our thoughts, and content us more than God. When we come to God we are earnest for other things: Hosea vii. 14, They howl upon their beds for corn and wine.' If anything be sought from God above God, more than God, and not for God, it is but a brutish cry.

3. It is our benefit to seek God. It is no benefit to God if we do not seek him. The Lord [3] hath no less, though we have less. He that hides

himself from the sun, doth not impair the light. We derogate nothing from God if we do not seek him. He needed not the creature: he had happiness enough in himself; but we hide ourselves from our own happiness and our own peace. But what benefit have we by seeking God? A great deal of present benefit: Ps. xxii. 26, They that seek thee shall praise thy name.' You will have cause to bless God before the search be over. God hath passed his word, there are a great many experiences we taste. As they that continue in the pursuit of the philosopher's stone find out many experiences which are a satisfaction to their understandings, so, one way or other, we shall have cause to bless God. The God of Jacob hath openly professed we shall not seek him in vain, Isa. xliv. 19 , that is, this is a truth God hath written as it were with a sunbeam, that something will come in seeking of God. By seeking him in prayer we carry away a great deal of comfort and strength. As we read of that emperor that sent not away any one sad out of his presence, so neither doth God; there is some comfort to be had in waiting upon him; and as it brings present comfort and satisfaction, so it brings an everlasting reward: Heb. xi. 6, He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' If you would have the fruit of your holy calling, that which is the result of that religion you do profess, you must diligently seek him, so that in effect we never seek ourselves more than when we seek the Lord: Amos v. 6, Seek the Lord, and ye shall live.' It is the undoubted way to get eternal life, to live for ever. They that seek not his face here shall never see his face for ever. With what diligence will men court an outward preferment, which is yet very uncertain? Prov. xxix. 26, All men seek the ruler's face; but every man's judgment is of the Lord.' What a deal of observance and waiting is there for the ruler's face and favour! and yet God disposeth of every man's judgment. It is uncertain whether they shall obtain it^

yea or nay; but now, if you seek the face of God in heaven, you shall live for ever.

4. If you do not sensibly find God, yet comfort thyself that thou art in a seeking way, and in the pursuit of him: Ps. xxiv. 6, God's people are described to be the generation of them that seek him.' This is the true mark of God's chosen people; they make it their business to get the favour of God, and to wrestle through discouragements. It is better to be a seeker than a wanderer. Though we do not feel the love of God, nor have the comfort of a pardon, have no sensible communion with him; yet the choice and bent of the heart is towards him, and you have the character of God's people upon you.

5. You have misspent a great deal of time already, and long neglected God; therefore, now you should seek him: Hosea x. 22. It is time to seek the Lord, until he come and rain righteousness upon you.' It is time, that is, it is not too late, while we are preserved and invited. And again, it is time, that is, it is high time; the business of your lives hath been too long neglected. It is such another expression as 1 Peter iv. 3, The time past is enough to have wrought the will of the Gentiles,' &c. God hath been too long kept out of his right, and we out of our happiness. The night is coming upon us, and will you not begin your day's work?

6. This is the reason of affliction: we are so backward in this work that we need to be whipped unto it: Hosea v. 15, I will go and return to my place, saith God, till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face.' God knows that want is a spur to a lazy creature; and therefore doth God break in upon men, and scourge them as with scorpions, that they may bethink themselves, and look after God.

Use 2. For direction. If you would seek God--

1. Seek him early: Prov. viii. 32, Blessed are they that seek me

early.' We cannot soon enough go about this work. Seek him when God is nigh, when the Spirit is nigh: Isa. lv.6, Call upon the Lord while he is near.' There are certain seasons which you cannot easily get again; such times when God doth deal more pressingly with you, when the word bears in upon the heart, and when God is near unto us. David like a quick echo returns upon God: Ps. xxvii. 8, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' It would be a great loss not to obey present impulses and invitations, and not make use of the advantages which God puts into our hands.

2. Seek him daily; Ps. cv. 4, Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his face evermore.' That is, from day to day you must be seeking the face of God, in the strength of God. Every hour we need his direction, protection, strength; and we are in danger to lose him, if we do not continue the search.

3. Seek him unweariedly, and do not give over your seeking until you find God. Wrestle through discouragements; though former endeavours have been in vain, yet still we should continue seeking after God. We have that command to enforce us to it: Luke v. 5, We have toiled all night; howbeit at thy command,' &c. Though we do not presently find, yet we must not cast off all endeavours. In spiritual things many times a man hears and goes away with nothing but when he comes to meditate upon it, and work it upon the heart, then he finds the face of God, and the strength of God. Therefore, you must not give over your seeking.

4. Seek him in Christ. God will only be found in a mediator: Heb. vii. 25, Those are accepted that come to God by him.' Guilty creatures cannot enjoy God immediately; and in Christ, God is more familiar with us: Hosea iii. 5, They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king.' None can seek him rightly but those that seek him in Christ. It is uncomfortable to think of God out of Christ. As the historian saith

of Themistocles, when he sought the favour of the king, he snatched up the king's son, and so came and mediated for his grace and favour. Let us take the Son of God in the arms of our faith, and present him to God the Father, and seek his face, his strength.

5. God can only be sought by the help of his own Spirit. As our access to God, we have it by Christ, so we have it by the Spirit: Eph. ii. 18, For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.' As Christ gives us the leave, so the Spirit gives us the help. Bernard speaks fitly to this purpose; None can be aforehand with God, we cannot seek him till we find him in some sense: he will be sought that he may be found; and he is found that he may be sought. It is his preventing grace which makes us restless in the use of means; and when we are brought home to God, when we seek after God, it is by his own grace. The spouse was listless and careless until she could take God by the scent of his own grace, when he put his finger upon the handle of the lock, and dropped myrrh.' By the sweet and powerful influences of his grace, she was carried on in seeking after God. Thus much for the first part of the duty, seek.

Secondly, Now the manner, with the whole heart.

Doct. Whoever would seek God aright, they must seek him with their whole heart.

Here I shall inquire--

1. What doth this imply?

2. Why God will be sought with the whole heart?

1. What doth this imply? It implies sincerity and integrity; for it is not to be taken in the legal sense, with respect to absolute perfection, but in opposition to deceit: Jer. iii. 10, Judah has not turned to me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord.' It is spoken of the time of Josiah's reformation; many men whirled about

with the times, and were forced by preternatural motions. The Father of spirits above all things requireth the spirit, and he that is the searcher and judge of the heart requireth the heart should be consecrated to him. Integrity opposeth partiality. There are indeed two things in this expression, the whole heart; it notes extension of parts and intension of degrees,

[1.] The extension of parts; with the understanding, will, and affections. Some seek God with a piece of their hearts, to explain it either in the work of faith or love. In the work of faith; as Acts viii. 37, If thou believest with all thine heart.' There is a believing with a piece, and a believing with all the heart. There is an inactive knowledge, a naked assent, which may be real, yet it is not a true faith; the devil may have this: Luke iv. 34, the devil makes an orthodox confession there, Thou art Jesus, the Son of the living God.' This is only a conviction upon the understanding, without any bent upon the heart. It is not enough to own Christ to be the true Messiah, but we must embrace him, put our whole trust in him. There may be an assent joined with some sense and conscience, and some vanishing sweetness and taste by the reasonableness of salvation by Christ, Heb. vi. 4; but this is not believing with all the heart; it is but a taste, a lighter work upon the affections, and therefore bringeth in little experience. There may be some assent, such as may engage to profession and partial reformation, but the whole heart is not subdued to God. Then do we believe with the whole heart, when the heart is warmed with the things we know and assent to; when there is a full and free consent to take Christ upon God's terms, to all the uses and purposes for which God hath appointed him: 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, Know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind;' when there is an effective and an affective know ledge; when we can not

only discourse of God and Christ, and are inclined to believe; but when these truths soak into the heart to frame it to the obedience of his will. When the Lord had spoken of practical obedience, Was not this to know me, saith the Lord?' Jer. xxii. 16. And this is to believe. So for love: Deut. vi. 5, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' Every faculty must express love to God. Many will be content to give God a part. God hath their consciences, but the world their affections. Their heart is divided, and the evidence of it is plainly this: In their troubles and extremities they will seek after God, but this is not their constant work and delight. We are welcome to God when we are compelled to come into his presence. God will not say, as men, You come in your necessity. But we must then be sincere in our addresses, and rest in him as our portion and all-sufficient good.

[2.] For intension of degrees. To seek God with the whole heart, is to seek him with the highest elevation of our hearts. The whole heart must be carried out to God, and to other things for God's sake. As harbingers, when they go to take up room for a prince, they take up the whole house, none else must have place there; so God, he will have the whole heart.

Again, it may be considered as to the exaction of the law, and as a rule of the gospel.

(1.) As an exaction of the law; and so Christ urged it to the young man that was of a pharisaical institution, to abate his pride and confidence: Mat. xxii. 37, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' Certainly these words there have a legal importance and signification; for in an other Evangelist, Luke x. 28, it is added, Do and live,' which is the tenor of the law. And Christ's intent was to abate the Pharisees'

pride, by propounding the rigour of the first covenant. The law requireth complete love without the least defect; according to the terms of it, a grain wanting would make the whole unacceptable; as a hard land lord, when all the rent is not brought to the full, he accepteth none. It is good to consider it under this sense, that we may seek God in Christ to quicken us, that we may value our deliverance by him from this burden, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear; a straggling thought, a wandering glance, the least outrunning of the heart, had rendered us accursed for ever.

(2.) It may be considered as a rule of the gospel, which requireth our utmost endeavours, our bewailing infirmities and defects, but accepts of sincerity. There will be a double principle in us to the last, but there should not be a double heart. So that this expression of seeking the Lord with the whole heart is reconcilable enough with the weaknesses of the present state. For instance: 1 Kings xiv. 8, My servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, and did that only which was Bright in mine eyes.' David had many failings, and some that left an indelible brand upon him, in the matter of Uriah, yet because of his sincerity, and habitual purpose, God saith, He hath kept all my commandments.' So in Josiah: 2 Kings xxiii. 25, Like to him there was no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might.'

Yet he also had his imperfections; against the warning of the Lord he goes out with a wicked king, and dies in battle. So Asa: 2 Chron. xv. 17, The high places were not taken away--it was a failing in that holy king--yet it is said, The heart of Asa was perfect all his days.' Well, then, when the whole heart is engaged in this work, when we do not only study to know God, but make it our work to enjoy him, to rest in him as our all-sufficient portion, though there will be many defects, yet then

are we said to seek him with the whole heart.

2. The reasons why God will be sought with the whole heart are--

[1.] He that gives but part to God doth indeed give nothing. The devil keeps an interest as long as one lust remains unmortified, and one corner of the soul is kept for him. As Pharaoh stood hucking,--he would fain have some pawn of their return; either leave your children behind; no, no, they must go and see the sacrifices, and be trained up in the way of the Lord; then he would have their flocks and herds left behind; he knew that would draw their hearts back again, so Satan must have either this lust or that; he knows by keeping part all will fall to his share in the end. A bird that is tied in a string seems to have more liberty than a bird in a cage; it flutters up and down, though it be held fast: so many seem to flutter up and down and do many things, as Herod; but his Herodias drew him back again into the fowler's net. Thus because of a sinner's danger.

[2.] Because of God's right. By creation he made the whole, therefore^ requires the whole;' the Father of spirits' must have the whole spirit. We were not mangled in our creation; God, that made the whole, must have the whole. He preserves the whole. Christ hath bought the whole: 1 Cor. vi. 20, Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.' And God promiseth to glorify the whole. Christians, it would be uncomfortable to us if God should only take a part to heaven. All that you have is to be glorified in the day of Christ; all that you are and have must be given to him--whole spirit, soul, and body. Let us not deprive him of any part.

Use. Well, do we serve God and seek after God with the whole heart? The natural mother had rather part with the whole than see the child divided, 1 Kings iii. 26. God had rather part with the whole than take a piece. Either he will have the whole of your love, or leave the whole

to Satan. The Lord complains, Hosea x. 2, Their heart is divided.' Men have some affections for God many times, but they have affections for their lusts too, the world hath a great share and portion of their heart.

Quest. But when, in a gospel sense, may we be said to seek God with the whole heart? Take it in these short propositions.

1. When the settled purpose of our souls is to cleave to God, to love and serve him with an entire obedience, both in the inward and outward man, when this is the full determination and consent of our hearts.

2. When we do what we can by all good means to maintain this purpose; for otherwise it is but a fruit of conviction, a freewill pang: Acts xxiv. 16, Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards all men.'

3. When we search out our defects, and are ever bewailing them with kindly remorse: Rom. vii. 24, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?'

4. When we run by faith to Christ Jesus, and sue out our pardon and peace in Christ's name, until we come to be complete in him: Col. i. 10, That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.'

[3] Qu. it is no benefit to God. If we do not seek him, the Lord,' &c.?--ED.

SERMON IV.

They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.--Ver. 3.

STILL the Psalmist continues the description of a blessed man. In the two first verses, holiness (which is the way to and evidence of blessedness) is considered with respect to the subject and the object of it, the life and the heart of man. The life of man, Blessed are the undefiled in the way.' The heart of man, they seek him with the whole heart.'

Now, holiness is considered, in the parts of it, negatively and positively. The two parts of holiness are an eschewing of sin and studying to please God. You have both in this verse, They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways.'

First, You have the blessed man described negatively, they do no iniquity. Upon hearing the words, presently there occurs a doubt, how then can any man be blessed? for there is not a man that liveth and sinneth not,' Eccles. vii. 20; and James iii. 2, In many things we offend all.' To deny it, is a flat lie against the truth, and against our own. experience. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,' 1 John i. 8. The expression may be abused on the one side, to establish the impeccability and perfection of the saints. On the other side, it may be abused by persons of a weak and tender conscience, to the hindrance of their comfort and rejoicing in God. When they shall hear this is the character of a blessed man, they do no iniquity,' they are very apt to conclude against their own regeneration, because of their daily failings.

To avoid these difficulties, I shall inquire--

1. What it is to do iniquity.

2. Who are the persons among the sons of men that may be said to do no iniquity.

First What it is to do iniquity? If we make it our trade and practice' to continue in wilful disobedience. To sin is one thing, but to make sin our work is another: 1 John iii. 9, He that is born of God doth not commit sin;' he doth not work sin; and Mat. vii. 23, Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' That is the character of the reprobate workers of iniquity. So John viii. 34, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.' Sin is their constant trade: Ps. cxxxix. 24, See if there be any wicked way in me.' None are absolutely freed from sin, but it is not their trade, their way, their work. When a man makes it his study and business to carry on a course of sin, then he is said to do iniquity.

Secondly, Who are those that are said to do no iniquity in God's account, though they fail often through weakness of the flesh and violence of temptation? Answer--

1. All such as are renewed by grace, and reconciled to God by Christ Jesus; to these God imputeth no sin to condemnation, and in his account they do no iniquity. Notable is that, 1 Kings xiv. 8. It is said of David, He kept my commandments, and followed me with all his heart, and did that only which was right in mine eyes.' How can that be? We may trace David by his failings; they are upon record everywhere in the word; yet here a veil is drawn upon them; God laid them not to his charge. There is a double reason why their failings are not laid to their charge. Partly, because of their general state; they are in Christ, taken into favour through him; and there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ.' Rom. viii. 1; therefore particular errors and escapes do not alter their condition. Which is not to be understood as if a man should not be humbled, and ask God's pardon for his infirmities; no, for then they prove iniquities, they will lie upon

record against us. It was a gross fancy of the Valentinians, that held they were not defiled with sin what soever they committed; though base and obscene persons, yet still they were as gold in the dirt. No, no; we' are to recover ourselves by repentance, to sue out the favour of God. When David humbled himself, and had repented, then saith Nathan, 2 Sam. xii. 13, The Lord hath put away thy sin.' Partly, too, because their bent and habitual inclination is to do otherwise. They set themselves to comply with God's will, to seek and serve the Lord, though they are clogged with many infirmities. A wicked man sinneth with deliberation and delight; his bent is to do evil; he makes provision for lusts.' Rom. xiii. 12, and serves them by a voluntary subjection, Titus iii. 3. But those that are renewed by grace are not debtors to the flesh; they have taken another debt and obligation upon them, which is to serve the Lord, Rom. viii. 12. Partly, too, because their general course and way is to do otherwise. Unumquodque operatur secundum suam formam--everything works according to its form; the constant action a of nature are according to the kind. So the new creature, his constant operations are according to grace. A man is known by his custom, and the course of his endeavours, what is his business. If a man be constantly, easily, frequently carried away to sin, it discovers a habit of soul, and the temper of his heart. Meadows may be overflown, but marsh ground is drowned with the return of every tide. A child of God may be carried away, and act contrary to the bent and inclination of the new nature; but when men are drowned and overcome with the return of every temptation, and carried away, it argues a habit of sin. And partly, because sin never carries it away clearly, but with some dislikes and resistances of the new nature. The children of God make it their business to avoid all sin, by watching, praying, mortifying: Ps. xxxix. 1, I said, I will take heed to my ways,

that I sin not with my tongue.' And then there is a resistance of the sin. God hath planted graces in their hearts; the fear of his majesty, that works a resistance; and therefore there is not a full allowance of what they do. This resistance sometimes is more strong; then the temptation is overcome: How can I do this wickedness, and sin against God?' Gen. xxxix. 9. Sometimes it is more weak, and then sin carries it, though against the will of a holy man: Rom. vii. 15, 18, The evil which I hate, that do I.' It is the evil which they hate; they protest against it; they are like men which are oppressed by the power of the enemy. And then there is a remorse after the sin: David's heart smote him.' It grieves and shames them that they do evil. There is tenderness goes with the new nature; Peter sinned foully, but he went out and wept bitterly.

Well, then, the point is this:--

Doct. 1. They that are and shall be blessed are such as make it their business to avoid all sin.

I may illustrate it by these reasons:--

1. Surely they shall be blessed, for they take care to remove the makebate, the wall of partition between God and them. It is sin which separates: Isa. lix. 2, But your iniquities have separated between you and your God.' This was that which cast angels out of heaven; when they had sinned, God could endure their company no longer. This cast Adam out of paradise. This is that which hinders men from communion with God.

2. These are men fitting and preparing themselves for the enjoyment of their great hopes: Col. i. 12, Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;' 1 John iii. 3, He that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as he is pure.' Esther, when she was chosen to be bride and spouse to that great king, had her months of

purification. The time we spend in the world are the months of our purification; it is a sign they mind their business, they are fitting for eternal happiness. They remember they are shortly to appear before the great God, therefore they would not be uncomely. Joseph washed his garments when he was to go before Pharaoh. They have these hopes that they shall see God as he is, that they shall be like him, and he will appear for their comfort; therefore they are fitting themselves more and more.

3. In them true happiness is begun. There are degrees in blessedness the angels they never sinned; the glorified saints they have sinned, but sin no more; the saints upon earth, in them sin reigns not; therefore here is their happiness begun. As sin is taken away, so our happiness increaseth; first God begins with us in a way of justification, ne damnet; he takes away the damning power that is in sin; and in sanctification the work goes on, ne regnet, that sin may not reign afterward ne sit, that sin may not be; therefore these have begun their happiness, they are hastening towards it apace.

Use 1. For trial and examination, whether we may be reckoned among the blessed men, yea or nay. There are some think, because the children of God are liable to so many failings, and there being so many wiles and circuits in the heart of man, that there can be no judgment made upon the case between the sins of the regenerate and unregenerate. But surely there is a difference between the sinning of the one, and the sinning of the other, and such a difference as may be discerned: 1 John iii. 9, Whosoever is born of God doth net commit sin.' Now mark, ver. 10, In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.' This is that which distinguisheth the children of God from the children of the devil. Well, then, how shall we manage this discovery, that we may be able to judge of our own estates?

First, Let us consider how far sin may be in a blessed man, in a child of God.

1. They have a corrupt nature, they have sin in them as well as others; it is their misery to the last: Rom. vii. 24, O wretched man that I am,' saith the holy apostle. Sin, though it be dejectum, cast down in regard of regency, yet it is not ejectum, cast out in regard of inherency; their corrupt nature sticks by them to the last. One compares it to a wild fig-tree, or to ivy in a wall; cut off the body, the boughs, sprigs, branches, yet still there will be something that will be sprouting up again until the wall be digged down. Such an indwelling sin is in us, though we pray, strive, and cut off the excrescences, the buddings out of it here and there, yet till it be plucked asunder by death, it continueth with us.

2. They have their daily failings and infirmities: Eccles. vii. 20, There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.' Those that for their general state are just and righteous men, yet certain sins they cannot get rid of, and are unavoidable; as sins of ignorance, incogitancy, sudden surreption, indeliberate incursions, which we shall never be freed from as long as we are in this imperfect state. So also imperfections of duty, for we cannot serve God with that high degree of reverence, delight, and perfection which he requireth There are unavoidable infirmities which are pardoned of course.

3. They may be guilty of some sins which by watchfulness might be prevented, as vain thoughts, idle, passionate speeches, and many carnal actions. It is possible that these may be prevented by the ordinary assistances of grace, and if we will keep a strict guard over our own hearts. But in this case God's children may be overtaken and overborne; overtaken by the suddenness, or overborne by the violence of temptation: overtaken, Gal. vi. 1, If a man be overtaken in a fault,

restore such an one,' &c.; and overborne, James i. 14, Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.'

4. They may now and then fall foully; as Noah by excess of drink, Lot's incest, David's adultery, Peter's denial. Failings and infirmities they are not determined either by the smallness or by the greatness of the act, but by other concomitant circumstances. Not by the smallness of the act. There is as much treason in coining pence as shillings and pounds. Allowed affection to small sins is deadly and damnable: he that is unfaithful in little will be unfaithful in much. Christians, where temptations are weak and impotent, and of slight concernment and importance, they may be sooner confuted, and obedience is the more easy; so that our rebellion to God by small sins may be greater. A man may have great affections to small sins; so it may prove an iniquity, a damnable sin.

On the other side, great sins may be infirmities; as Lot's incest, David's adultery, when they are not done with full consent of soul, when their hearts are not wholly carried away with them. Iniquities are determined by their manner: Jude 15, Their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed:' when with full consent of will, and it is their course that argues an habitual hatred and contempt of God.

5. A child of God may have some particular evils, which may be called predominant sins (not with respect to grace, that is impossible, that a man should be renewed and have such sins that sin should carry the mastery over grace); but they may be said to have a predominancy in comparison of other sins; he may have some particular inclination to some evil above others. David had his iniquity, Ps. xviii. 23. Look, as the saints have particular graces; Abraham was eminent for faith, Timothy for sobriety, Moses for meekness, &c.; so they have their particular corruptions which are more suitable to their temper and

course of life. Peter seems to be inclined to tergiversation, and to shrinking in a time of trouble. We find him often tripping in that kind; in the denial of his master; again, Gal. ii. 12, it is said he dissembled and complied with the Jews, therefore Paul withstood him to his face, for he was to be blamed.' It is evident by experience there are particular corruptions to which the children of God are more inclinable: this appears by the great power and sway they bear in commanding other evils to be committed, by their falling into them out of inward propensity when outward temptations are few or weak, or none at all; and when resistance is made, yet they are more pestered and haunted with them than with other temptations, which is a constant matter of exercise and humiliation to them.

Secondly, Wherein doth grace now discover itself, where is the difference?

1. In that they cannot fall into those iniquities wherein there is an absolute contrariety to grace, as hatred of God, total apostasy, so they cannot sin the sin unto death, 1 John v. 16.

2. In that they do not sin with the whole heart: Ps. cxix. 176, I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.' There was somewhat of God in the heart, when he was conscious to himself of strayings and wanderings; and David saith elsewhere, I have not departed wickedly from thy precepts.' When they sin, it is with the dislike and reluctancy of the new nature; it is rather a rape than a consent. Bernard saith, A child of God suffers sin rather than acts it, and his heart's protest is against it

3. It is not their course; not constant, easy, and frequent. Relapses into gross sins, they argue an habitual aversion from God, for a habit is determined by the constancy and uniformity of acts; therefore it is but now and then under some great temptation. There is sin, and there

is a way of sin: Ps. cxxxix. 24, Search me and see if there be any way of wickedness in me,' as Chrysostom glosseth.

4. When they fall they do not rest in sin: Shall they fall, and shall they not arise?' Jer. viii. 4. They may fall into the dirt, but they do not lie and wallow there like swine in the mire. A fountain may be mudded, but it works itself clean again. The needle that hath been touched with the loadstone may be jogged and discomposed, but it never leaves till it turns towards the pole again. God's children have their failings, but they sue out their pardon, run to their advocate, 1 John ii. 1, humble themselves before God.

5. Their falls are sanctified. When they have smarted under sin, they grow more watchful and more circumspect. A child of God may have the worse in proelio, in the battle, but not in bello, in the war. Some times the carnal part may get the victory, and they may fall foul, but see the issue: Ps. li. 6, In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.' David had sinned against the Lord, but I have learned wisdom, never to trust a naughty heart more, but to look to myself better.

6. Grace discovers itself by the constant endeavours which they make against sin. What is the constant course a Christian takes? They groan under the relics of sin; it is their burden that they have such an evil nature, Rom. vii. 24. They fly to God's grace in Christ for daily pardon, 1 John i. 9. They are ever washing their garments in the Lamb's blood, Rev. vii., and every day are cleansing themselves from the filthiness and defilement they contract by sin: John xiii. 10, He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet.' An allusion to a man that hath been a journey, in those countries where they went barefoot, when he came home he must wash his feet. So a man that is reconciled to God, though he hath been in the bath, in the fountain which God hath opened for uncleanness, yet every day he must be washing his feet,

cleansing himself by the blood of Christ more and more, because he contracts new defilement. Then by using all endeavours against it, Col. iii. 5; as prayer, striving, watching, cutting off the provisions of the flesh, improving the death of Christ. They do not voluntarily and without opposition live under sin, and the slavish tyranny of it. Their bent and habitual inclination is to do otherwise; therefore they are said to do no iniquity: whereas those that are reckless and careless of their souls, sin, and never lay it to heart; they are the workers of iniquity.

Use 2. If this be the character of a blessed man, to make it our business to avoid sin, then here is caution to God's people:

1. To beware of all sin.

2. To be very cautious against gross sins, committed against the light of conscience.

3. To beware of continuance in sin.

First, To beware of all sin. The more you have the mark of a blessed man: 1 John ii. 1, These things I write unto you, that you sin not.' Though you have a pardon and cleansing by the blood of Christ, though you have an advocate, yet sin not. Now the motives to set on this caution are taken from God, from ourselves, from the nature of sin.

1. From God. Sin not. Why? Because it is an offence to God. Consider how contrary sin is to all the persons in the Trinity. To God the Father as a lawgiver, being a contempt of his authority, 1 John iii. 4. Sin is anomian, a transgression of the law,' that is, an act of disloyalty and rebellion against the crown of heaven. Open sin doth as it were proclaim rebellion and war against God; and privy sin is conspiracy against him. All creatures have a law: Ps. cxlviii. 6, Thou hast set to them a decree, beyond which they cannot pass.' And they are less exorbitant in their motions than we are. It is a greater violation

to the law of nature for man to sin, than for the sea to break its bounds. The creatures have not sense and reason, yet they do not pass beyond the law which God hath set them. This should prevail with the new creature especially, whose hearts God hath suited to the law, so that they offer a violence to their own conscience. Take heed of entering into the lists with God, of despising his authority. Every sin that is committed slights the law which forbids it: 2 Sam. xii. 9, Wherefore despisest thou his commandments?' God stands much upon his law,--one tittle shall not pass away,--and you despise it, go about to make it void, when you give way to sin. Nay, it is an abuse of his love: 1 John iii. 1, Behold what manner of love the Father hath showed us;' you are children and sons of God, and will you slight his love? Your sins are like Absalom's treason against his father. The Rechabites are commended for keeping their father's command, Jer. xxxv. Set pots before them, &c.--No, our father hath forbidden us to drink wine. Their father was dead, but ours is living; will you that are sons renounce God, and side with the devil's party, and commit sin,--you to whom the Father hath showed such love that you should be called his children? Then it is a wrong to Jesus Christ--to his merit, to his example. To his merit. Christ came to take away sin, and will you bind those cords the faster which Christ came to loosen? Then you go about to defeat the purpose of his death, and put your Redeemer to shame. You seek to make void the great end for which Christ came, which was to dissolve sin. And, besides, you disparage the worth of the price he paid down; you make the blood of Christ a cheap thing, when you despise grace and holiness; you make nothing of that which cost him so dear--you lessen the greatness of his sufferings. And it is a wrong to his pattern. You should be pure as Christ is pure,' 1 John iii. 3; and ver. 7, be righteous as he is righteous.' You should discover what a holy person

Christ was, by a conformity to him in your conversation. Now, will you dishonour him? What a strange Christ will you hold forth to the world, when his name is upon you--will you give way to sin and folly? And it is a wrong to God the Spirit, a grief to him. His great and first work was to wash us from sin, Titus iii. 5. You forget that such a work was past upon your hearts, and that you have been purged from your old sins,' when you return to them again, 2 Peter i. 9; and his constant residence in the heart is to check the lusts of the flesh, to prevent the actings of sin. If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' Rom. viii. 13; therefore you go about to make void his personal operation. Thus it is a wrong to God.

2. By an argument drawn from ourselves; it is very unsuitable to you. We profess ourselves to be regenerate' and born of God: 1 John iii. 9, He that is born of God cannot sin.' It is not only contrary to thy duty, but to thy nature, as thou art a new creature. It were monstrous for the egg of one creature to bring forth a brood of another kind, for a crow or a kite to come from the egg of a hen. It is as unnatural a production for a new creature to sin; therefore you that are born of God, it is very uncomely and unsuitable. Do not dishonour your high birth.

3. Consider the nature of sin; if you give way to it, it will encroach further. Sins steal into the throne insensibly; and being habituated in us by long custom, we cannot easily shake off the yoke or redeem ourselves from their tyranny. They go on from little to little, and get strength by multiplied acts. Therefore we should be very careful to avoid all sin.

The second part of the caution is, beware of gross sins, committed against light and conscience. When we are tempted to sin, say with Joseph: Gen. xxxix. 9, How can I do this wickedness, and sin against

God?' The more of deliberation and will there is in any action, the sin is the fouler. Consider, foul sins are a blot that will stick long by us. See 1 Kings xv. 5; it is said, David walked in all the ways of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.' Why, there were many other things wherein David failed; you read of his diffidence and distrust in God: I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.' We read of his dissimulation, and feigning himself mad in the company of the Philistines. We read of his injustice to Mephibosheth, his fond affection to Absalom, his indulgence to Amnon. We read of his numbering the people, which cost the lives of thousands all on a sudden: all these are great failings, but these are not taken notice of; but the matter of Uriah left a scar and blot that was not easily washed off.

Thirdly, Beware of continuance in sin. How may we continue in sin? In what sense? Three things I shall take notice of in sin--culpa, reatus, macula; there is the fault, the guilt, the blot; and then we continue in sin, when the fault, the guilt, or blot is continued upon us.

1. The fault is continued when the acts of it are repeated, when we fall into the same sin again and again. Relapses are very dangerous, as a bone often broken in the same place; you are in danger of this, before the breach be well made up between God and you; as Lot doubling his incest: to venture once and again is very dangerous.

2. The guilt doth continue upon a man till serious and solemn repentance, till he sue out pardon in the name of Christ. Though a man should forbear the act, never commit it more; yet unless he retracts it by a serious remorse, and humbleth himself before God, and sueth out his pardon in a repenting way, the guilt continues. If we confess'--he speaks to believers--then sin is forgiven, not otherwise.

3. There is the macula, the blot, by which the schoolmen understand an inclination to sin again; the evil influence of the sin continueth until we use serious endeavours to mortify the root of it. When we have been foiled by any lust, that lust must be more mortified. For instance, Jonah, he repented for forsaking his call, when he was cast into the whale's belly; but the sin broke out again, because he did not mortify the root; what was that?--his pride. So that it is not enough to bewail the sin, but we must lance the sore, and discover the root and core of it before all will be well. A man may repent of the eruption of sin, the former act, but the inclination to sin again is not taken off. Judges xvi. 2. Sampson loves a woman of Gaza, and she had betrayed him; but by carrying away the gates of the city he saves his life: possibly upon that experience he might repent of his folly and inordinate love to that woman. Ay! but the root remains: therefore he falls in love with another woman, with Delilah. Therefore if you would do what is your duty, you must look to the fault, that that be not renewed; the guilt, that that be not continued by omission of repentance; and that the blot also do not remain upon you, by not searching to the root of the distemper, the cause of that sin by which we have been foiled. So much for the first part of the text, They do no iniquity.

The second note is, they walk in his ways. This is the positive part; not only avoiding of sin, but practice of holiness, is implied.

Observe--

Doct. 2. It is not enough only to avoid evil, but we must do good.

They do no iniquity;' then they walk in his ways.' Why?

1. The law of God is positive as well as negative. In every command there are precepts and prohibitions, that we might own God, as well as renounce the devil; and maintain communion with him, as well as avoid

our own misery: Amos v. 15, Hate the evil, and love the good;' Rom. xii. 9, Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.'

2. The mercies of God they are positive as well as privative. Our obedience should correspond with God's mercies. Now, God doth not only deliver us from hell, but he hath called us to glory. John iii. 16, The end of Christ's coming is, that we should not perish' (there is the privative part), but come to everlasting life' (there is the positive). In the covenant God hath undertaken to be a sun and a shield,' Ps. lxxxiv. 11; not only a sun, which is the fountain of life and vegetation and blessing, but a shield to defend us from danger in the world; therefore our obedience should be positive as well as privative.

Use. It reproves those that rest in negatives. As it was said of the emperor, he was rather not vicious than virtuous. Many men, all their religion runs upon nots: Luke xviii. 11, I am not as this publican.' That ground is naught, though it brings not forth briars and thorns, if it yields not good increase. Not only the unruly servant is cast into hell, that beat his fellow-servant, that ate and drank with the drunken, but the idle servant, that wrapped up his talent in a napkin. Meroz is cursed, not for opposing and fighting, but for not helping, Judges v. 23. Dives did not take away food from Lazarus, but he did not give him of his crumbs. Many will say, I set up no other gods; ay! but dost thou love, reverence, and obey the true God? In the second commandment, I abhor idols; but dost thou delight in ordinances? I do not swear and rend the name of God by cursed oaths; ay! but dost thou glorify God and honour him? I do not profane the Sabbath; but dost thou sanctify it? Thou dost not plough and dance; but thou art idle, toyest away the Sabbath. Thou dost not wrong thy parents; but dost thou reverence them? Thou dost not murder; but dost thou do good to thy neighbour? Thou art no adulterer; but dost thou study temperance and a

holy sobriety in all things? Thou art no slanderer; but art thou tender of thy neighbour's honour and credit as of thy own? Usually men cut off half their bill, as the unjust steward, when he owed a hundred, bade him set down fifty. We do not think of sins of omission. If we are not drunkards, adulterers, and profane persons, we do not think what it is to omit respects to God, and want of reverence to his holy majesty; to delight in him and his ways.

In the next place, take notice of the notion, by which the precepts of God are expressed; here they are called ways, that walk in his ways;' how is that?--not as he hath given us an example, to be holy as he is holy, just as he is just; but his ways are his precepts. Why are they his ways? Because they are appointed by God, and prescribed by him. Which shows the evil of defection and going astray from him. It is a despising God's wisdom and authority. The great and wise God hath found out a way for the creature to walk in, that he may attain true happiness; and we must still be running out into bypaths; yea, it is a despising of his goodness: He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;' how to walk step by step. Then they are God's ways, as they lead to the enjoyment of him. From thence we may learn that many that wish to be where he is, shall never come there, because they do not walk in the way that leads to him. A man can never come to a place, that will not go in the way that will bring him thither: so they will never come to the enjoyment of God in a blessed estate, that will not take the Lord's way to blessedness, that follow not the course God hath prescribed to them in his word.

Chapter 8

SERMON V.

Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.--Ver. 4.

THE Psalmist having laid down the description of the blessed man by the frame of his heart, and the course of his life, and the integrity of his obedience, he comes now to another argument whereby to enforce the entire observation of God's law. The argument in the text is taken from God's authority enjoining this course, and he propounds it by way of address and appeal to God for the greater emphasis and force, Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.'

In the words take notice of two things--

1. The fundamental ground and reason of our obedience, which is God's command or will declared in his word.

2. The manner of this obedience. God will not be put off with any thing, but served with the greatest diligence and exactness, to keep thy precepts diligently.' The Septuagint renders it, That thy commands should be kept exceeding much.'

In the first part take notice--

1. Of the lawgiver, thou.

2. His authority interposed, or positive injunction, hast commanded us. It is not left to our arbitrament whether we will take up the course which leads to true happiness, yea or nay.

3. The thing commanded, to keep thy precepts.

Doct. To gain the heart to a full obedience, it is good to consider the authority of God in his word.

There are many courses we must use to draw the heart to an obedience of God. We may urge--

1. The reasonableness of obedience; so that if we are left at our

liberty, we should take up the ways of God rather than any other: Rom. vii. 12, The commandment is holy, just, and good.' All that God hath required, it carrieth a great suitableness to the reasonable nature, so that if a man were well in his wits, and were to choose a law, he would of his own accord prefer the laws of God before liberty and any other service. Certainly there is an excellency in them which is in part discerned by carnal men; they admire those that practise the duties which God hath required, though they are loth to submit to them themselves. It is no heavy burden to live chastely, humbly, soberly, and to maintain a communion and correspondence with God; and whosoever doth so hath much the sweeter life of him that liveth sinfully. We may urge--

2. The profitableness of obedience, and how much it conduceth to our good: Deut. x. 13, The statutes which I command thee for thy good.' Our labour in the work of obedience is not lost or misspent. A godly course is refreshed with many sweet experiences for the present, and will bring in a full reward for the future.

3. The next motive is that of the text, to urge the command of God. It is a course enjoined and imposed upon us by our sovereign law giver. It is not in our choice, as if it were an indifferent thing whether we will walk in the laws of God or not, but of absolute necessity, unless we renounce the authority of God. This is the argument in the text, therefore let us see how it is laid down here.

[1.] Take notice of the lawgiver, thou. It is not our equal, or one that will be baffled, but the great God, upon whom thou dependest every moment. Men are easily carried away to please those that have power over them, even sometimes to the wrong of God and conscience: Hosea v. 11, Ephraim walked willingly after the commandment;' meaning Jeroboam's law for the worshipping the calves in Dan and Bethel. When we depend

upon men we consent to their commands, and study a compliance, though contrary to our own inclinations. And is not God's authority to be regarded? Surely he hath the greatest right to command us, for he made us--there is none hath such dominion and lordship over us as God hath; and our dependence upon him is more than can be upon any created being, for in him we live, and move, and have our being;' and therefore, thou hast commanded, this should be a powerful argument. And mark, none can enforce his command with such threatenings and rewards as he can. Not with such threats: Mat. x. 28, Fear not him that can kill the body, and after that hath no more,' &c. Men can threaten us with strapados, dungeons, halters, and other instruments of persecution; but God, with a pit without a bottom, with a worm that never dies, with a fire that shall never be quenched, with torments without end, and without ease. Then for rewards. As Saul said, Can the son of Jesse give you vineyards, and make you captains of fifties, of hundreds, and of thousands?' The world takes him to have most right to command that can bid most for our obedience. Who can promise more than God, who is a plentiful rewarder of them that diligently seek him'? Heb. xi. 6. Who hath told us of a kingdom prepared for us; of a body glorious like unto Christ's body; of a soul enlarged to the greatest capacities of a creature; and yet filled up with God, and satisfied with the fruition of himself. This is the person spoken of in the text, to whom the Psalmist saith, Thou hast commanded us.' And surely if we would willingly walk after any commandment, we should after the commandment of the great God.

[2.] The second circumstance is, hast commanded; he hath interposed his authority. Besides the particular precept and rule of duty, there are general commands or significations of God's authority to bind all the rest, Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts.' If the word of God,

or rule of obedience, were. only given us as a direction, we should regard it as coming from the wisdom of God. But now it is an injunction as coming from the authority of God; therefore in his name we may charge you, as you will answer it another day, that these precepts be dear and precious to you. Unless you mean to renounce the sovereign majesty of God, and put him besides the throne, and break out into open rebellion against him, you must do what he hath commanded: 1 Tim. i. 9, Charge them that be rich in the world,' &c., not only advise but charge them. And Titus ii. 15, These things exhort, and rebuke with all authority.' God will have the creatures know that he expects this duty and homage from them.

[3.] Here is the nature of this obedience, or the thing commanded, to keep thy precepts. What is that?--to observe the whole rule of faith and manners. Believing in Christ, that falls under a command: 1 John iii. 23, This is his command, that we should believe in him whom he hath sent.' Repentance is under a command: Acts xvii. 30, He hath commanded all men everywhere to repent.' Upon your peril be it, if you refuse his grace. So gospel obedience falls under a command, the great God hath charged us to keep all his precepts; to make conscience of all duties that we owe to God and man, Acts xxiv. 6; the smaller as well as the greater, Mat. v. 19. God counts his authority to be despised and laid aside, and the command and obligatory power of his law to be made void, if a man shall either in doctrine or practice count any transgression of his laws so light and venial as not to be stood upon, as if it were but a trifle. Christians, if we had the awe of God's authority upon our hearts, what kind of persons would we be at all times, in all places, and in all company? what a check would this be to a proud thought, a light word, or a passionate speech?--what exactness would we study in our conversations, had we but serious thoughts of the

sovereign majesty of God, and of his authority forbidding these things in the word!

To offer some reasons of the point, why it is of so much profit to consider the authority of God in the command.

1. Because then the heart would not be so loose, off and on in point of duty; when a thing is counted arbitrary (as generally we count so of strictness), the heart hangs off more from God. When we press men to pray in secret, to be full of good works, to meditate of God, to examine conscience, to redeem time, to be watchful, they think these be counsels of perfection, not rules of duty, enforced by the positive command of God; therefore are men so slight and careless in them. But now, when a man hath learned to urge a naughty heart with the authority of God, and charge them in the name of God, he lies more under the awe of duty. Hath God said I must search and try my ways, and shall I live in a constant neglect of it? Hath God bidden me to redeem my time, and shall I make no conscience how I waste away my precious hours? Hath God bidden me keep my heart with all keepings, and shall I let it run at large without any restraint and regard? It is my debt, and I must pay it, or I shall answer it at my peril in the great day of accounts; it is not only commended but commanded: 2 Kings v. 13, If the prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?'

2. We cannot be so bold and venturous in sinning, when we remember how the authority of God stands in the way: Prov. xiii. 13, He that fears the commandment, he shall be blessed;' not only the penalty, but the command. The heart is never right until we be brought to fear a commandment more than any inconveniencies whatsoever. To a wicked man there seems to be nothing so light as a command, and therefore he breaks through against checks of conscience. But a man that hath the

awe of God upon him, when mindful of God's authority, he fears a command. Jude 9, it is said of Michael the archangel, He durst not bring a railing accusation.' He had not the boldness, when the commandment of God was in his way.

3. Many times we are doubtful of success, and so our hands are weakened thereby. We forbear duty, because we do not know what will come of it. Now, a sense of God's authority and command doth fortify the heart against these discouragements: Luke v. 5, Master, we have toiled all the night, howbeit at thy command we will cast down the net.' A poor soul that hath long lain at the pool, that hath been labouring, following God from one duty to another, and nothing comes sensibly of it, yet at thy command,' &c., he will keep up his endeavours still. This is the very case in the text, Blessed is the man that keeps thy precepts, and that seeks him with the whole heart.' Then, presently, Thou hast commanded;' that is, though our obedience had no promise of reward, and our felicity were not proposed as the fruit of it, yet the command itself, and the authority of God, is a reason sufficient.

4. In some duties that are not evident by natural light, as believing and owning of Christ, the heart is more bound to them by the sense of a command, than by any other encouragement. It is God's pleasure it should be so: John vi. 29, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;' 1 John iii. 23, This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.' It is enough to set a servant about his work, that it is his master's pleasure. Thou dost not stand disputing whether thou shouldst repent or not, obey or not, abstain from fleshly idols, yea or nay, or from fornication. And why should you stand aloof from the work of faith, and doubt whether you should believe or not? We have many natural prejudices, but this, his command, is a mighty relief to the soul. It is his command we

should believe in his Son. It is not only a matter of comfort and privilege, but also a matter of duty and obedience; and therefore, though we have discouragements upon us--I am unworthy to be received to mercy--yet this will bend the heart to the work. God is worthy to be obeyed; it is his commandment. Thou dost not question whether thou shouldst grieve for thy sins--why should you question whether you should believe in Christ? If God had only given us leave to believe, we could not have had such an advantage, as now he hath interposed his authority, and commanded us to believe: Rejoice in the Lord; and again I say, Rejoice,' Phil. iv. If God had only given us leave to refresh ourselves in a sense of his love, it were an invaluable mercy; but we have not only leave to rejoice, but a charge. It is our duty to work up our heart to a comfortable sense of the love of God, and a fruition of his favour.

5. Obedience is never right but when it is done out of a conscience of God's authority, intuitu voluntatis. The bare sight of God's will should be reason enough to a gracious heart. It is the will of God; it is his command, So it is often urged: 1 Thes. iv. 3, the apostle bids them follow holiness, for this is the will of God, your sanctification.' And servants should be faithful in their burdensome and hard labours: 1 Peter ii. 15, For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' And 1 Thes. v. 18, In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ^ Jesus concerning you.' That is argument enough to a godly Christian, that God hath signified his will and good pleasure, though the duty were never so cross to his own desires and interests. They obey simply for the commandment sake, without any other reason and inducement. There is indeed ratio formalis, and ratio motiva. There are encouragements to God's service, but the formal reason of obedience is

God's will. And this is pure obedience, to do what he wills, because he wills it.

The uses are:--1. To exhort thee to take this course with thy naughty heart. When it hangs back from any duty, or from any course of strictness, urge it with the authority of God. These precepts are not the advices and counsels of men who wish well to us, and who would advise us to the best, but they are the commands of God, who must and will be obeyed. Or, when thou art carried out to any sin, it is forbidden fruit; there is a commandment in the way, and that is as terrible to a gracious heart as an angel with a flaming sword.

To back these thoughts, let me propound a few considerations.

Consider--

1. God can command what he will. He is absolute. His will is the supreme reason of all things. It is notable that God backs his laws with the consideration of his sovereignty. You shall do thus and thus. Why? I am the Lord.' That is all his reason, Lev. xviii. 4, 5. It is repeated in that and many places in the next chapter. The Papists speak much of blind obedience, obeying their superiors without inquiring into the reason of it. Surely we owe God blind obedience, as Abraham obeyed God, not knowing whither he went,' Heb. xi. 8. John Cassian makes mention of one who willingly fetched water near two miles every day, for a whole year together, to pour it upon a dead dry stick, at the command of his superior, when no reason else could be given for it. And I have read of another who professed that, if he were enjoined by his superior to put forth to sea in a ship that had neither mast, tackling, nor any other furniture, he would do it; and when he was asked how he could do this without hazard of his discretion, he answered, The wisdom must be in him that hath power to command, not in him that hath power to obey. Thus do they place merit in this blind obedience, in giving up

their wills absolutely to the power of their superior. Certainly, in God's commands, his sovereignty is enough; the uttermost latitude of this blind obedience is due to him. If he hath said it is his will, how contrary soever it be to our reason, lusts, interests, it must be done. It is enough for us to know that we are commanded. To command is God's part, and to obey that is ours, whatever shall be declared to be his will and pleasure.

2. God can most severely punish our disobedience, and therefore his commands should have a power upon us: James iv. 12, There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy;' with a destruction indeed, and salvation indeed. So there is but one lawgiver in this sense. He truly hath potestatem vitae et necis. God hath the power of life and death. Why? Because he can punish with eternal death, and bestow eternal life.

3. He is neither ignorant nor forgetful of our prevarications and disobedience. The Rechabites were tender of the commandment of their dead father, Jer. xxxv., who could not take cognisance of their actions: Our father commanded us.' Certainly we should be tender of the commands of the great God: Prov. xv. 3, The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.' He is not so shut up within the curtain of the heavens but that he takes notice how his laws are kept and observed. Saith the prophet to Gehazi, Went not my spirit with thee?' meaning his prophetical spirit. So doth God, as it were, appeal to the conscience of a sinner. Doth not my spirit go along with thee? Is not he conscious to our works, and observes all we do?

4. God stands much upon the authority of his law: Hosea viii. 12, I have written to them the great things of my law,' &c. Mark, he calls them the great things of his law;' they are not things to be slighted and contemned. They are not directions of little moment; there is no

small hazard in contemning them, or not walking according to them. Indeed, we think it a small matter to stand upon every circumstance; but God doth not think so. Uzzah was struck dead in the place for failing in a circumstance--he would stay the ark, which shook. The Bethshemites, sinning in a circumstance, it cost them the lives of many thousands. Lot's wife, for looking back, was turned into a pillar of salt. Let these things beget an awe upon our hearts of the great God, and of what he hath enjoined us.

Use 2. It informs us of the heinous nature of sin. Of sin in general, it is anomia , a transgression of the law,' 1 John iii. 4; that is, a contempt of God's authority. It is an unlording of him and putting him out of the throne. Every sin is an affront to God's authority; it is a despising of the command, 2 Sam. xii. 9; you rise up in defiance to God, and cast off his sovereignty in despising his command; more particularly, sins against knowledge, or against conscience. You may see the heinousness of these sins by this--all sins, they proceed either from ignorance, or from oblivion, or from rebellion. Sins of ignorance, they are not so heinous, though they are sins. A man is bound to know the will of his creator; but then ignorance of it is not so heinous. To strike a friend in the dark is not so ill taken as in the open light. So there are sins of oblivion, which is an ignorance for the time, for a man hath not such explicit thoughts as to revive his knowledge upon himself. He is overtaken, Gal. vi. 1. This a great sin too. Why? For the awe of God should ever be fresh and great upon the heart, and we are to remember his statutes to do them.' But now, there are sins of rebellion, that are committed against light and conscience, whether they be of omission or commission. We are troubled for sins of commission against light; we should be as much for sins of omission, for they are rebellions against God, when we omit a duty of

which we are convinced: James iv. 17, To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.'

Secondly, Come we to the manner of this obedience, Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. From thence note--

Doct. That we should not only do what God hath required, but we should do it diligently.

1. Because the matter of keeping God's precepts doth not only fall under his authority, but the manner also. God hath not only required service, but service with all its circumstances: 1 Cor. ix. 24, I so run that I may obtain.' It is our duty, not only to run, but so run, not as in jest, but as in good earnest: Rom. xii. 11, Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' Not only serving the Lord, but seething hot in spirit, when our affections are so strong that they boil over in our lives. And James v. 16, The fervent effectual prayer;' that prayer which hath a spirit and a life in it. Not only prayer is required, but fervency, not dead and drowsy devotion. So Luke vii. 18, not only it is required that we hear, but to take heed how we hear,' with what reverence and seriousness. And Acts xxvi. 7, The twelve tribes served God instantly, day and night,' with the uttermost extension of their strength, so the word signifies. And for charity, it is not enough to give, but with readiness and freeness. Be ready to communicate;' like life-honey it must drop of its own accord.

2. The manner is the great thing which God requires; it is very valuable upon several grounds: Prov. xvi. 2, The ways of man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.' What doth God put into the balance of the sanctuary when he comes to make a judgment? When he would weigh an action he weighs the spirits. He considers not only the bulk, the matter of the action, but the spirit, with what heart it was done. A man may sin in doing good, but he cannot sin in

doing well; therefore the manner should be looked to as well as the matter.

3. It is a good help against slightness. We are apt to put off God with anything, and therefore we had need to rouse up ourselves to serve him with diligence: Josh. xxiv. 19, You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a jealous God,' &c. It is another matter to serve the Lord than the world thinks of. Why? For he is holy and jealous; he is holy, and so hates the least failing; and very jealous, sin awakens the displeasure of his jealousy--he will punish for very little failings. Ananias and Sapphira struck dead in the place for one lie; Zacharias struck dumb for an act of unbelief; Moses, for a few rash words, never entered into the land of Canaan; David, for a proud conceit in numbering the people, lost seventy thousand men with the pestilence; the Corinthians, many of them died for unworthy receiving. God is the same God still: he hates sin as much as ever; therefore we should not be slight.

4. It is a dishonour to God to do his work negligently: Mal. i. 14, Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing, for I am a great king, saith the Lord;' implying that it is a lessening of his majesty. It is a sign we have cheap thoughts of God, when we are slight in his service. Christians, we owe our best to God, and are to serve him with all our might: Deut. vi. 5, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' It is a lessening of his excellency in our thoughts when everything serves the turn.

5. Keeping the commandment, it is a great trust. God hath left this trust with us that we should keep his precepts, therefore it is to be discharged seriously. A man is very careful that hath taken a trust upon him to preserve it. No men that have given up their names to Christ, but they have taken up this trust upon them to keep his

precepts; therefore we should do it with all diligence and needfulness of soul.

6. We have no other plea to evidence our sincerity; we are guilty of many defects, and cannot do as we would,--where lies our evidence then? When we set ourselves to obey, and aim at the highest exactness to serve him with our best affections and strength. A child of God, he doth not do all that God hath required, but he doth his best, and then that is a sign the heart is upright. For what is this diligence, but our utmost study and endeavour after perfection, to avoid all known evils, and to practise all known duties, and that with as much care as we can? Now, this is an argument of our sincerity, and then our slips are but failings which God will spare, pity, pardon: Mal. iii. 17, I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him,' &c. Where a man is careless, and failings are allowed, then they are iniquities. A father, out of indulgence, may pass by a failing when his son waits upon him, suppose when he spills the wine and breaks the glass; but surely will not allow him to throw it down carelessly or wilfully. We have no other plea to evidence our sincerity but this.

Use. It presseth us, whatever we do for the great God, to do it with all our might, Eccles. ix. 10. There is no weighty thing can be done without diligence; much more the keeping the commandment. Satan is diligent in tempting, and we ourselves are weak and infirm; we can not do the least thing as we should. And the danger of miscarrying is so great, that surely it will require all our care. Wherein should we show this diligence and exactness? When we keep all the parts of the law, and that at all times and places, and that with the whole man.

1. When we strive to keep the law in all the points of it. This was Paul's exercise: Acts xxiv. 16, To keep a good conscience void of offence both towards God and man.' Mark, here was his great business;

this is to be diligent, when a man labours to keep a good conscience always. And saith he, Herein, or upon this do I exercise myself; that is, upon this encouragement, upon hope of a blessed resurrection, for that is spoken of there. There are wages and recompenses enough in heaven, therefore we should not grudge at a little work, that we may not be drawn willingly from the least part of our duty.

2. When we do it at all times and places, and in all company, then it is a sign we mind the work, then are we diligent: Ps. cvi. 3, Blessed is he that doth righteousness at all times.' Not only now and then, but it is his constant course. We do not judge men's complexions by the colour they have when they sit before the fire. We cannot judge of men by a fit and pang when they are under the awe of an ordinance, or in good company; but when at all times he labours to keep up a warmth of heart towards God.

3. When he labours to do this with his whole man, not only in pretence, and with his body, or outward man, but with inward affections: Rom. i. 9, My God, whom I serve in the spirit.' And the true people of God are described: Phil iii. 3, To worship God in the spirit.' When they labour to bring their hearts under the power of God's precepts, and do not only mind conformity of the outward man, this is to keep the precepts of God diligently. All this is to be under stood, not in exact perfection; but it is to be understood of our striving, labouring, watching; of our praying, and of our exercising ourselves hereunto, that we may with our whole man come under the full obedience of the law of God, and may manifest it upon all occasions, at all times, in all companies and places; and this is an evidence of our sincerity.

SERMON VI.

Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!--Ver. 5.

IN the former verse he had spoken of God's authority; now he beggeth grace to obey: Thou hast commanded;' and Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!'

1. Note, that it is the use and duty of the people of God to turn precepts into prayers.

That this is the practice of God's children appeareth: Jer. xxxi. 18, Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.' God had said, Turn you, and you shall live;' and they ask it of God, Turn us,' as he required it of them. It was Austin's prayer, Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis, Give what thou requirest, and require what thou wilt.

It is the duty of the saints; for--1. It suiteth with the gospel-covenant, where precepts and promises go hand in hand, where God giveth what he commandeth, and worketh all our works in us,' and for us. They are not conditions of the covenant only, but a part of it.

What God hath required at our hands, that we may desire at his hands. God is no Pharaoh, to require brick where he giveth no straw. Lex jubet, gratia juvat. The articles of the new covenant are not only put into the form of precepts, but promises. The law giveth no strength to perform anything, but the gospel offereth grace. 2. Because by this means the ends of God are fulfilled. Why doth God require what we cannot perform by our own strength? He doth it--(1.) To keep up his right; (2.) To convince us of our impotency, and that upon a trial; without his grace we cannot do his work; (3.) That the creature may express his readiness to obey; (4.) To bring us to lie at his feet for grace.

Now, when we turn precepts into prayers, all these ends are accomplished.

[1.] To keep up his right. If we have lost our power, there is no reason God should lose his right. A drunken servant is under the obligation and duty of a servant still; he is unable to do his master's work, bat he is bound to it. It is unreasonable that another should surfer through my default. Well, then, God may well command the fallen creature to keep his precepts diligently. Now, when we deal earnestly with God about it, it argueth a sense of his authority upon our hearts. If we were not held under the awe of the commandment, why should we be so earnest about it? If men were more sensible of their obligations, we should have more prayers in this kind. This is the will of God, and how shall I do to observe it?

[2.] To convince us of our impotency, and that upon a trial. Practical conviction is best. We may discourse of the weakness and in sufficiency of the creature, but we are not affected with it till we try. A diseased man as long as he sits still feels not the lameness of his joints, but upon exercise it is sensible. Now, these prayers are a profession of weakness upon a trial: Rom. vii. 18, For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.' That presupposeth a search, not I cannot, but I find not, and then we run to prayer. Every prayer is an acknowledgment of our weakness and dependence. Who would ask that of another which he thinketh to be in his own power?

[3.] That the creature may express his readiness. God will have us will, though we cannot do. It is true he giveth both: Phil. ii. 13, For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' But the one by preventing, the other by assisting grace, Rom. vii. 18. Though we are unable to do what we should, yet it is the

desire of our hearts. Prayer is the expression of our desire. When we heartily beg grace, it is a sign the commandment is not grievous, but our lusts. It much discovereth a man's heart, what he counteth to be his bondage and the yoke: 1 John v. 3, For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.' Which do we groan under? the burden of the law, or the body of death? That is best seen by our heartiness in prayer.

[4.] To bring us to lie at his feet. God will be owned not only as a lawgiver, but as a fountain of grace. The precept cometh from God to drive us to God; his sovereignty maketh way for his grace. He calleth upon us for obedience, that we may call upon him for help. First, he giveth us a law, that he may afterwards give us a heart. God's end is to bring us upon our knees. As hard providences conduce to bring God and us together, so do hard commandments. Till we be reduced to a distress, we never think seriously of dealing with God.

Use. It teacheth us what to do when we meet with anything that is difficult and impossible to us; as to repent, believe, to renounce a bewitching lust, or perform a spiritual duty. Two ways we are apt to miscarry in such a case; either by murmuring against God, as if he were harsh and austere, and had reaped where he hath not sown, and gathered where he hath not strewed;' or by casting off all out of a foolish despondency: cut at heart, or else wax faint. These are the two evils. I shall never get rid of this naughty heart. Or else we fret against God: Prov. xix. 3, The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord.' Now to prevent these evils, spread the case before the Lord in this manner--

(1.) Acknowledge the debt. God will keep up the sense of his authority; his command must be the reason of our care, as well as his promise the ground of our hope. (2.) Confess your impotency: 2 Cor. iii. 5, Not

that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.' This is to empty the bucket before we go to the fountain. When we are full of self, there is no room for grace. (3.) Own God's power: Mat. xix. 26, But Jesus beheld them, and saith unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.' The difficulties that we meet with in the way to heaven should serve only to make us despair of our own strength and abilities, not of God's, with whom nothing is impossible. It is a relief to consider of the divine power, from whence we fetch all our supplies necessary to life and godliness. (4.) Deal with God earnestly about help. The command showeth how pleasing such requests are to God, and you own God not only as a lawgiver, but author of grace. Do not come in a lukewarm, careless fashion, but Oh that my heart were directed!' Sluggish wishes will do no good; you bespeak your own denial when you ask grace as a thing of course: Jer. xxxi. 18, I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.'

2. The next thing that we may note, is the serious desire that is in God's people after holiness. Mark, it is not a velleity, but a volition, Oh that, noteth the vehemency and heartiness.

It is his first desire. David had hitherto spoken assertively; when he cometh to speak supplications, his first and chief request to God is, Oh that my ways were directed!' &c.

Mark again, it is not a desire of happiness, but holiness; not Oh that I were blessed!' but Oh that my ways were directed!' A mind to know, a will to obey, and a memory to keep in mind God's precepts.

It is practical holiness: Oh that my ways!' God hath his ways: They walk in his ways,' ver. 3. And we have our ways: Oh that my ways were

directed!' that is, all my thoughts, counsels, inclinations, speeches, actions, were directed by thy statutes. Every commandment is a royal edict, a statute which God hath made for the governing of the world.

Now the saints have this desire of holiness--

[1.] From the new nature that is in them. The appetite followeth the nature: Gal. v. 17, The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; go that ye cannot do the things that ye would.' Desires being the vigorous bent of the soul, discover the temper of it. The carnal nature puts forth itself in lustings, so doth the new nature. The main thing we have by grace is a new heart, that is, new loves, new desires, and new delights: Rom. viii. 5, For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit.'

[2.] Out of love to God, which implieth subjection and conformity to him. Love to God is testified by a desire of subjection; for his love is a love of bounty, ours a love of duty: 1 John v. 3, For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.' It is the great desire of their souls that they may be subject to God. As he that loveth would not offend the party loved, so it is their desire to please God in all things; and as holiness implieth a conformity to God, they study to be like him. It is their hope, their desire, their care. Their hope: 1 John iii. 2, But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.' It is their desire and care in every ordinance: 2 Cor. iii. 18, But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' And it is their constant endeavour: 1 Peter i. 15, But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all

manner of conversation.'

[3.] Out of experience of the ways of God, of that goodness and enlargement of heart that is to be found in them. They have tasted and seen how good his laws are. They can answer God's appeal, Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?' Yea, doubt less, it is good: Ps. xix. 10, 11, The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward.' The spiritual life is interlined and refreshed with many sweet experiences.

The use here is, first, a note of discovery; for men are judged by their desires, rather than their practices, as being freest from constraint; and this is humbly represented by the children of God, to incline his favour and compassion to them: Neh. i. 11, Let thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name.' They come short in many things, but they desire to fear God: Isa. xxvi 8 The desires of our soul are to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.' They could speak little of what they had done for God Paul was better at willing than performing, till freed from this body of death:' Rom. vii. 18, For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.' This will be our best evidence to the last, Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!'

But may not wicked men have good desires?

Ans. They may have a loose inclination to good things, but not a full resolution for God. Wicked men have an enlightened conscience, but no renewed wills. This enlightened conscience may carry them so far, as to some general approbation of the things of God, which may produce a wish that they were so and so; but this doth no good to the heart. Sparks do

not kindle the fire, but coals: a spark is enough to set us on fire in carnal matters, but not in spiritual. More distinctly--

[1.] Wicked men may desire their own happiness, though not upon God's terms: Num. xxiii. 10, Oh that I might die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!' At oportuit sic vixisse. John vi. 34, Evermore give us of this bread' of life. Everyman would be blessed, and go to heaven, if it were left to his option and choice; they like the end, but not the means. There was not a murmuring Israelite but would count Canaan a good land; but the giants and sons of Anak were there.

[2.] They may have some languid and vanishing motions towards the means as well as the end, being convinced of the necessity of holiness; yea, they may draw out their wishes into a cold prayer that God would make them better; as lazy persons sometimes express their desires, Would I were at such a place, and never travel! Would I had written such a task, and never put pen to paper!--Vellent sed nolunt. When it cometh to trial, they do not set themselves in good earnest to get that grace they wish for.

What is the difference between a volition and a velleity?

(1.) Such desires as are not waving, but resolute and fixed. Aquinas saith, Velleitas est voluntas incompleta, a half will. They have a month's mind to that which is good, but not a thorough resolution; as Agrippa, almost persuaded, but not altogether; such a desire as will bear up against a strong tide of opposition. It is called the setting of the heart:' 1 Chron. xxii. 19, Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.' Whatever cometh of it, they must and will have grace: Ps. xxvii. 4, One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.'

(2.) Such desires as are absolute, and do not stand upon terms. There is an hypothetical and conditional will. We would, but with such conditions. I would have Christ, if it did not cost me so dear--to deny lusts, interests, friends, relations, much waiting, praying, watching, striving. So Mat. xxii. 5, they would come to the supper; but house, oxen, farm, merchandise--there was something in the way that hindered them: there was no full and perfect will. A chapman no doubt would have the wares he liketh, but will not come to the price. I will have heaven, whatever it cost me, is the voice of a desiring saint.

(3.) Such desires as are active and industrious; not a remiss will: Prov. xiii. 4, The soul of the sluggard, desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.' Cold, raw wishes are unuseful and fruitless; we must work as well as wish. Poor, languid, inactive desires come to nothing, when men do not put forth their endeavours, and apply themselves to the prosecution of what is desired. Faint and sluggish velleities do hurt: Prov. xxi. 25, The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuseth labour.' Whatever a man doth seriously desire to have, he will use proper means to procure it. Wishes are but the fruits of a speculative fancy, rather than an industrious affection.

(4.) Such desires as are constant, and not easily controlled by other desires. Idle, lazy wishes, ineffectual glances, sudden motions, while their hearts are detained in the speculation of holiness, are like children's desires, soon put out of the humour. There may be vehement and sudden lustings in an unregenerated person; free-will hath its pangs of devotion. But the apostle declares: Rom. vii. 18, To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.' It is a constant habitual will, not a volatile devotion, that cometh upon us now and then; but such a will as is present, as sin is present. He

had said before, When I would do good, evil is present with me.' Whithersoever you go, you carry a sinning nature about with you. It is present, urging the heart to vanity, folly, lust; so should this will be present with you, urging the heart to good.

(5.) Such desires are joined with serious groans and sorrow for our defects. He cannot be so good as he would, but desireth and complaineth; therefore God accepteth of the will for the deed: Rom. vii. 24, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Though an unrenewed man seem to desire grace, yet he feeleth no grief in the want of grace, it never troubleth him; his desires do not break out into groans and bitter complaints, because of indwelling corruption. Now, by these things may you try your hearts.

3. The third thing observable from hence, is the necessity of directing grace, Oh that my ways were directed!'

I shall first premise some distinctions--

[1.] There is a general direction, and a particular direction. (1.) The general direction is in the word; there God hath declared his mind in his statutes: He hath showed thee, O man, what is good,' Micah vi. 8. (2.) A particular direction by his Spirit, who doth order and direct us how to apply the rule to all our ways: Isa. lviii. 11, The Lord shall guide thee continually.' Now, this particular direction is either to our general choice: Ps. xvi. 7, I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel.' It is the work of God only to teach us how to apply the rule so as to choose him for our portion. Or secondly, as to acts and orderly exercise of any particular grace; so 2 Thes. iii. 5, The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.' Or thirdly, as to the management of our civil actions; as the pillar of the cloud went before the Israelites in their journeys, so doth God still guide his people in all their affairs, both as to

duty and success. As to duty: Prov. iii. 6, In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' Ask his counsel, leave, and blessing: in doubtful things ask his counsel; in clear cases ask his leave, Shall I go up or not?' and then ask his blessing. As to success: Prov. xvi. 9, A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps.' Events cross expectation; we cannot foresee the event of things in the course of a man's life, what is expedient, and what not: Prov. xx. 24, Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man, then understand his own way?' We purpose and determine many things rightly, and according to rule, but God disposeth of all events: Rom. i. 10, Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God, to come unto you.' God brought Paul to Rome by a way he little thought of. Therefore we need to call God to counsel, and to inquire of the oracle in all matters that concern family, commonwealth, or church. We need a guide: Jer. x. 23, O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; neither is it in man that walketh to direct his steps.' Affairs do not depend on our policy or integrity, but on the divine providence, who ordereth every step, to give such success as he pleaseth.

[2.] Distinction. There is a literal direction, and an effectual direction. (1.) The literal direction is by that speculative knowledge that we get by the word: Ps. cxix. 105, Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,' sufficient not only for general courses, but particular actions. (2.) The effectual direction is by the Holy Ghost applying the word, and bending the heart to the obedience of it: Isa. lxi. 8, I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them,'--that is, I will so show them their way, as to work their hearts to the sincere obedience of it.

Now, to give you the reasons for the necessity of this direction, three

things prove it--

(1.) The blindness of our minds. We are wise in generals, but know not how to apply the rule to particular cases. The heathens were vain en tois dialogismois, in their imaginations.' Rom. i. 21. And the same is true of us Christians: though we have a clearer knowledge of God, and the way how he will be served and glorified; yet to suit it to particular cases, how dark are we! A dial may be well set, yet, if the sun shine not upon it, we cannot tell the time of the day. The scriptures are sufficient to make us wise; but without the light of the Spirit, how do we grope at noonday!

(2.) The forgetfulness of our memories. We need a monitor to stir up in us diligence, watchfulness, and earnest endeavours: Isa. xxx. 21, And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.' The cares and businesses of the world do often drive the sense of our duty out of our minds. One great end of God's Spirit is to put us in remembrance, to revive truths upon us in their season. A ship, though never so well rigged, needs a pilot; we need a good guide to put us in mind of our duty.

(3.) The obstinacy of our heart. So that we need every moment to enforce the authority of God upon us; and to persuade us to what is right and good. The Spirit's light is so directive, that it is also persuasive; there needs not only counsel, but efficacy and power. We have boisterous lusts, and wandering hearts; we need not only to be conducted, but governed. We have hearts that love to wander,' Jer. xiv. 10; we are sheep that need a shepherd, for no creature is more apt to stray: Ps. xcv. 10, It is a people that do err in their hearts:' not only ignorant, but perverse; not in mind only apt to err, but love to err. Thus you see the necessity of this direction, Oh that my ways were

directed to keep thy statutes!'

The uses. Well, then, give the Lord this honour, of being your continual guide: Ps. xlviii. 14, For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.' You do not own him as a God, unless you make him your guide: Ps. lxxiii. 24, Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.' In vain do you hope for eternal life else. Therefore--

1. Commit yourselves to the tuition of his grace. A man is to choose God for a guide, as well as to take him for a lord; to ask his counsel as well as submit to his commandments: Jer. iii. 4, Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?'

2. Depend upon him in every action. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord;' all his particular actions: Rom. viii. 26, For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.'

3. Seek his counsel out of a desire to follow it: John vii. 17, If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' Still walk according to light received, and it will increase upon you. Such as make conscience of known truth shall know more. He that cometh with a subjected mind, and fixed resolution to receive and obey, shall have a discerning spirit. God answereth men according to the fidelity of their own hearts.

SERMON VII.

Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.--Ver. 6.

THE Psalmist had prayed for direction to keep God's commandments: here he showeth the fruit and benefit of that direction.

In the words two things are observable--

1. The description of sincere obedience: respect to all the commandments.

2. The fruit of it: then shall I not be ashamed.

First, Observe; a sincere heart aimeth at universal obedience to God's law. Here are to be illustrated--

1. All thy commandments.'

2. Having respect' to them. The object; and the act of the soul.

[1.] All the commandments must be taken notice of, small and great.

(1.) Small, we cannot dispense with ourselves in the least: Mat. v. 19, Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.' We are apt to say, It is but a little one, and my soul shall live.' No sin can be little that is committed against the great God. It argueth the more wickedness and corruption to break with God upon every trifling occasion. A little force will make a heavy body move downward.

(2.) As small, so great. The ceremonialist is apt to stand much upon lesser things: John xviii. 28, the Jews would not enter into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled, yet they sought the life of the Lord of glory. Hypocrites make a great business about small matters, and in the meantime reject weighty duties, ta barutera tou nomou: Mat. xxiii. 23, Ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and

have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and riot to leave the other undone;' like one that cometh into a shop to buy a pennyworth and steals a pound's worth, or is punctual in paying a small debt that he may get deeper into our books, and cheat us of a greater sum, comply in circumstances and terms, which yet have their place, but make no conscience of greater.

[2.] Commandments that require public, and commandments that require private duties: 2 Cor. vii. 1, Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' In times of trouble men content themselves that their hearts are right, as the libertines in Corinth, and think it is no matter whether they own God publicly, yea or nay. Then for private duties, some make a fair show to the world, but in their family converse are loose and careless: David saith, Ps. ci. 2, I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.' If a man be truly holy he will show it at home as well as abroad; in his family, where his constant converse is, yea, in his closet and secret retirements. A Christian is alike everywhere, because God is alike everywhere. We strain ourselves to put forth our gifts in public; God will be served with our uttermost in secret also.

[3.] There are commandments that concern the inward as well as the outward man; we must make conscience of both: Isa. lv. 7, Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy,' &c. We must not only make conscience of our way, or outward actions, but also of our thoughts; as we must not do evil before man, so not think evil before God. Thoughts fall under a law as well as our actions: James iv. 8, Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye

sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.'

[4.] There are commands that concern God, and commands that concern man. There is a first table and a second; some are very punctual in dealing with men, but neglectful of God: Rom. i. 18, The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.' Both the tables are owned from heaven. Some there are that will not wrong their neighbour of a farthing, yet stick not to rob God of that fear, faith, and love that is due to him. Many will not defile their bodies with promiscuous copulation, but are adulterers and adulteresses, James iv. 4, running a-whoring from their spiritual husband, and doting on the creature. Many there are who condemned the rebellion of Absalom, but rise up against their heavenly Father; are not murderers, but strike at the being of God. Some there are who are very tender of wronging the reputation of men, yet dishonour God, and are never troubled for it. Others there are who are much in worship, but in their dealings with men are very unconscionable: they will not swear an oath, yet are very uncharitable, censuring their brethren without any pity or remorse. This is the fashion of the world, to be in with one duty, and out with another. The commandments are ushered in with this preface, God spake all these words;' he that hath enjoined one hath enjoined another. But now, as the echo rendereth but part of the speech, so do we in our return of obedience. God spake all, and we return but part.

2. Having respect unto the commandments; that needeth illustration also. Though we cannot keep all, or any one of them as we should, yet we must have regard to all, and that equally without any distinction. When have we an equal respect to all? I answer, Three ways--(1.) Proposito; (2.) Affectu; (3.) Conatu.

[1.] Proposito, in vow and purpose. We must approve of all, and choose

all for our rule, without reservation and indulgence. Some commands are more contrary than others to our lusts and interests, and are less in our power to perform. Now, a sanctified judgment must approve all, and a sanctified will accept and choose all as equally good, necessary, and profitable for us: Rom. vii. 12, The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good'--the law in general, nay, that commandment which had wrought such tragical effects in his heart. It is holy, as being the copy of God's purity; just, as doing us no wrong, being no infringement of our just freedom; good, as being very profitable to direct and perfect our operations, and to make us happy here and hereafter. But this approbation is not enough, there must be consent: ver. 16, I consent to the law that it is good,' though it is contrary to my natural inclinations. It is a good law, the heart must be engaged, I will write my laws upon their hearts, and put them into their minds.' God doth not only give us a knowledge, or a single approbation of his will, but a will to choose it as our rule to live by. The heart is suited and inclined to it, and a man giveth up himself faithfully and entirely to serve God according to the direction of his word.

[2.] Affectu. There must be a sincere affection to all, or a care to keep them. We must not entertain affection to any known sin: Ps. lxvi. 18, If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me.' A man may have a great deal of sin in his heart, but if he cherish and dandle it, and have a regard to it, he is one whom God will not accept His desire is not to offend God, and it is his trouble when corruption gets the start of grace. If a king warneth a city of traitors, and calleth upon them to search them out, and send them away, and they never regard the message, but willingly give them harbour and entertainment, then it is a sign they are disaffected to him: to cherish a sin after warning is

an open rebellion against God.

[3.] Conatu, in endeavour. We must keep all, conatu, licet non eventu; it is our labour, though not our success. Those that dispense with any commandment voluntarily and willingly, have never yet learned the way of true obedience to God: 2 Kings v. 18, In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.' This is to set up a toleration in our hearts, and to make Satan some allowance, to part stakes between God and the devil. There is something wherein we would be excused, and expect favour in fashions, customs, ways of profit and advantage. The endeavour must be to keep all, though the success be not answerable. A mariner that is beaten back by the winds, yet proveth [4] to hold on his course to make his port. A man that would sit warm shutteth the door and windows, yet the wind will creep in, though he doth not leave any open passage for it.

Now, the reasons why we are to have respect to all the commandments are these following:--

1. Because they are all ratified by the same authority. There is a connection between them, as there is between links in a chain; take away one, and all falleth to pieces: James ii. 10, For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.' The authority of the law is lost if men may pick and choose as they please. He that said, Thou shalt do no murder,' hath also said, Thou shalt keep my Sabbaths.' A quatenus ad omne, the argument holds. Do one thing as a duty, and that will enforce the practice of all duties that we are convinced of: Col. i. 10, Walk worthy of God in all well-pleasing.' He that seeketh not to please God in all things,

seeketh not to please God in anything.

2. Because in conversion grace is given to observe all. There is a universal principle to incline the heart impartially to all. God infuseth all grace together; not one particular only in the hearts of his children, but the whole law. There is a form of grace introduced into the soul that suits with every point of the law. The heart is framed to resist every sin, to observe all that God hath commanded. A new-born infant hath all the parts of a man, though not the strength and bulk; so every Christian in regeneration. Men may be born without hands or feet, but the new creature never cometh out maimed and imperfect. It is small and weak at first, but it groweth and gathereth strength. There is no commandment to which it is not suited. Well, then, not to have respect to all were to hide our talent in a napkin, and to receive one of God's best gifts in vain. The apostle inferreth it out of their calling: 1 Peter i. 15, But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy, en pase anastrophe, in all manner of conversation,' at home and abroad, among infidels and with their fellow Christians, in prosperity and in adversity, walk worthy of your calling. As the sun is placed in heaven, and spreadeth his beams everywhere, nothing is hidden from his light; or as the lines run from the centre to every part of the circumference, so doth grace distil itself in a uniform obedience.

3. A Christian can never be perfect in degrees if he be not perfect in parts. What is defective in the parts cannot be made up by any growth. If a man should be born without an arm or a leg, this cannot be supplied by future growth, he is a maimed man still; so if a man be not perfect in parts, hath not respect to all the commandments, he can never be perfect in heaven. You cannot be presented as perfect in Christ Jesus,' Col. i. 28.

4. They that do not obey all, will not long obey any; but where profit or lust requireth it, they will break all, as Mark vi. 20, Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy, and observed him; and when he heared him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.' But one command stuck with him; being pleased with Herodias and the dancing damsel, that bringeth him to murder, &c. Keep but your passion a-foot, or your lust a-foot, or your worldliness a-foot, and it will carry you farther. One sin keepeth possession for Satan; allow but one lust and corruption in the heart, and that will under mine all, and become thine eternal ruin; as one leak may sink a ship. A bird tied by the leg, may make some show of escape. You never totally renounced Satan's government, and wholly gave up yourselves to God. By keeping a part, the whole falleth to his share.

Use 1. It reproveth those that make one duty excuse another. Two sorts there are,--some that go from sins to duties, and others from duties to sins, that antedate or postdate indulgences. (1.) Those that antedate, that hope to make amends for their evil course by their duties, as when men allow themselves in a present carnal practice^ upon the purpose of an after-repentance. It is as if men should distemper the body by excess, and then hope to amend all by giving themselves a vomit; or contract a sickness voluntarily, because they will take physic. Certainly men would not sin so freely, if they were not borne up by promises of future reformation. (2.) That post date. They go from duties to sins: Ezek. xxxiii. 13, When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.' If he shall commit a sin upon that confidence of his own righteousness. Josiah's breach with God, was after the preparing of the temple, 2 Chron. xxxv.

20; even God's children take the more carnal liberty because of their duties.

Use 2. Is trial. Have we this sincere respect to all the commandments? This may be known--

1. By a constant desire, resolution, and endeavour to be informed of God's will: Rom. xii. 2, And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, that acceptable and perfect will of God.' And Eph. v. 17, Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.' A man that desireth to follow God fully, would fain know the whole latitude and breadth of his duty. A child of God is inquisitive. He that desireth to keep all, doth also desire to know all. It is his business to study the mind of God in all things; gross negligence showeth we are afraid of understanding our duty.

2. By often searching and trying his own heart, that he may find where the matter sticketh: Lam. iii. 40, Let us search and try our ways, that we may turn unto the Lord.' Complete reformation is grounded on a serious search. A chief cause of our going wrong is because we do not bring our hearts and ways together.

3. Desire God to show it if there be anything in the heart allowed contrary to the word: Job xxxiv. 32, That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.' And Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24, Search me, God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked thing in me; and lead me in the way everlasting.' He would not hold on in any evil course. There is no sin so dear and near to him which he is not willing to see and judge in himself.

4. When they fail through human infirmity or imprudence, they seek to renew their peace with God: 1 John ii. 1, My little children, these

things write I unto you that ye sin not; and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' They sue out their discharge in Christ's name. If a man were unclean under the law, he was to wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water before evening, and not rest in his uncleanness. Now if we still abide in our filthiness, and do not fly to our advocate, and sue out our pardon in Christ's name, it argueth that we have not a respect to the commandment.

5. They diligently use all holy means which are appointed by God for growth in faith and obedience: 2 Cor. vii. 1, Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,' and coming up to a greater conformity.

6. A care of their bosom-sin, to get that weakened: Ps. xviii. 23, I was also upright before him; and I kept myself from mine iniquity.' Such as are most incident to us by temper of nature, course of life, or posture of interests; the right hand must be cut off, the right eye plucked out, Mat. v. 29, 30. If thou seekest to cross that sin that is most pleasing to thine own heart, seekest to dry up that unclean issue that runneth upon thee; by that and the other signs may we determine whether we have a sincere respect to all God's commandments.

Secondly, The next circumstance in the text is the fruit and benefit. They that have an entire respect to God's laws shall not be ashamed. There is a twofold shame: the shame of a guilty conscience, and the shame of a tender conscience.

The one is the merit and fruit of sin; the other is an act of grace. This here spoken of is to be understood not of a holy self-loathing, but a confounding shame.

This shame may be considered either with respect to their own hearts, or the world, or before God at the day of judgment.

1. With respect to their own hearts; and thus the upright and sincere shall not be ashamed. There is a generous confidence bewrayed in duties, in troubles, and in death. (1.) In duties. They can look God in the face; uprightness giveth boldness; and the more respect we have unto the commandments, the greater liberty have we in prayer: 1 John iii. 21, If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.' But when men walk crookedly and loosely, they sin away the liberty of their hearts, and cannot come to God with such a free spirit. A man that hath wronged another, and knoweth not how to pay, cannot endure to see him; so doth sin work a shyness of God. (2.) In troubles and afflictions. Nothing sooner abashed than a corrupt conscience; they cannot hold up their heads when crossed in the world; a burden sits very uneasy upon a galled back; their crosses revive their guilt, are parts of the curse; therefore they are soon blank. But now a godly man is bold and courageous. Two things make one bold, innocency and independency; and both are found in him that hath a sincere respect to God's commandments. Innocency, when the soul doth not look pale under any secret guilt, and when we can live above the creatures, it puts an heroical spirit or lion-like boldness into the children of God. (3.) In death. To be able to look death in the face, it is a comfort in your greatest distresses. When Hezekiah was arrested with the sentence of death in the mouth of the prophet, here was his comfort and support, O Lord, thou knowest that I have walked before thee with a perfect heart.' And Job xiii. 15, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'

2. Before the world, a man will be able to hold up his head that is sincere. It is true, he may be reproached and scoffed at, and suffer disgrace for his strictness; yet he is not ashamed. Though we displease men, yet if we please God, it is enough, if we have his approbation: 1

Cor. iv. 3, With me it is elachiston, a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment.' To depend on the words of man is a foolish thing. There is more ground of rejoicing than of shame. You have the approbation of their consciences, when not of their tongues. In the issue God will vindicate the righteousness of his faithful servants: Ps. xxxvii. 6, He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.' There will be no cause in the issue for a Christian to repent of his strict observance of God's commands.

3. Before God at the day of judgment: 1 John ii. 28, And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.' He is the brave man that can hold up his head in that day. Wicked men will then be ashamed--(1.) Because their secret sins are then divulged and made public: 1 Cor. iv. 5, Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, will who both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart, and then shall every man have praise of God.' (2.) Because of the frustration of their hopes. Disappointment bringeth shame. Some do many things, and make full account of their acceptance with God and reception to glory; but when all is disappointed, how much are they confounded! Rom. v. 5, Hope maketh not ashamed,' because it is not frustrated. (3.) By the contempt and dishonour God puts upon them, banishing them out of his presence. They become the scorn of saints and angels: Dan. xii. 2, And many of them that sleep in the dust shall arise, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.' But now the godly are bold and confident: Ps. i. 5, The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;' but the godly shall lift up their head with joy and rejoicing.

Now the reasons of this.

Where sin is not allowed, there is a threefold comfort. (1.) Justification: 1 John i. 7, But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' It is an evidence that giveth us the comfort. He hath failings, but they are blotted out for Christ's sake. (2.) It is an evidence of sanctification, that a work of grace hath passed upon us: 2 Cor. i. 12, For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward;' Heb. xiii. 18, We trust that we have a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly.' A universal purpose and an unfeigned respect hath the full room of an evidence. (3.) A pledge of glory to ensue: Rom. v. 5, And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Use. It informeth us, by the rule of contraries, that we deceive ourselves if we look for anything from sin but shame: Rom. vi. 21, For the wages of sin is death.' Sin and shame entered into the world together. How were Adam and Eve confounded after the fall! Sin is odious to God, it grieveth the Spirit; but the person that committeth it shall be filled with shame. In the greatest privacy, sin bringeth shame. Men are not solitary when they are by themselves; there is an eye and ear which seeth and observeth them. There is a law in our hearts which upbraids our sins to us as soon as we have committed them--a secret bosom-witness.

2. It informeth us what hard hearts they have that have respect to no commandments, yet are not ashamed. They have outgrown all feelings of conscience, and so glory in their shame:' Phil. iii. 19, Whose end is

destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.' Erubuit, salva res est. By how much less they are ashamed now, the more they shall be; their shamelessness will increase their shame: Jer. iii. 3, Thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.' The conscience of a sinner is like a clock, dull, calm, and at rest, when the weights are down; but wound up, it is full of motion.

3. Here is caution to God's children. The less respect you have to the commandments, the more shame will you have in yourselves. Partiality in obedience breaketh your confidence, and over-clouds your peace. Therefore, that we may not blemish our profession, let us walk more exactly. So shall we not be ashamed when we have respect to all God's commandments.'

Chapter 11

SERMON VIII

I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.--Ver. 7.

IN this verse David expresseth his esteem of the word, by telling what he would give for the knowledge and practice of it. As we use to tell a man how thankful we would be if he would do thus and thus for us; so, Lord, if thou wilt give me to learn thy righteous judgments, then I will praise thee, &c.

His promise of praise manifesteth his esteem, which should affect our stupid hearts. The canon is now larger, and the mysteries of the word are more clearly unfolded. If the saints of God were so taken with it before, when there were so scanty and dark representations in comparison of what is now, oh, what honour and praise do we now owe to God!

In this verse observe--

1. The title that is given to the word, thy righteous judgments.

2. His act of duty about it, or the benefit which he desireth, sound erudition, when I shall have learned.

3. The fruit of this benefit obtained, then will I praise thee.

4. The manner of performing this duty, with uprightness of heart.

First, The title that is given to the word, Thy righteous judgments.' or as it is in the margin, The judgments of thy righteousness.' Hence observe--

Doct. God's precepts are, and are so accounted of by his people as, righteous judgments, or judgments of righteousness.

There are two terms to be explained--

1. What is meant by judgments.

2. By righteousness.

For the first. Righteousness is sometimes put alone for the word, and so also judgments (as we shall find in this psalm); but here both are put together to increase the signification. The precepts of the word are called judgments for two reasons--

1. Because they are the judicial sentence of God concerning our state and actions.

2. Because of the suitable execution that is to follow.

1. They are the judicial sentence of God concerning our state and actions. The judicial sentence; that is, they are the decrees of the almighty lawgiver, given forth with an authority uncontrollable. A man may appeal from the sentence of men, but this is judgment. This is as certain as if he were executed presently. There is injustice and oppression many times in the courts of men, but there is a higher than the highest regards it, and there be higher than they,' Eccles. v. 8. There may be another tribunal to which we may appeal from the unjust sentences of men; but there is no appeal from God, for there is no higher judicature. Paschalis, a minister of the Albigenses, when he was burnt at Rome, cited the Pope and his cardinals before the tribunal of the Lamb. When we are wronged and oppressed here, we may cite them before the tribunal of God and Christ; but who can appeal from the tribunal of Christ himself?

And then this sentence is concerning our state and actions.

[1.] Our state, whether it be good or evil, The word sentenceth you now; for instance, if a man be in a carnal state: John iii. 18, He that believeth not is condemned.' How condemned? already.' In the sentence of the law, so he is gone and lost. Every unbeliever, such as all are by nature, is condemned already, having only the slender thread of a frail life between him and the execution of it. The sentence of the law

standeth in force against him, since he will not come to Christ to get it repealed. This sentence standeth in force against all heathens which never heard of Christ, and are condemned already by the law. But now Christians, or those that take up such a profession, and have heard of the gospel, on them it is confirmed by a new sentence, since they will not fly to another court, to the chancery of the gospel, and take sanctuary at the Lord's grace offered in Jesus Christ: He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned,' Mark xvi. 16. Again, when it is good, the sentence of the word, it is judgment: Rom. viii. 33, It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?' What hath the officer to do, when a man is absolved by the judge in court? Conscience is God's deputy, Satan is God's executioner. The witness is silenced; the executioner hath no more to do when the judge absolveth, as God doth all by the sentence of the gospel that are willing to come under Christ's shadow.

[2.] As the word judgeth and passeth sentence upon our states, so also upon our actions, thought, word, or deed; for all these in this regard come under the notion of acts.

(1.) Thoughts. They are liable to God's tribunal, which can be arraigned before no other bar, yet the word doth find them out. It doth not only discover the evil of them: Heb. iv. 12, The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;' but judgeth and sentenceth them: Jer. vi. 19, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts.' Men have only a process against others either for words or actions, but God hath a process against them for their thoughts. Though in men's courts thoughts are free, as not liable to their cognisance, yet they are subject to

another judicature.

(2.) Words. Idle words weigh heavy in God's balance. God, that hath given a law to the heart, hath also given a law to the lips, Mat. xii. 36, Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment.' Words will come to be judged: either we are to give an account of them here, or hereafter; either to condemn ourselves for them, and seek pardon, or to be condemned hereafter before God. A loose and ungoverned tongue will be one evidence brought against men as a sign of their unrenewed hearts in the day of judgment.

(3.) All our actions. They are sentenced in the word. God hath declared his mind concerning them: Eccles. xii. 14, God will bring every work into judgment;' things will not be huddled up in that day. God will not accept of a general bill of account by lump, but every action he will judge it according to the tenor of his word. This is an amplification of the first reason, why the word or precepts of God are called judgments, because they are judicial sentences of God the lawgiver, given forth with an authority uncontrollable concerning our estate and actions.

2. The next reason is, because of the suitable execution that is to follow in this world and in the next.

[1.] In this world. It is an easy matter to reconcile the word and providence together, for providence is but a comment upon the word; and you may even transcribe God's dispensations from the threatenings and promises of the law. The story of the people of the Jews might have been transcribed from the threatenings of the law, so that the comminations of the law were but as a calendar and prognostication what kind of weather it would be with that people. So still the apostle makes the observation: Heb. ii. 2, Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.' Mark, it is notable to observe

how God hath been punctual in executing the sentence of every command; the breach of it hath had a just recompense and reward--as I might instance in all the law of God. Moses and Aaron, if they will not sanctify God according to the first commandment, they shall be shut out of the land of Canaan; and if the people will have their false worship, how will God punctually accomplish it that he will ruin, them and their posterity? So Rom. i. 18, you have this general a little more specified; God hath not only taken notice of the first table, but of the second: The wrath of God is revealed from heaven,' not only against all ungodliness,' but unrighteousness of men,' &c. God from heaven hath owned both tables, and executed the sentence of the law against sinners: Hosea vii. 12, I will chastise them as their congregation hath heard.' If a man would observe providence, he might find not only justice in God's dispensations, but truth. I rather note this, because God's children may smart in this life for breach of the law. Though sentence of absolution takes place as to their persons and state, yet in this life they may smart sorely for the breach of the law. In time of trial God will make the world know he is impartial, that none shall go free, but the sentence of the word shall be executed: Prov. xi. 31, The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner.' Recompensed; that is, with a recompense of punishment: so Peter reads it out of the Septuagint, 1 Peter iv. 18, And if the righteous scarcely be saved,' &c. It is a hard matter to keep a righteous man from falling under the vengeance of God: God stands so much upon the credit of his word, that he deals out smart blows and stripes for their iniquity here in this world.

[2.] In the next world, there is no other sentence given but what is according to the word: John xii. 48, The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you in the last day.' God will pronounce sentence then

according to what is said now, either to believers or unbelievers.

Well, then, upon these grounds you see the execution is not only judgment, but the very law is judgment. A man that is to be examined and tried for life and death would fain know how it would speed with him, and how matters shall be carried beforehand. God will not deal with you by way of surprise; he hath plainly told you according to what rule he will proceed: saith he, The word which I have spoken, the same shall judge you at the last day.'

Use. I would apply this first term, judgments, thus: to press us to regard the sentence of the word more. If you cannot stand before the word of God, how will you stand before Christ's tribunal at the last day? Many times there is a conviction in the ore, though not refined to full conviction, and that discovers itself thus, by a fear to be tried and searched: John iii. 20, They will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved.' They that are loath to know are loath to search: you can have no comfort but what is according to the tenor of the word, and no happiness but what is according to the sentence of the word. What the word doth say to you, as sure as God is true it will be accomplished to a tittle. God stands upon his word more than anything: when heaven and earth shall pass away,' and be burned like a scroll,' not a jot of the word,' either law or gospel, shall pass away.' If we did think of this with seriousness, then one part of the word would drive us to another; we would run from the law to the gospel. Sinners could not lie in a carnal state: this law is not only my rule, but my judgment; and believers could not be so listless, and secure, and negligent as they are in their holy calling. Their doom in the word, this would make them seek more earnestly for pardon and grace, and make them strictly watch over their hearts and ways. Either we do not believe that the word is true, or that God will be so punctual and

exact as he hath declared. We dream of strange indulgences for which we have no cause, or else we would be more frequent at the throne of grace, and more exact and watchful in the course of our conversations.

Secondly, The next term to be opened is righteousness, another title given to the word in this psalm: it is so called, Heb. v. 13, Unskilful in the word of righteousness;' and 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17, it is profitable for instruction in righteousness.' But why is the word called righteousness? Because it shows how a man shall be justified, and how a justified man should approve himself both to God and man.

1. It showeth how a man shall be justified and accepted as righteous before God; therefore the word is called righteousness. This is a great secret and riddle which was hidden from the wise men of the world; they could never have found it out by all the profound researches and inquiries of nature into natural things; unless the word of God had made it known, it should still have been in the dark. For righteousness to plead for you. and to find acceptance, alas we should be thinking of going up to heaven, and going down into the deep; no, no, the word is nigh thee.' Rom. x. 8. This notion of the righteousness of Christ was the best notion the world was ever acquainted with; that when we all lay guilty, obnoxious to the wrath of God, and to the revenges of his angry justice, that then the Lord should reveal a righteousness, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe;' as the apostle amplifies it, Rom. iii. 22. What a rich and glorious discovery was this of the mind and counsel of God to poor sinners, that he hath revealed such a righteousness!

2. The word is called righteousness, because it shows how a justified man should approve himself both to God and man, by a holy conversation. It is the rule of moral righteousness: 1 John iii. 7, He is righteous that doth righteousness,' in the judgment of the word. There is not

only righteousness wrought by Christ for believers, but also righteousness wrought by Christ in believers, when a man doth exercise himself in performing his duties to God and man.

Use. Well, then, if we would be skilful in the matters of righteousness--

1. Consult often with the word, which is the copy of God's most righteous will. A man need go no further either for direction, quickening, or encouragement. The world despiseth the plain directions of the word, and crieth up the notion of things, and looketh for quainter conceits, and things of a more sublime speculation. If we should only bring scripture, and urge men by God's authority, and call upon them in Christ's name, and by Christ's arguments, this would be too low for them. But this is to tax the wisdom of God. He that hath the key of David' knew what kind of wards would fit the lock--what directions, what quickening notions and encouragements were fittest to be used in the case, to gain men to a sense of their duty both to God and man, and bring them into a way of righteousness.

2. Do you manifest the word to be righteousness: Wisdom should be justified of her children,' Mat. xi. 19. You should evidence it to the carnal world by taking off their prejudices, that the word may be justified. The world hath a suspicion; now evidence it to the conscience that it is a holy rule, a perfect direction for righteousness. The world prieth into the conversation of the saints; they live much by sensible things; therefore declare and evidence it to be a righteous thing.

So much for the title that is given to the word of God, thy judgments and righteousness.

Secondly, We come now to his act of duty about the word, or the benefit which he desired, When I shall have learned.' By learning he means his

attaining not only to the knowledge of the word, but the practice of it. It is not a speculative light, or a bare notion of things: John vi. 45, Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me.' It is such a learning as the effect will necessarily follow, such a light and illumination as doth convert the soul, and frame our hearts and ways according to the will of God; for otherwise if we get understanding of the word, nay, if we get it imprinted in our memories, it will do us no good without practice.

Doct. The best of God's servants are but scholars and students in the knowledge and obedience of his word.

For saith David, which had so much acquaintance, When I shall have learned.' The professors of the Christian religion were primitively called disciples or learners: Acts vi. 2, to plethos ton matheton, The multitude of the disciples.' This seems to be the true definition of a church, the genus and difference; the genus is the community or multitude of men united among themselves, as a corporation, city, or household. The difference or form is disciples, those that gave up themselves to Christ to be taught and governed, and to be instructed in this way and doctrine. So Acts xi. 26, it is said there, The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.' Christians are disciples and to difference them from the disciples of other men, they are the disciples of Christ. (1.) The school, that is, the church, where there are public lectures read to all visible professors; but the elect getting saving knowledge, they are not only taught of men, but taught of God, they have an inward light. (2.) The book, that is, the scripture, which is able to make wise to salvation,' to make the man of God perfect,' 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. Some run to tradition, others cry up their own reason to the wrong of the scripture; they make Christ to be their disciple rather than they his, when they will not receive things

upon his testimony and revelation, as the Socinians. (3.) The teacher is either supreme or subordinate. The supreme teacher is Christ; he is the great prophet of the church: so it is said, John vi. 45, They shall be taught of God.' This is, such a teacher that not only opens the scripture, but opens the understanding,' Luke xxiv. 45. The subordinate teachers are the ministers of the gospel, whom God useth for this work; not out of any indigence, but indulgence; not for any efficacy in the preacher, but out of a suitableness to the hearer, as a means most agreeable to our frail estate, to deal with us by way of counsel. God can teach us without men, by the secret illapses of his Spirit; but he will use those that are of the same nature with ourselves, that have the same temptations, necessities, and affections, which know the heart of a man. He would use them who, if they deceive us, must deceive themselves; he would use men of whose conversation and course we are conscious; we know their walk and way; he would use them as ambassadors' to pray us in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God,' 2 Cor. v. 20. (4.) The lesson which we learn is not only to know, but to obey. Science without conscience will not fit our turn, nor suit with the dignity of our teacher. To be like children that have the rickets, swollen in the head, when the feet are weak; we do not learn truth as it is in Jesus till we be regenerated, for that is a truth for practice and walking, not for talk, Eph. iv. 21. He is most learned that turns God's word into works: 1 John ii. 4, 5, He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.' In this school there is no man counted a proficient, but he that grows in practice. It is not the curious searcher that is the best scholar, but the humble practitioner; when we are cast into the mould of this doctrine, and have the prints, the stamp and character of it

upon our heart; as Rom. vi. 17, Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.' In the original it is, Whereto ye were delivered.' When we come to a physician, it is not enough to know his prescriptions, but they must be followed. We do not come to Christ as students of physic, to be trained up in the theory, but as patients; not as one that minds the art, but the cure, to do what is prescribed, that we may know how to get rid of our soul-diseases. Therefore Christ saith, John viii. 31, Then are ye my disciples indeed, if my word abide in you.' There are Christ's disciples in pretence, and Christ's disciples indeed; those that make it their work to get from Christ a power and virtue to carry on a uniform and constant obedience, these are the true learners. Therefore it will not fit our turn unless we labour to come under the power of what we learn, as well as get the knowledge; and it will not suit with the dignity of our teacher, who doth not only enlighten the mind, but change us by his efficacy, and leaves a suitable impression upon the soul. God writeth the lesson upon our hearts; that is, not only gives us the lesson, but a heart to learn it. Man's teaching is a pouring it into the ears. This is God's teaching, to inform our reason, and move our will: Phil. ii. 13, It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.' He teacheth us promises so as to make us believe them; and commandments so as to make us obey them; and the doctrine of the gospel teacheth us so as to stamp the impression of it upon the soul, to change us into his image and likeness, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Use. It presseth us to give up ourselves to this learning. Study the word, but take God for your teacher. Look to him that speaks from heaven if you would learn to purpose, otherwise our natural blindness will never be cured, nor our prejudices removed, nor our wills gained to God; or if they should be gained to a profession of truth, it will

never hold long. When men lead us into a truth, we shall easily be led off again by other men; and all a man's teaching will never reform the heart. Man's light is like a March sun, which raiseth vapours, but doth not dispel and scatter them; so it discovers lust, but doth not give us power to suppress it; therefore our main business must be to be taught of God.

Further, Observe your proficiency in this knowledge: Heb. v. 14, To have your senses exercised to discern both good and evil.' We should every day grow more skilful in the word of righteousness,' John xiv. 9, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?' To be backward in the knowledge of grace after long teaching, and to be still conflicting with fleshly lusts, which is the exercise of beginners--so much means and so small experience, and get no further--this is sad!

Thirdly, The fruit of this benefit obtained, Then shall I praise him.'

From hence observe--

1. Upon receipt of every mercy we should praise God. We are forward in supplication, but backward in gratulation. This is a more noble duty, and continueth with us in heaven. It is the work of glorified saints and angels to praise God. All the lepers could beg health, yet but one returned to give God the glory. This is sad when it is so; for this is a more sublime duty, therefore it should have more of our care. This is a profitable duty: Ps. lxvii. 5, 6, Let the people praise thee, O Lord, let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us.' The more vapours go up, the more showers come down; and the more praises go up, the more mercies. There is a reciprocal intercourse between us and God, by mercies and praises, as there is between the earth and the lower heavens, by vapours and showers. There are two words by which our

thankfulness to God is expressed, praising and blessing: Ps. cxlv. 10, All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee.' What is the difference? Praise respecteth God's excellences, and blessing respecteth God's benefits. We may praise a man that never hath done us good, if he be excel lent and praiseworthy; but blessing respecteth God's bounty and benefits; yet they are promiscuously taken sometimes, as here praise is taken for blessing.

2. Observe: We should praise God especially for spiritual blessings, Eph. i. 3. Why? Partly because these come from the special love of God. God bestows corn, wine, and oil in the general upon the world; but now knowledge, and grace, and blessed experiences of communion with God, these are special things, he bestows them upon the saints, therefore deserves more thankfulness. Protection, it is the common benefit of every subject; but preferment and favour is for friends, and those that are near to the prince; so this is the favour of his people, called so Ps. cvi. 5, Show me the favour of thy people.' This is a special blessing God bestoweth upon his own children. Again, these concern the better part, the inward man, the spirit, the soul, which is the man. He doth us more favour which heals a wound in the body than he that only seweth up a rent in our garment (for the body is more than raiment); so he that doth good to our souls is more than he that doth good to our bodies, which gives outward blessings, because these are above the body. Again, these are pledges of eternal blessings in heavenly places: He hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places.' But why is it said, He hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places'? Why, there they began, and there they are consummated; there was their first purpose, and there is the final accomplishment. A man may have the world, and yet never the nearer heaven; but when he hath grace, and learned God's statutes, and his heart is gained to obedience

of God's will, this is more than gold, silver, and great riches. Again, these dispose the heart to thankfulness. There is an occasion to praise God, and a heart to praise him; outward mercies give us an occasion, but spiritual mercies give a disposition. Other things are but motives to praise God, but these are preparations. And then other things, they are given in judgment; these things cannot. A man may have an estate in judgment, but he cannot have Christ and grace in judgment. These things are always given in mercy.

Use. Well, then, the use is to reprove us that we are no more sensible of spiritual benefits. We love the body more than the soul, and therefore have a quick sense of bodily mercies. But now, in soul concernments we are not the like affected. It is for want of observation to descry the progress of grace, and God's dealings with the inward man: Col. iv. 2, Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.' And it is for want of affection. We are wrought upon by carnal arguments, mercies of flesh and blood, and showers of rain, food, and gladness. These things make us praise God; but that which we get from God in an ordinance, we are not so sensible of.

3. I observe again, those that have learned God's righteous judgments, they are only fit to praise God: Ps. xxxiii. 1, Praise is comely for the upright.' It is unseemly in a wicked man's mouth that he should be praising of God. It is his duty, but it is not so comely; but praise to the upright, this is suitable. Canticum novum et vetus homo male concordant, saith Austin. The new song, the psalm of praise, and the old man, make but ill music. We need a new heart, if we would go about this work. It is an exercise becoming the godly. We should be reconciled to God, and have his grace and favour. Under the law they were to bring their peace-offering, and lay it on the top of the burnt-offering, Lev. iii. When we come to offer a thank-offering to

God, we should be in a state of amity and friendship with him. That is the clear moral of that ceremony: Sing with grace in your hearts,' Col. iii. 16. Others have not such matter nor such hearts to praise God; they are but tinkling cymbals. But those that have grace, it is acceptable and comely for them.

4. I observe again, I will praise thee when I shall have learned,' &c. Those that profit by the word, they are bound to praise God, and acknowledge him as the author of all that they have got. The grace of a teachable heart, we have it from him, therefore the honour must be his. He that gave the law, he it is that writes it upon the heart. Alas! we in ourselves are but like the wild ass's colt,' Job xi. 12, both for rudeness of understanding, and also for unruliness of affection. Well, then, if we be tamed and subdued, he must have all the glory and the praise: Ps. xvi. 7, Blessed be God that gave me counsel in my reins.' It was God which made the word effectual, and counselled us how to choose him for our portion. We were as indocile and in capable as others. If God had left us to our own swing, what fools should we have been!

Use. It reproves us because we are so apt to intercept the revenues of the crown of heaven, and to convert them to our own use, like rebels against God. This proud pronoun ego, I, I, is always interposing: This Babel which I have built.' We are sacrificing to this proud self: This I have done; and if God be mentioned, it is but for fashion's sake, as those women in the prophet Isaiah, Only call us by thy name; we will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel'--I allude to it. God must bear the name, but we sacrifice to ourselves in all we get, as if it were our own acquiring. God, I thank thee,' saith the Pharisee; yet he trusted in himself that he was righteous, Luke viii. Oh, learn, then, the commendable modesty of God's servants, of ascribing all to God:

Luke xix. 16, he doth not say my industry, but thy pound hath gained another.' And by the grace of God I am what I am.' And I laboured more abundantly than they all.' He corrects it presently, Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me,' 1 Cor. xv. 10. So again: Gal. ii. 20, I live;' and then, presently, not I, but Christ liveth in me.' Thus should we learn to be faithful and loyal to God, and deal with him as Joab did to David when he was like to surprise Rabbah, and take it: 2 Sam. xii. 28, Encamp against the city, and take it, lest I take the city, and it be called after my name.' Let us be very jealous that we do not get into God's place, and self interpose, and perk up with what we have attained unto; for the Lord must have all the glory, the praise must be his.

The fourth circumstance in the text is the manner of performing this duty of rendering praise; with an upright heart. I shall not discourse of uprightness in general, but uprightness in praising God. God must be praised with a great deal of uprightness of soul; that is the note.

This uprightness in praising lieth in two things,--not only with the tongue, but the heart; not only with the heart, but the life.

1. Not only with the tongue, but with the heart: Ps. ciii. 1, Praise the Lord, my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.' Mark, not only with my tongue, with my glory,' as he calls it, but with my soul. Formal speeches are but an empty prattle, which God regards not: Ps. xlvii. 7, Sing ye praises with understanding.' It is fit the noblest faculty should be employed in the noblest work. This is the noblest work, to praise God; therefore all that is within us must be summoned. Church adversaries took up a customary form: Zech. xi. 5, Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich.' And in Nehemiah it is said, Your brethren that hated me said, Let God be glorious.' In instruments of music, the deeper the belly of the instrument, the sweeter the melody;

so praise, the more it comes from the heart, the more acceptable to God.

2. This uprightness implies the life as well as the heart. Honour given to God in words is many times retracted and disproved by the dishonour we do to him in our conversations. This is the carrying Christ on the top of the pinnacle, as the devil did, with an intent he might throw down himself again. So we seem to advance and carry him high in praises, that we may throw him down in our lives: Titus i. 16, They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him.' Empty compliments God accepteth not, as long as there is blasphemy in their lives. Our lives must glorify him: Mat. v. 16, Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

Use. It reproves us that we are no more hearty and serious in the praises of God. In our necessities, when we want, then we can howl upon our bed. Our necessity doth put a shrill accent upon our groans, and sharpen our affections in prayer; but in praise, how cold and dull are we! Surely we should be as warm in the one as in the other. Then it may press you to live praises, and show forth the praises of him in your conversation, 1 Peter ii. 7. Hezekiah had been sick, God recovered him, he penned a psalm of thanksgiving, Isa. xxxviii. 9. Yet it is said, He rendered not according to what he received,' &c., 2 Chron. xxxii., because his heart was proud and lifted up. If you do not walk more humbly and closely with God, it is not praise with uprightness of heart; it must issue and break out in our actions and course of our conversation.

SERMON IX.

I will keep thy statutes. forsake me not utterly.--Ver. 8.

THIS verse, being the last of this portion, is the result of his meditation concerning the utility and necessity of keeping the law of God. Here take notice--

1. Of his resolution, I will keep thy statutes.

2. His prayer, O forsake me not utterly.

It is his purpose to keep the law; yet because he is conscious to himself of many infirmities, he prays against desertion. In the prayer there is a litotes, more is intended than is expressed. O forsake me not. He means, strengthen me in this work. And if thou shouldest desert me, yet but for a while, Lord, not for ever; if in part, not in whole.

Four points we may observe from hence--

1. That it is a great advantage to come to a resolution in a course of godliness.

2. Those that resolve upon a course of obedience had need to fly to God's help.

3. Though we fly to God's help, yet sometimes God may withdraw, and seem to forsake us.

4. Though God seem to forsake us, and really doth so in part, yet we should pray that it may not be a total and utter desertion.

The notion of statutes I have opened, and also what it is to keep them in mind, heart, and life. That which we are now to take notice of is David's resolution. Hence observe--

Doct. 1. That it is a great advantage to come to a resolution in a course of godliness.

Negatively, let me speak to this point.

1. This is not to be understood as if our resolutions had any strength in themselves to bear us out. Peter is a sad instance how little our confidence and purposes will come to: and therefore David here, when he was most upright in his own resolution, is most diffident of his own strength; O forsake me not:' implying, if God should forsake him, all would come to nothing. God must enable us to do what we resolve.

2. Nor is it to be understood that it is in a man's power to resolve; this would put grace under the dominion of our will; it is by preventing grace that we are brought to a serious purpose: Phil. ii. 13, He giveth to will and to do.' Man's will is the toughest sinew in the whole creation. The very purpose and bent of the heart is the fruit of regeneration. Free-will hath its pangs, its velleities, which are like a little morning-dew, that is soon dried up: Hosea vi. 4, Our righteousness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.' But the will and resolution that we are to understand here is the fruit of grace.

3. Not as if the obligation to obedience did arise from our own purpose and promise, rather than from God's command; this were to set man's authority above God's, and to lay aside the precept, which is the surer bond and obligation, and to bind the soul with the slender thread of our own resolutions. When we purpose and promise obedience, we do but make the old bond and engagement of duty the more active and sensible upon the soul, so that it is not to jostle out God's authority, but to yield our consent. However, the obligation is the greater; for to disobey after we have acknowledged an authority, among men it is counted a more heinous crime than standing out against the authority itself. A thing that is not due before, yet when we have promised or dedicated it to God, then it is not in our power; as in the case of Ananias, Acts v. But now we are not free before the contract, we have

bonds upon us; and the business of our promise and resolution is only to make our obligation more powerful upon the conscience.

4. Not as if it were an arbitrary thing thus to do, and practised by the saints only for the more convenience of the spiritual life. No; but it is a thing required: Acts xi. 23, He exhorteth them that, with full purpose of heart, they would cleave to the Lord,'

Positively: 1. It is a course which God will bless; he hath ap pointed ordinances for this end and purpose that we might come to this resolution. The promise is first implicitly made in baptism; therefore is it called, 1 Peter iii. 21, the answer of a good conscience towards God.' How so? Why, the covenant binds mutually on God's part and on ours, and so do the seals which belong to the covenant. It doth not only seal pardon and sanctification on God's part, but there is a promise and answer on our part. An answer to what? To the demands of the covenant. In the covenant of grace God saith, I will be your God; baptism seals that, and we promise to be his people. Now our answer to this demand of God, and to this interrogatory he puts^to us in the covenant, it is sealed by us in baptism, and it is renewed in the Lord's Supper. Look, as in the old sacrifices, they were all a renewing of the oath of allegiance to God, or confirming their purposes and resolutions, you have the same notion to the sacrifice that is given to the Lord's Supper, for it is called the blood of the covenant,' Exod. xxiv. 7, 8. In the ordinance of the Lord's Supper there we come to take an obligation upon us; half of the blood is sprinkled upon us. And this purpose and resolution to it is still continued and kept afoot in our daily exercise, invocation, and prayer, wherein either we explicitly or implicitly renew our obedience; for every prayer is an implicit vow, wherewith we bind ourselves to seek those things we ask, or else we do not engage God to bestow them. Thus it is a course that God will bless.

2. It is of great necessity to prevent uncertainty of spirit. Until we come to resolution we shall be liable to temptation; until we fully set our faces towards God, and have a bent and serious purpose of heart, we shall never be free from temptation from the devil, and from evil men, or from ourselves. From the devil: James i. 8, A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' As long as we are wavering, and suspensive, we can never carry on uniformity of obedience. While we halt between God and Baal, Satan hath an advantage against us So from evil men: David doth express himself as coming to a resolution in this psalm, ver. 115, Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God.' There is no way to shake off those evil companions and associates till there be a bent seriously to wards heaven. So from ourselves: we have changeable hearts, that love to wander,' Jer. xiv. 10. We have many revoltings and reluctancies; therefore, until a sanctified judgment and will concur to make up a resolution and holy purpose, we shall still be up and down. The saints, being sensible of their weakness, often bind this upon themselves: Ps. cxix. 57, I have said that I would keep thy words;' there was a practical decree past upon the conscience. And ver. 106, I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.' An oath is the highest assurance among men, and most solemn engagement, and all little enough to hold a backsliding heart under a sense and care of our duty. As long as the Israelites had a will to Canaan, so long they digested the inconveniences of the wilderness. Every difficulty and trouble will put us out of the way, and we cannot be secured against an unsteady heart, but by taking up such a course, a serious resolve of maintaining communion with God. And as it is useful to prevent temptation, so to excite and quicken our dulness: we forget our vow and purpose, and therefore we relapse into sin. The apostle

saith, 2 Peter i. 9, He hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins;' that he did renounce these things in baptism. And Paul puts us in mind of our engagement: Rom. viii. 12, We are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh.' You make vows and promises to God, to renounce the flesh and vanities of the world, and to give up yourselves to God's service; and these things are forgotten, and therefore we grow slight, cold, careless in the profession of godliness;

Use. The first use is to press us to come to a declared resolution to serve and please God, and to direct us in what manner.

First, Make it with a full bent of heart. Rest not upon a Shall I? shall I? but I will keep thy statutes.' As Agrippa was almost persuaded to be a Christian, but not altogether, so men stand hovering and debating. You should resolve, Ps. cxix. 112, I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes alway to the end.' It is God's work to incline the heart; but when the work of grace is passed upon us, then the believer doth voluntarily incline himself; his will is bent to serve God, not by fits and starts, but alway to the end: 1 Chron. xxii. 19, Now set your hearts to seek the Lord;' that is, resolve, be not off and on.

But, secondly, In what manner shall we make it?

1. Seriously and advisedly, not in a rash humour. The people, when they heard the law, and were startled with the majesty of God, Deut. v. 28, 29, answered, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.' It was well done to come to a purpose and resolution; but Oh, that there were such a heart within them,' saith God, that they would fear me,' &c.: Josh. xxiv. 19, We will serve the Lord,' say the people;' You cannot serve the Lord,' saith Joshua. Do you know what it is? Rash undertakings will necessarily be accompanied with a feeble prosecution; and therefore count the charges, lest you repent of the bargain, Luke xiv. 23.

2. Make Christ a liberal allowance, if you would come to a resolution: Mat. xvi. 24, He that will come after me,' he that hath a heart set upon this business, let him know what he must do;' let him deny himself,' &c. When we engage for God, he would have us reckon for the worst, to be provided for all difficulties. A man that builds, when he hath set apart such a sum of money to compass it, while he keeps within allowance, all is well; but when that is exceeded, every penny is disbursed with grudging. So if you do anything in this holy business, make Christ a liberal allowance at first, lest we think of returning into Egypt afterward, when we meet with fiery flying serpents, and difficulties and hardships in our passage to heaven. Let it be a thorough resolution, that, come what will come, we will be the Lord's. There should be a holy wilfulness. Paul was resolved to go to Jerusalem, because he was bound in spirit; and though they did even break his heart, yet they could not break his purpose.

3. Resolve as trusting upon the Lord's grace. You are poor weak creatures; how changeable in an hour! not a feather so tossed to and fro in the air; therefore we shall fail, falter, and break promise every day, if we go forth in the strength of our own resolutions. Resolve as trusting in the direction and assistance of God's Holy Spirit: if God undertake for us, then, under God, we may undertake. To resolve is more easy than to perform, as articles are sooner consented to than made good; a castle is more easily built in time of peace than maintained and kept in a time of war; and therefore still wait, and depend upon God for his grace.

4. You cannot promise absolute and thorough obedience, though you should strive after it, for this you will never be able to perform; and your own promises, purposes, and resolutions will but increase your trouble, though you are still to be aiming after it.

Doct. 2. Those that will keep God's statutes must fly to God's help.

As David doth here, Oh, forsake me not utterly;' that is, Oh,

strengthen me in this work. Three reasons for this--

1. We are weak and mutable creatures.

2. Our strength lies in God's hands.

3. God gives out his strength according to his own pleasure.

1. We are weak and mutable creatures. When we were at our best we were so. Adam in innocency was not able to stand without confirming grace, but gave out at the first assault. And still we are mu table, though we have a strong inclination for the present. When the precepts of God are propounded with evidence, and backed with promises and threatenings, and a resolution follows thereupon, the fruit of rational conviction and moral suasion, which is not for the present false and hypocritical, yet it will not hold without the bottom of grace. It hath not supernatural, yet it may have moral sincerity. Such a resolution was that of the Israelites after the terrible delivery of God's law. They promised universal obedience, and did not lie in it; for God saith, They have done well in their promise; there was a moral sincerity, but there wanted a renewed sanctified heart. And those captains which came to Jeremiah, chap. xlii. 5, intended not to deceive for the present, when they called God to witness that they would do according to all things for the which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us.' And Hazael, Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?' Certainly he had abomination of it, when the prophet mentioned that cruelty of ripping up women with child. But suppose the resolution to be a fruit of grace and regeneration, yet we have not full power to stand of ourselves: still we are very changeable creatures in matters that do not absolutely and immediately concern life and death. Lot, that was chaste in Sodom, in the midst of so many temptations, you will find him

committing incest in the mountains, where were none but his two daughters. What a change was here! David, that was so tender, that his heart smote him for cutting off the lap of Saul's garment, one would wonder that he should plot lust, be guilty of murder, and lie in that stupid condition for a long time. Peter, which had such courage to venture upon a band of men, and to cut off Malchus's ear, should be so faint-hearted at a damsel's question! So, while the strength of the present impulse and the grace of God is warm upon the heart, we may keep close to our work while the influence continues; but afterward, how cold and dead do men grow! as vapours drawn up by the sun, at night fall down again in a dew. The people were upon a high point of willingness, mighty forward, and ready to offer whole cart-loads of gold and silver, 1 Chron. xxix. 18. What saith David? O Lord God, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and stablish their heart unto thee.' We are not always in a like frame.

2. Our strength lies in God, and not in ourselves. When the apostle had exhorted his Ephesians to all Christian duties, he concludes it thus: Eph. vi. 10, Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' This might is in God, he is our strength. And 2 Tim. ii. 1, Be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ.' God would not trust us with the stock in our own hands, now we have spent our portion, and played the prodigals, but would have us wait upon him from morning to morning: Ps. xxv. 4, Show me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths; lead me in thy truth, and teach me.' We are apt to embezzle it, or forget God, both which are very mischievous. When the prodigal got his stock in his own hands, he went into a far country, out of his father's house. God would not hear from us, there would not be such a constant communion and correspondence between him and us, if our daily necessities did not

force us to him. Therefore, that the throne of grace might not lie unfrequented, God keeps the strength in his own hands. We need to consult with him on all occasions.

3. God gives out his strength according to his own pleasure. God many times gives the will, when he suspendeth the strength that is necessary for the performance. Sometimes God gives scire, a sense and conscience of duty; at other times he gives velle, to will, to have a purpose; and when he gives to will, he doth not always give posse, to be able--not such a lively performance. It is possible he may give the will where he doth not give the deed; for it is said, Phil. ii. 13, He worketh both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' And Paul certainly doth not speak as a convinced, but as a renewed man, when he saith, To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not.' He had received the will, and not the deed--finding presupposeth searching. When we have done all we can, yet how to bring our purposes into actions, we cannot tell. Peter had his resolutions (and no doubt they were hearty and real), yet when he comes to make them good, what a poor weakling was Peter! Putabat se posse, quod se velle sentiebat--he thought he could do that which he could will, saith Austin: John xiii. 37, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thee.' We look upon the willing spirit, and not upon the weak flesh. It is possible we may lean upon recent dispositions and affections, as if they would carry us out, without dependence upon God. Therefore, for all the parts of spiritual strength he must be sought to.

The use is--

Use. To press you to beware of presumption and self-confidence, when your resolutions are at the highest for God, and your hearts in the best frame. Resolution is needful, as was said before; but all our confidences must arise from God's promises, not our own, if we mean not

to be left in the dirt. This self-confidence in spiritual things I shall show--

1. How it discovereth itself.

2. How to cure it.

1. It discovereth itself--

[1.] Partly thus, by venturing upon temptations without a call and warrant. When men will lay their heads in the lap of a temptation, and run into the mouth of danger, they tempt God, but trust to themselves. Peter would be venturing into the devil's quarters; but what is the issue? He denies his master. Dependence upon God is ever accompanied with a holy solicitude and cautelous fear, Phil. ii. 12, 13. When we go out of God's way it is a presuming upon our own strength; for he will keep us in viis, in his ways; not in praecipitiis, when we run headlong into danger.

[2.] When men neglect those means whereby their graces or comforts may be fed and supplied. A man that is kept humble and depending will be always waiting for his dole at wisdom's gates, Prov. viii. 34. We cannot regularly expect anything from God but in God's way. They who depend upon God will be much in prayer, hearing, and taking all opportunities. But when men begin to think they need not pray so much, need not make such conscience of hearing; when we are more arbitrary and negligent in the use of means, then we be gin to live upon ourselves and our own stock, and do not depend upon the free grace of God to carry us out in our work.

[3.] When you go forth to any work or conflict, without an actual renewing of your dependence upon God. It is a sign you lean upon the strength of your own resolutions, or present frame of your heart. The Ephraimites took it ill that Gideon would go to war, and not call them into the field when they went out against the enemy, Judges viii. 1.

Oh, may not God much more take it ill that we will go forth to grapple with the devil and temptations, and go about any business in our own strength? Therefore, still a sense of our weakness must be upon us, that we may do all in the name of the Lord Jesus;' that is, by help and assistance from him, Col. iii. 17.

[4.] When we boast of our courage before we are called to a trial. They that crack in their quarters do not always do most valiantly in the field. Peter's boast, Though all men should leave thee, yet will not I,' came to very little; and you know the story of Mr Saunders in the Book of Martyrs. Let not him that puts on his harness boast as he that puts it off.' A temptation will show us how little service that grace will do us which we are proud of, and boast of.

2. To cure carnal confidence, remember your work and your impediments. (1.) Consider your work. A full view of duty will check our rash presumptions. Can you deny yourselves, take up your cross, maintain and carry on a holy course to your life's end? And (2.) Remember your impediments. Partly from a naughty heart. You are to row against the stream of flesh and blood. Satan will be sure to trouble you, and will assault you again and again. Though he be never so fully foiled, he will not give over the combat: Luke iv. 13, he departed from Christ for a season.' He had a mind to try the other bout. And the world will be your let--many discouragements and snares from the love and fear of it: 1 John v. 3, 4, He that loves God keeps his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous'; and presently he saith, And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith;' implying there is no keeping the commandments without victory over the world. Now, can you do all these things in your own strength? The young man was forward in resolving to keep the commandments, but he went away sad, for he had great possessions, Mat. xix. 22. Therefore consider these things, that

you may fly to the Lord Jesus.

Doct. 3. Though we fly to God's help, yet sometimes God may withdraw and forsake us.

Here I shall speak of the kinds of desertion, and then of the reasons.

First, For the kinds, take these distinctions:--

1. There is a real desertion and a seeming. Christ may be out of sight, and yet you not out of mind. When the dam is abroad for meat, the young brood in the nest are not forgotten nor forsaken. The child cries as if the mother was gone, but she is but hidden, or about other business: Isa. xlix. 14, 15, Sion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me.' In the misgivings of our hearts, we think God hath cast off all care and all thought of us. But God's affectionate answer showeth that all this was but a fond surmise: Can a woman forget her sucking-child?' &c. So Ps. xxxi. 22, I said in my haste, I am cut off before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.' We are never more in God's heart many times than when we think he hath quite cast us off. Surely when the heart is drawn after him he is not wholly gone. We often mistake God's dispensations. When he is preparing for us more ample relief, and emptying us of all carnal dependence, we judge that that is a forsaking; as Ps. xciv. 18, When I said, My foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.' Sometimes in point of comfort we are at a loss, and filled with distractions and troubles, and all is that God may come in for our relief. So in point of grace: 2 Cor. xii. 10, When I am weak, then I am strong.' There is also a real desertion; for God grants his people are forsaken some times: Though I have forsaken you for a little moment,' Isa. liv. 7, 8, And Christ, that could not be mistaken, complaineth of it; and the saints feel it to their bitter cost.

2. There is internal and external desertion. Internal is with respect

to the withdrawings of the Spirit: Ps. li. 11, Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.' Now external desertion is in point of affliction, when God leaves us under sharp crosses in his wise providence. These must be distinguished; sometimes they are asunder, some times together. And when they are together, God may return as to our inward comfort and support, yet not for our deliverance: Ps. cxxxviii. 3, In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.' David was in great straits, and God affords him soul-relief; that was all the answer he could get then; support and strength to bear the troubles, but not deliverance from the affliction. Sometimes the ebb of outward comfort doth make way for a greater tide and influx of inward comfort: 2 Cor. i. 5, As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.' Cordials are for a fainting time. When children are sick and weakly, we treat them with the more indulgence. God may return, and may never less forsake us inwardly than when he doth forsake us outwardly: 2 Cor. iv. 16, Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' God makes sickly bodies make way for the health of the soul, and an aching head for a better heart. When he seems to cast us off in point of our external condition, it is to draw us into a more inward communion with himself, that we might receive greater supplies of his grace.

3. There is a desertion as to comfort, and a desertion as to grace. The children of God may sometimes lose the feelings of God's love: Ps. lxxvii. 1-3, My soul refused to be comforted; I remembered God, and was troubled; my spirit was overwhelmed.' Oh, what a word was that! Remembering of God revives the heart; but to think of God, and to think of his loss, that was his great trouble. Yet all this while God may hold communion in point of grace: Ps. lxxiii. 23, Nevertheless, I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.' He had

been under a conflict, lost his comfort, yet he acknowledgeth support; God held him in his right hand. Trouble and discomfort hath its use; want of comfort makes way many times for increase of grace; and therefore, though a man may be deserted as to comfort, yet he may have a greater influence of grace from God. How often doth it fall put thus with God's children, that their right is more confirmed to spiritual blessings when their sense is lost! Then they are more industrious and diligent to get a sense of God's love again. A summer's sun that is clouded yields more comfort and warmth to the earth than a winter's sun that shines brightest. These cloudy times have their use and their fruit; and Christians have the less of a happy part of communion with God, that they may have more holiness; and less of sweetness and sensible consolation, that they may have more grace.

4. There is desertio correctiva et eruditiva--a desertion for correction, and a desertion for instruction. Sometimes the aim of it is merely for correction for former sin; it is a penal overclouding for our unkind and ungracious dealing with him. God may do it for sins; nay, many times for old sins long ago committed; he may charge them anew upon the conscience: Job xiii. 24, compared with ver. 26, Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?' Thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.' An old bruise may trouble us long after, upon every change of weather. Many that have grieved God's Spirit in their youth, after they have been converted, God will reckon with them about it in their age. A man will smart for his ungracious courses first or last. Sometimes it is merely for instruction; it instructs us chiefly to show us God's sovereignty, with the changeableness of the best comfort on this side heaven; to show us his sovereignty, that he will be free to go and come at his own pleasure. He will have his people know he is lord, and may do with his

own as pleaseth him. The heavenly eradiations and outshinings of his love are not at our beck; God will dispense them according to his pleasure. A mariner hath no cause to murmur and quarrel with God because the wind bloweth out of the east when he desireth a westerly gale. Why? Because it is his wind, and he will dispose these things according to his pleasure. So the comfort and outshinings of his love are his, and he will take them and give them as he thinks good. Again, to show us the changeableness of the best comforts on this side heaven. When Christ hath been in the soul with a full and high influx of comfort, this doth not remain long with us; God may withdraw. Observe it, often after the highest enlargements there may be some forsaking. Cant. v. 1, there we read of a feast between Christ and his beloved: 1 Come eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.' Here they are feasted with love; presently we read of desertion, the spouse waxeth lazy and drowsy, and Christ is gone; then she is forced to go up and down to find him. Paul had his raptures; then a messenger of Satan to buffet him. The same disciples that were conscious to Christ's transfiguration--Peter, James, and John, Mat. xvii.--the same disciples are chosen also to be conscious to his agonies: Mat. xxvi. 37, He took with him Peter, James, and John.' First they had a glimpse of his glory, then a sight of his bitter agonies and sufferings, Jeremiah in one line singing of praise, and in the next cursing the day of his birth, Jer. xx. 13, 14. After the most ravishing comforts may be a sad suspension. Jacob saw the face of God, and wrestled with him, but his thigh halted. There needs something to humble the creature after these experiences.

5. Desertion is either felt or not felt. Not felt, and then it is more dangerous, and usually ends in some notable fall; as Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. God left him, and he was not sensible, and then he runs into

pride and vainglory, and draweth wrath upon him and his people. God's children, when they do not observe his comings and goings, they fall into mischief, it begins their woe. We do not observe what experiences we have of God, then we faint: we do not observe his goings, then that makes way for some scandal and imprudent and un seemly action, and that makes way for some bitter and sharp affliction. But if it be felt, it is the better provided against. If we do not murmur, but seek to God in Christ to get the loss made up, then it is better. Meek acknowledgments are better than complaining expostulations. It is a sign it works kindly.

6. There is a total and a partial desertion. Those who are bent to obey God may for a while and in some degree be left to themselves. We cannot promise ourselves an utter immunity from desertion, but it is not total. We shall find, for his great name's sake The Lord will not forsake his people,' 1 Sam. xii. 22; and Heb. xiii. 5, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' Not utterly, yet in part they may be forsaken. Elijah was forsaken, but not as Ahab; Peter was forsaken in part, but not as Judas, that was utterly forsaken, until he was made a prey to the devil. So carnal professors are forsaken utterly until they are made a prey fit for the devil's tooth. David was forsaken to be humbled and bettered; but Saul was forsaken utterly to be destroyed. Saith Theophylact, God may forsake his people so as to shut out their prayers, Ps. lxxx. 4, so as to interrupt the peace and joy of their heart, to abate their strength; the spiritual life may be much at a stand, and so as sin may break out, and they fall foully; but not utterly forsaken. But one way or other God is present; present in light sometimes when he is not present in strength, when he manifests the evil of their present condition, so as to mourn under it; and present in awakening desires, though not in giving enjoyment. As long as there

is any esteem of God, he is not yet gone; there is some light and love yet left, manifested by our desires of communion with him.

7. There is a temporary desertion and an eternal desertion. One is spoken of, Isa. liv. 7, 8, For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.' God may for sake his servants for a little while: indeed they may have a long winter of it sometimes; as David lay for many months under his sin, until Nathan roused him; but this is but a moment to the eternity wherein God loves them. But the eternal forsaking is of the final impenitent, when God saith, Never see my face more, go ye cursed,' &c. Thus for the kinds.

Secondly, The reasons of desertion.

1. To correct us for our wantonness, and our unkind dealing with Christ. If we neglect him upon frivolous pretences, certainly he will be gone: Cant. v. 3, I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?' See ver. 6, My beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone.' When we are not at God's call, he will not be at our beck. She that would not open to Christ, when she opened, Christ was gone.

2. To acquaint us with our weakness. What feathers are we when the blast of a temptation is let loose upon us! God will show what we are by his withdrawing. God left Hezekiah, That he might try him, that he might know all that was in his heart,' 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. When Christ was asleep, the storm arose, and the ship was in danger. If God be gone but a little, or suspend his influence, we can not stand our ground.

3. To subdue our carnal confidence: Ps. xxx. 6, 7, In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.' We fall asleep upon a carnal pillow, then God draws it away: Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled.' The nurse lets the child get a knock, to make it more cautious. God withdraws, that we may learn more to depend upon him.

4. To heighten our esteem of Christ, that love may be sharpened by

absence. When once we feel the loss of it to our bitter cost, we will not part with him again upon easy terms. The spouse when she caught him would not let him go. Cant. iii. 2, 3, 4; then are we more tender to observe him in his motions.

5. That by our own bitter experience we may learn how to value the sufferings of Christ, when we taste of the bitter cup of which he drank for us. Christians, you do not know what it was for Christ to cry out, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mat. xxvii. 46, until we are sensible in our measure and degree of the like. He tasted of the hell of being forsaken, and we must pledge him in that cup first or last, that we may know what our Saviour endured for us; and what it is for a holy man to want the light of God's countenance, and those sensible consolations that he formerly had.

6. To prevent evil to come, especially pride, that we might not be lifted up; and to entender our hearts to others: 2 Cor. i. 4, That we might comfort others with the comforts wherewith we were comforted of God.'

Use 1. This informs us that we are not therefore cast out of the love of God because there may be some forsaking. Desertion is incident to the most heavenly spirits. Christ hath legitimated this condition, and made it consistent with grace. It is a disease this which follows the royal seed; David, Heman, Hezekiah, these were forsaken, yet were children of God. It is more incident to the godly than the wicked and carnal. The carnal may be under bondage; sometimes their peace may be troubled and disturbed; but this desertion properly is a disease incident to the godly, and none are so affected with it as they: they have a tender heart; when God is gone how are they troubled! They are very observant, and therefore we cannot say they are not godly because they are forsaken. But those that never felt the love of Christ, never

knew what communion with God means, were never troubled with sin, have none of this affliction; bat this is incident to the richest and most heavenly spirit whom God hath taken into communion with himself.

Use 2. For direction to the children of God.

1. Observe God's comings and goings; see whether you be forsaken. When God hides himself from your prayers, when means have not such a lively influence, when you have a strong affection to obey, but not such help to bring it into act, and you begin to stumble, observe it; God is withdrawn, and many times seems to withdraw, to observe whether you will take notice of it. Christ made as if he would go further, but they constrained him to stay; so he makes as if he would be gone, to see if you will constrain him to tarry.

2. Inquire after the reason: Ps. lxxvii. 6, I communed with mine own heart.' What then? My spirit made diligent search.' Ay! this is the time to make diligent search what it is divides between God and you. Though God doth it out of sovereignty and instruction sometimes, yet there is ever cause for creatures to humble themselves, and make diligent search what is the matter.

3. Submit to the dispensation: murmuring doth but entangle you more; God will have us stoop to his sovereignty and wisdom before he hath done. A husband must be absent for necessary occasions; a frown is as necessary for a child as a smile. David refuseth not to be tried, only he prays, Lord, forsake me not utterly.' It is a fond child that will not let its parent go out of sight.

4. Learn to trust in a withdrawing God, and depend upon him; to stay ourselves upon his name when we see no light, Isa. l. 10. Never leave until you find him. Look, as Esther would go into the king's presence when there was no golden sceptre held forth, so venture into God's presence when you have no smile and countenance from heaven; trust in a

withdrawing God; nay, when wrath breaks out, when God killeth you: Job xiii. 15, Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him.' With such a holy obstinacy of faith should we follow God in this case.

Doct. 4. When God seemeth to forsake us, and really doth so in part, yet we should pray that it be not an utter and total desertion.

Isa. lxiv. 9, Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever. Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people,' (1.) Do not despond; we are very apt to do so: Ps. lxxvii. 7-9, Will the Lord cast off for ever? will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.' The worst kind of despondency is to lie in sin. To lie in the dirt, because we are fallen, is foolish obstinacy. (2.) Pray to God--(1st.) Acknowledging that we have deserved it; (2d.) By supplication. There is nothing which God hath promised to perform but we may ask it in prayer: Heb. xiii. 5, He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' If thou provest me, let me not miscarry; if thou exercisest me, let me not be cut off. Beg his returns. (3.) Give thanks that God is not wholly gone, as certainly he is not, as long as you are sensible of your loss, and have a tender heart left. Though he hath withdrawn the light of his countenance, yet he hath left the esteem of it, a thirst after God, and a desire of communion with himself. As long as there is any attraction left, you may find him by the smell of his ointments.

SERMON X.

Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.--Ver. 9.

IN the former part the Psalmist showeth that the word of God pointeth out the only true way to blessedness. Now, the main thing which the word enforceth is holiness. This is the way which we must take if we intend to come to our journey's end. This David applieth to the young man in the text, Wherewith shall a young man cleanse,' &c.

In the words there is--(1.) A question asked; (2.) An answer given.

In the question there is the person spoken of, a young man. And his work, wherewith shall he cleanse his way? Omnis quaestio supponit unum, et inquirit aliud. In this question there are several things supposed.

1. That we are from the birth polluted with sin; for we must be cleansed. It is not, direct his way,' but cleanse his way.'

2. That we should be very early and timeously sensible of this evil; for the question is propounded concerning the young man.

3. That we should earnestly seek for a remedy how to dry up the issue of sin^that runneth upon us. All this is to be supposed.

That which is inquired after is, what remedy there is against it? what course is to be taken? So that the sum of the question is this: How shall a man that is impure, and naturally defiled with sin, be made able, as soon as he cometh to the use of reason, to purge out that natural corruption, and live a holy and pure life to God? The answer given is, By taking heed thereto according to thy word.' Where two things are to be observed--(1.) The remedy; (2.) The manner how it is applied and made use of.

1. The remedy is the word--by way of address to God, called thy word;

because if God had not given direction about it, we should have been at an utter loss.

2. The manner how it is applied and made use of, by taking heed thereto, &c., by studying and endeavouring a holy conformity to God's will.

[1.] I begin with the question; for, as the careless world carrieth the matter, it seemeth very impertinent and ridiculous. What have youth and childhood to do with so serious a work? When old age hath snowed upon their heads, and the smart experience of more years in the world hath ripened them for so severe a discipline, then it is time to think of cleansing their way, or of entering upon a course of repentance and submission to God. For the present, Dandum est aliquid huic aetati--youth must be a little indulged; they will grow wiser as they grow more in years. Oh! no; God demandeth his right as soon as we are capable to understand it. And it concerneth every one, as soon as he cometh to the use of reason, presently to mind his work, both in regard of God and himself.

(1.) In regard of God, that he may not be kept out of his right too long: Eccles. xii. 1, Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth.' He is our creator; we have nothing but what he gave us, and that for his own use and service. And therefore the vessel should be cleansed as soon as may be, that it may be fit for the master's use.' It is a kind of spiritual restitution for the neglects of childhood and the forgetfulness of infancy, when we were not in a capacity to know our creator, much less to serve him. And therefore, as soon as we come to the use of reason, we should restore his right with advantage.

(2.) In regard of himself. The first seasoning of the vessel is very considerable: Prov. xxii. 6, Train up a child in the way in which he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' When well

principled and seasoned in youth, it sticketh by them, before sin and worldly lusts have gotten a deeper rooting. If Solomon's observation be true, a man's infancy and younger time is a notable presage what he will prove afterwards: Prov. xx. 11, Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.' Much may be known by our young inclinations. But, alas! this is not full out the case. The vessel is seasoned already; but wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?' which presupposeth a defilement. No infant is like a vessel that newly cometh out of the potter's shop, indifferent for good or bad infusions. The vessel is tainted already, and hath a smatch of the old man and the corruptions of the flesh: Ps. li. 5, Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' We came polluted into the world; our business is to stop the growth of sin. As a child walloweth in his filthiness, so we do all spiritually wallow in our blood: Ezek. xvi. 4, 5, As for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born, thou wert not washed in water, nor swaddled at all. No eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out into the open field, to the loathing of thy person in the day that thou wast born. And when I saw thee polluted in thy own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live,' &c. Therefore the question is very savoury and profitable, Wherewith shall a young man,' &c.

But why is the young man only specified?

I answer--All men are concerned in this work. Old men are not left to themselves, nor wholly given over as hopeless; but youth need it most, being inclined to liberty and carnal pleasures, and most apt to be led aside from the right way by the motions of the flesh; and being headstrong in their passions, and self-willed, need to have their fervours abated by the cool and chill doctrines of repentance and

conversion to God. And, therefore, though others be not excluded, the young man is expressly mentioned: unbroken colts need the stronger bits. The word is of use to all, but especially to youth, to bridle them, and reduce them to reason.

[2.] The answer--By taking heed thereto according to thy word.' The word, as a remedy against natural uncleanness, is considerable two ways--as a rule, and as an instrument.

(1.) As the only rule of that holiness which God will accept. All other ways are but bypaths, as good meaning, or the suggestions of a blind conscience, custom, example of others, our own desires, laws of men, superstitious observances, and apocryphal holiness. Nothing is holiness in God's account, how specious soever it be, unless it be according to the word. What doth the word do about all these as the rule? It showeth the only way of reconciliation with God, or being cleansed from the guilt of sin, and the only way of solid and true sanctification and subjection to God, which is our cleansing from the filthiness of sin. All religions aim at this--Ut anima sit subjecta Deo, et peccata [5] in se. No true peace without the word, nor no true holiness. The first is proved Jer. vi. 16, Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' The second is proved John xvii. 17, Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.' So that a young man that is, like Hercules in bivio, to choose his path to true happiness, will never attain to true peace and sound satisfaction of conscience, nor to true grace or a hearty subjection to God, but by consulting with the word. No other rule and direction will serve the turn. (1.) It is the only rule to teach us how to obtain true peace of conscience. The whole world is become obnoxious to God, and held under the awe of divine justice. This bondage is natural, and the great

inquiry is how his anger shall be appeased: Micah vi. 6, 7, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' Now here is no tolerable satisfaction offered, no plaster for the wounds of conscience, no way to compromise and take up the controversy between us^and God; but by the propitiation which the gospel holdeth forth all this is effected. The Gentiles were at a loss, the Jews rested in the sacrifices, which yet could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience,' Heb. ix. 9; therefore they fled to barbarous and sinfully cruel customs, offering their first-born, &c. There was no course to recover men from their entanglements and perplexities of soul, how to pacify God for sin, but they were still left in a floating uncertainty, till God revealed himself as reconciling the world to himself in Christ. Now, no doctrine doth propound the way of reconciliation with God, and redemption from those fears of his angry justice which are so natural to us, with such rational advantages, and claimeth such a just title to human belief, as the doctrine of the gospel. Oh! then, if the young man would cleanse his conscience, and quiet and calm his own spirit, he must of necessity take up with the word as his sure direction in the case. Look abroad, where will you find rest for your souls in this business of atonement and reconciliation with God? What strange horrible fruits and effects have men's contrivances on this account produced? What have they not invented, what have they not done, what not suffered upon this account? and yet continued in dread and bondage all their days. Now, what a glorious soul-appeasing light doth the doctrine of satisfaction and

atonement by the blood of Christ the Son of God cause to break in upon the hearts of men! The testimony of blood in the conscience is one of the witnesses the believer hath in himself: 1 John v. 8, And there are three that bear witness on earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood;' and ver. 10, He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.' (2.) It is the only rule of true holiness. Never was it stated and brought to such a pitch as it is in the scriptures, nor enforced by such arguments as are found there; it requireth such a holiness as standeth in conformity to God, and is determined by his will. Now it is but reason that he that is the Supreme Being should be the rule of all the rest. It is a holiness of another rate than the blind heart could find out; not an external devotion, nor a civil course, but such as transformeth the heart and subdueth it to the will of God, Rom. ii. 15. If a man would attain to the highest exactness that a rational creature is capable of, not to moral virtue only, but a true genuine respect to God and man, he must regard and love the law of God that is pure. A man that would be holy had need of an exact rule, for to be sure his practice will come short of his rule; and therefore, if the rule itself be short, there will no due provision be made for respects to God or man. But now this is a rule that reacheth not only to the way, but the thoughts; that converteth the soul: Ps. xix. 7, The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' Take the fairest draughts of that moral perfection which yet is of human recommendation, and you will find it defective and maimed in some parts, either as to God or men. It is inferioris hemisphaerii, as not reaching to the full subjection of the soul to God. There is some dead fly in their box of ointment, either for manner or end.

(2.) The word is considerable as an instrument which God maketh use of to cleanse the heart of man. It will not be amiss a little to show the

instrumentality of the word to this blessed end and purpose. It is the glass that discovereth sin, and the water that washeth it away. (1.) It is the glass wherein to see our corruption. The first step to the cure is a knowledge of the disease; it is a glass wherein to Bee our natural face: James i. 23, For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass,' &c. In the word we see God's image and our own. It is the copy of God's holiness, and the representation of our natural faces, Rom. vii. 9. What fond conceits have we of our own spiritual beauty! but there we may see the leprous spots that are upon us. (2.) It sets us a-work to see it purged; it is the water to wash it out. The word of command presseth the duty; it is indispensably required. What doth every command sound in our ears but Wash you, make you clean.'? This is indispensably required: 1 John iii. 3, And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure;' and Heb. xii. 14, Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' Some things God may dispense with, but this is never dispensed with. Many things are ornamental that are not absolutely necessary, as wealth, riches: Wisdom with an inheritance is good;' so learning. Many have gone to heaven that were never learned, but never any without holiness. (3.) The word of promise encourageth it: 2 Cor. vii. 1, Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;' and 2 Peter i. 4, Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.' God might have required it upon the account of his sovereignty, we being his creatures, especially this being the perfection of our natures, and rather a privilege than a burden; but

God would not rule us with a rod of iron, but deal with rational creatures rationally, by promises and threatenings. On the one side he telleth us of a pit without a bottom: on the other, of blessed and glorious promises, things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard of, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive.' Therefore the word hath a notable instrumentality that way.

(3.) The doctrine of the scripture holds out the remedy and means of cleansing--Christ's blood; which is not only an argument or motive to move us to it. So it is urged 1 Peter i. 8, Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable,' &c. It presseth holiness upon this argument. Why? God hath been at great cost to bring it about, therefore we must not content ourselves with some smooth morality, which might have been whether Christ had been, yea or nay. Again, the word propounds it as a purchase, whereby grace is procured for us; so it is said, 1 John i. 7, He hath purchased the Spirit to bless us, and turn us from our sins. And it exciteth faith to apply and improve this remedy, and so conveyeth the power of God into the soul: Acts xv. 9, Purifying their hearts by faith.'

2. The manner how the word is applied and made use of, If he take heed thereunto according to thy word.' This implieth a studying of the word, and the tendency and importance of it, which is necessary if the young man would have benefit by it. David calleth the statutes of God the men of his counsel. Young men that are taken with other books, if they neglect the word of God--that book that should do the cure upon the heart and mind--they are, with all their knowledge, miserable: Ps. i. 2, His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' If men would grow wise to salvation, and get any skill in the practice of godliness, they must be much in this

blessed book of God, which is given us for direction: 1 John ii. 14, I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.' It is not a slight acquaintance with the word that will make a young man so successful as to defeat the temptations of Satan, and be too hard for his own lust; it is not a little notional irradiation, but to have the word dwell in you, and abide in you richly. The way to destroy ill weeds is to plant good herbs that are contrary. We suck in carnal principles with our milk, and therefore we are said to speak lies from the womb.' A kind of a riddle; before we are able to speak, we speak lies--namely, as we are prone to error and all manner of carnal fancies by the natural temper and frame of our hearts, Isa. lviii. 2; and therefore, from our very tender and infant-age we should be acquainted with the word of God: 2 Tim. iii. 15, And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures.' It may be children, by reading the word, get nothing but a little memorative knowledge, but yet it is good to plant the field of the memory; in time they will soak into the judgment and conscience, and thence into the heart and affections.

3. It implieth a care and watchfulness over our hearts and ways, that our will and actions be conformed to the word. This must be the young man's daily prayer and care, that there be a conformity between his will and the word, that he may be a walking Bible, Christ's living epistle, copy out the word in his life, that the truths of it may appeal plainly in his conversation.

All that I have said issueth itself into three points:--

1. That the great duty of youth, as soon as they come to the full use of reason, is to inquire and study how they may cleanse their hearts and ways from sin.

2. That the word of God is the only rule sufficient and effectual to

accomplish this work.

3. If we would have this efficacy, there is required much care and watchfulness, that we come to the direction of the word in every tittle; not a loose and inattentive reflection upon the word, careless inconsiderateness, but a taking heed thereunto.

Now, why in youth, and as soon as we come to the use of reason, we should mind the work of cleansing our way?

1. Consider how reasonable this is. It is fit that God should have our first and our best. It is fit he should have our first, because he minded us before we were born. His love to us is an eternal and an everlasting love; and shall we put off God to old age? shall we thrust him into a corner? Surely God, that loved us so early, it is but reason he should have our first, and also our best; for we have all from him. Under the law the first-fruits were God's, to show the first and best was his portion. All the sacrifices that were offered to him, they were in their strength, and young: Lev. ii. 14, And if thou offer a meat-offering of thy first-fruits unto the Lord, thou shalt offer for the meat-offering of thy first-fruits green ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears.' God would not stay till ripened. God will not be long kept out of his portion. Youth is our best time. Mal. i. 13, when they brought a weak and sickly offering, Should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord.' The health, strength, quickness of spirit, and vigour is in youth. Shall our health and strength be for the devil's use, and shall we put off God with the dregs of time? Shall Satan feast upon the flower of our youth and fresh time, and God only have the scraps and fragments of the devil's table? When wit is dulled, the ears heavy, the body weak, and affections are spent, is this a fit present for God?

2. Consider the necessity of it. (1.) Because of the heat of youth, the

passions and lusts are very strong: 2 Tim. ii. 22, Fly also youthful lusts.' Men are most incident in that age to pride and self-conceit, to strong affections, inordinate and excessive love of liberty: 1 Tim. iii. 6, Not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.' A man may make tame fierce creatures, lions and tigers; and the fury of youth needs to be tempered and bridled by the word. It is much for the glory of grace that this heat and violence is broken when the subject is least of all disposed and prepared. (2.) Because none are tempted so much as they. Children cannot be serviceable to the devil, and old men are spent, and have chosen their ways; but youths, who have a sharpness of understanding, and the stoutest and most stirring spirits, the devil loveth to make use of such: 1 John ii. 13, I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.' They are most assaulted; but it is for the honour of grace when they overcome, when their fervency and strength is employed, not in satisfying lusts, but in the service of God and fighting against Satan. Therefore it is very needful they should be seasoned with the word betimes.

3. Consider the many inconveniencies that will follow if they do not presently mind this work. (1.) Death is uncertain, and therefore such a weighty business as this will brook no delay. God doth not always give warning. Nadab and Abihu, two rash and inconsiderate young men, were taken away in their sins; and the bears out of the forest devoured the children that mocked the prophet. The danger being so great, as soon as we are sensible of it, we should flee from it. When children come to the fulness of reason, they stand upon their own bottom; before, they are reckoned to their parents. Oh, woe be to you if you die in your sins! Certainly as soon as a man is upon his own personal account, he should look to himself, lest God cut him off before he hath made his

peace with him. (2.) Sin groweth stronger by custom, and more rooted; it gathereth strength by every act. A brand that hath been in the fire is more apt to take fire again. A man in a dropsy, the more he drinks, the more his thirst increaseth. Every act lesseneth fear and strengthened inclination: Jer. xiii. 27, Woe unto thee, Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?' A twig is easily bowed, but when it grows into a tree it is more troublesome and unpliable. A tree newly set may be transplanted, but when long rooted, not so easily. The man that was possessed of a devil from his childhood, how hardly is he cured! Mark ix. 29. (3.) Justice is provoked the longer, and that will be a grief to you first or last. If ever we be brought home to God, it will cost us many a bitter tear; not only at first conversion: Jer. xxxi. 18, I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised,' &c., but afterwards, David, though he began with God betimes, Ps. xxv. 7, yet prays, Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgression;' and Job xiii. 26, For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.' Old bruises may trouble us long after, upon every change of weather, and new afflictions revive the sense of old sins; they may stick by us. We think tricks of youth are not to be stood upon: you may have a bitter sense of them to your dying day. (4.) You will every day grow more useless to God: the exercise of religion dependeth much on the vigour of affections. Again, it is very profitable; it brings a great deal of honour to God to begin with him betimes. All time is little enough to declare your respects to God. And it is honourable for you. Seniority in grace is a preferment: they were in Christ before me,' saith Paul. An old disciple is a title of honour. To grow grey in Christ's service, and to know him long, it maketh the work of grace more easy. The dedication of the first-fruits sanctified

the whole lump: Lam. iii. 27, It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth,' to be inured to strictness betimes. Dispositions impressed in youth increase with us. Again, it will be very comfortable when the miseries of old age come upon you. As the ant provideth in summer for winter, so should we provide for age. Now what a sweet comfort will it be, when we are taken off from service, that while we had any strength and affections, God had the use of them! Then our age will be a good old age.

Use 1 is for lamentation that so few youths take to the ways of God. No age doth despise the word so much as this, which hath most need of it. It is a rare thing to find a Joseph, or a Samuel, or a Josiah,. that seek God betimes. Go the universities, and you will find that those that should be as Nazarites consecrated to God, live as those that have vowed and consecrated themselves to Satan: Amos ii. 11, And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites,' &c. The sons of the prophets in their youth were bred for a more strict discipline in their holy calling, separated from worldly delights, to be a stock of a succeeding ministry. But, alas I they spend their time in vanity, bringing nothing thence but the sins of the place, and vainly following the sinful customs of the country. How few regard the education of their youth in knowledge or religious practice! Families are societies to be sanctified to God, as well as churches. The governors of them have as truly a charge of souls as the pastors of churches. They offer their children to God in baptism, but educate and bring them up for the world and the flesh. They be wail any natural defect in them, if their children have a stammering tongue, a deaf ear, or a withered leg; but not want of grace. We have a prejudice, and think they are too young to be wrought upon; but God's word can break in with weight and power on young ones: Luke xi. 1, One of his

disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples;' and Mat. xxi. 15, 16, When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus said unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?' They learned it of their parents: Mat. xxi. 9, And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David.' We should often be infusing good principles in youth. Corruption of youth is one of the saddest symptoms of approaching judgment.

Use 2 is exhortation to young ones. You that are to begin your course, begin with God: you have no experience, yet you have a rule; you have mighty lusts, but a stronger spirit. No age is excluded from the promise of the Spirit: Joel ii. 28, 29, And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.' Of John the Baptist it is said, Luke i. 15, He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb;' and Mark x. 14, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.' There is power to enlighten you, notwithstanding all your prejudices; to subdue your lusts, notwithstanding the power of corruptions: 1 John ii. 13, 14, I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father,' etc.; and see Gen. xxxix. 9. It will be a great comfort to you when you die that your great work is over. Oh, what a sad thing is it that, when the body is going to the grave, the soul hath not yet

learned to converse with God! Hosea viii. 12, I have written to them the great things of my law; but they were counted a strange thing.' God hath written an epistle to us, and we will not read it nor consult with it; are wholly strangers to it. But now, when acquainted with God, it will not be so irksome to go to him.

SERMON XI.

With my whole heart have I sought thee: let me not wander from thy commandments.--Ver. 10.

THE Psalmist had in the former verse directed the young man to diligence^and attention unto the word; but the word doth nothing unless we join prayer; and therefore now he gives an example in his own person. Having spoken of the power of the word to cleanse the way, now saith he, With my whole heart,' &c.

Here take notice--

1. Of David's argument, with my whole heart have I sought thee.

2. His request, O let me not wander from thy commandments.

First, For David's argument, I have sought thee with my whole heart.' He pleadeth his own sincerity. I showed you largely what it is to seek God, and that with the whole heart, in the second verse. I shall not repeat anything; only, that I may not dismiss this clause without some note, observe, first, that it is the duty and practice of God's children to seek him.

You have David's instance in the text and elsewhere. It is their general character: Ps. xxiv. 6, This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.' God's children are a generation of seekers. They find hereafter, but now they seek. Their great business is to be seeking after God, more ample and full communion with him.

Seeking of God implies three things:--

1. There is a more general seeking of God, for relief of our sin and misery by nature.

2. More particular, upon special occasions.

3. There is a constant seeking of God in the use of his ordinances.

1. There is a more general seeking of God, for relief of our sinful and wretched condition by nature. Adam, when a sinner, ran away from God; and therefore all our business is now to seek him, that we may find him again in Christ Jesus. The general address that is made to God for pardon and reconciliation, it is often called a seeking of God in scripture; so it is taken Isa. lv. 6, Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near;' that is, get into favour with God before it be too late. So Amos v. 6, Seek the Lord, and ye shall live.' This notes our general address for pardon and reconciliation.

2. There is a more particular seeking of God; that notes our addresses to God either in our exigencies and straits, or in all our business and employment.

[1.] In our exigencies and straits. And so we are said to seek God when in doubts we seek his direction, James i. 5; when in weakness we seek strength; in sickness, health; in troubles, comfort. Asa is blamed that he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.' Paul's messenger of Satan drives him to the throne of grace: 2 Cor. xii. 8, For this I sought the Lord thrice.' He would knock again and again, to see what answers he could get from God.

[2.] In all our businesses and affairs God must be sought unto, and we must ask his leave, his counsel, and his blessing. Pagans, before the awe of religion was extinguished, would begin with their gods in every weighty enterprise. A Jove principium was an honest heathen principle. Laban consults with his teraphim; Balak sends for Balaam; they had their oracles that they would resort to. So far as any nation was touched with a sense of a divine power, they would never venture upon anything without consulting with their gods. And it is enjoined as a piece of religious good manners to own God upon all occasions: Prov.

iii. 5, In all thy ways acknowledge him.' It is an acknowledgment of God, an owning him as a God, that we would be asking his leave, counsel, and blessing. His leave must be asked, though the thing be never so lawful and easy. We are taught every day to ask our daily bread, though we have it by us, that we may not, like thieves and robbers, use his goods without his leave. So for his counsel; he is sure to miscarry that makes his bosom his oracle, his wit his counsellor. It is a high piece of spiritual idolatry to lean upon our own understanding, and think to carry even the ordinary affairs of any day without asking counsel from God. And then his blessing. God is not an idle spectator, he disposeth of all events, and giveth the blessing: Jer. x. 23, The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;' that is, as to any happy issue. God doth the more stand upon his right that he may the oftener hear from us, and that we may have many occasions to bring us to the throne of grace. Now this is the constant practice of God's children. David always ran to the oracle or the ephod when he had any business to do: 1 Sam. xxiii., Shall I do thus and thus, or shall I not? Jacob in his journey would neither go to Laban, nor come from him, without a warrant. Jehoshaphat in the business of Ramoth-Gilead would not stir a foot until he had counsel from God; he sends not only to the captain of the host, but to the prophet of the Lord: Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord to day,' 1 Kings xxii. 2; Judges i. 1, ii. 28.

I have spoken this to show why the children of God are called the generation of them that seek him.

3. The third thing that may be called seeking of God is our observance of him in the use of his ordinances. It is one thing to serve God, another thing to seek God; one thing to make God the object, another thing the end of our worship. To seek God only in our necessity, and

not to seek God in his ordinances, argueth a base spirit. Christians,. our losing God in Adam, that makes us seek him in a way of reconciliation. Our want of God in straits, and in the course of our affairs, maketh us seek him by way of supply. But now our duty to God, and love to him, should make us seek him in his ordinances by way of communion; and in this sense seeking God is often spoken of in scripture: Ps. xxii. 26, They shall praise the Lord that seek him;' that is, that wait upon him, and maintain communion with him in the means of grace.

Well, then, let us be more in seeking of God. If we would find him in heaven, we must seek him on earth: Heb. xi. 6, He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' They that seek his favour, that often resort to him, carry on a constant communion with him; those that are waiting for his power and presence in his ordinances, these are the men God will own. We are not fit to receive so great a blessing as God's favour if we will not look after it with diligence.

Secondly, Observe, those that seek God aright, must seek him with their whole heart.

But how is that? Besides what hath already been spoken of it in the second use, it noteth three things--

1: Sincerity of aims.

2. Integrity of parts.

3. Uniformity of endeavours.

1. Sincerity of aims. Many pretend to seek God, but indeed they do but seek themselves. As those that followed Christ for the loaves, that take up religion upon base and carnal respects: John vi. 26, Verily I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.' There was much outward diligence, but a false heart lurking under it; their belly drove them

to him. Of all by-ends this is the worst and basest: Vix diligitur Jesus propter Jesum.--Jesus Christ is scarce loved for Jesus' sake. Yet, further, those that prayed to God for corn, wine, and oil, and did not seek his favour and grace in the first place, see what the Lord saith of them: Hosea vii. 14, They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds.' They did seek God, but yet it is counted howling. They only minded the supply of outward wants; and made prayer merely to be an act of carnal self-love. And then it is but howling, such a noise as a dog or a beast would make when he wants his food. Christians, no doubt they were instant, there was a world of earnestness, they were affected when the stroke was upon them, and seriously desired to get rid of it, but they have not cried to me with their whole heart.' It was but such a sense of pain and want as the beasts have. If there be anything sought from God more than God, or not for God, we do not seek him with the whole heart, but only for other uses.

2. It notes integrity of parts. We read in scripture of loving God, not only with the heart, but with the whole heart;' and of believing, not only with the heart, Rom. x. 10, but of believing with the whole heart,' Acts viii. 37; because seeking of God is but a metaphorical term, by which faith is expressed; therefore let us see what it is to believe with the whole heart. The doctrine of the gospel is not only true, to work upon the understanding, but it is good, so as to move and draw the will: 1 Tim. i. 15, This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation,' &c. Not only a faithful saying'--that is, a true doctrine--that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,' but it is worthy of all acceptation.' It is an excellent doctrine to ravish the will. Now, observe what a great deal of difference there is between men in believing. Some that hear the gospel, and have only a literal

knowledge of it, so as to be able to talk of it, so as to understand the words and syllables, to know what it means; they may have some clearness of understanding this way, but there is not a sound assent. There are others affected so with the gospel, as by the common influence of the Spirit they may assent to the truths delivered concerning God and Christ, and salvation by him, yet do not give it entertainment in their hearts. These may be said to seek God, but not with the whole heart. A speculative, naked, and cold assent they may have, but that is not enough. It is not enough to see food that is whole some, but you must eat it. Nor is it enough to understand the gospel, and believe that it is true, but we must embrace it; it must be accepted, else we do not believe with the whole heart. The word is propounded to man as true. Now, the truth made known may cause a speculative assent. This may draw profession after it; and this we call historical faith, because we are no more affected with the gospel than with an ordinary history which we read and believe. The word is propounded again as good, to move and excite the will. Now, there is a twofold good--the good of happiness, and the good of holiness. The good of happiness, that which is profitable and sweet. Then there is the good of holiness. Now, there are many that look upon the gospel as good and profitable, because it offereth pardon and eternal life; such comfort to the conscience, and such good to our whole souls. We may be affected with it as a good doctrine. Naturally, man hath not only a sense of religion, but he hath a hunger after immortality and everlasting blessedness. Therefore, since the gospel doth so clearly promote happiness, it may be greedily catched hold of by those whose hearts are affected, while they look upon it under these notions; and they may be so far affected that they may for a while not only profess it out of danger, but when some danger doth arise they may defend their

opinions with some care. Yet this is not with all the heart. Why? As soon as any great danger doth arise, out of which there is no escape, as gibbets, fires, racks, ignominy, and utter loss--as soon as persecution arose, saith Christ, all this ardour and heat of spirit which they did formerly seem to have, comes to nothing. What is the reason it vanisheth? Because they receive the gospel rather upon those notions of interest and profit, than of duty and holiness; and the impression of the profitableness of the gospel, as a doctrine of happiness, was not so deeply rooted in them, not so durable, that the hope of the future good would be prevalent over the fear of present evil and danger. There may be some desires of heaven in a carnal breast, but they are easily blotted out by worldly temptations; but the true desires of holiness are lasting, and will prevail over our lusts.

3. Believing with all the heart implies uniformity of endeavours. Oftentimes the soul may be strongly moved and affected for the present, and carried out to the gospel under the notion of holiness; but it is but the lighter part of the soul that is so moved, not the whole heart, therefore it is not durable. The people meant as they spake when they were willing to come under the obedience of the word. God gives them that testimony: The people have well said; but oh! that there were such a heart in them,' Deut. v. 28, 29. They may receive it, and may seem affected with it, and have a sense of reformation; but, saith the evangelist, Luke viii. 14, It brings no fruit to perfection.' It was not so deeply rooted as to prevail strongly over their carnal distempers. And, therefore, here comes in another sort of men, that are affected with the word as a holy doctrine. They may have a liking to the holiness of it, and have some consolation thereupon; they have their beginnings, and some good offers towards sanctification; but it brings nothing to perfection. They may have such a hope of heaven as

that they may be said to taste the powers of the world to come,' Heb. vi. 5, 6; yet because it is not deeply rooted in the heart, and only begets some raw motions, and moves the lighter part of the soul, and doth not show itself in a uniform course of obedience, therefore it is not with all the heart. It may be it was but for a time, or cast in upon some eminent trouble. Therefore that is only believing, and seeking God with all the heart, when the doctrine of life is so acknowledged to be true, good, and holy, as to be closed with upon that account; not only because of its suitableness to our eternal good and interest, but as it is a rule of our duty. And then it enters upon the heart when every faculty of it is subdued to God. It is not some colouring of the outside, but a deep dye when it soaks into the whole soul, and subdues the affections to God, which is manifested by a uniform course of obedience. Now David urgeth this to God as an argument, I have sought thee with my whole heart.' Hence observe--

Doct. We may mention the good which is wrought in us, and urge it to God in prayer.

It is a useful case. How may we mention our own gracious qualifications, and the good that is wrought in us?

Negatively--1. Not by way of boasting. There is no such thing here; no presumptuous boasting of his own perfections; for it was accompanied with a deep sense of his weakness, wandering, and straggling condition; he acknowledgeth his infirmities. There is no such thing allowed as boasting. The apostle's argument is convincing, Why boastest thou? What have we that we have not received?' If we can boast of anything, it is that we are most in debt, that we have received more: 1 Cor. i. 31, we must glory in the Lord.'

2. Not pleading of merit, as if he had deserved anything of God. So the Pharisee speaks of his good works, Luke xviii. 11. It is not to such a

purpose as if we could challenge a reward as a due debt upon any good that we have done.

But positively--How then may we make mention of our qualifications?

1. We may mention what is wrought in us for God's glory. Surely, however we humble ourselves, we must not belie his bounty. To be always complaining of spiritual evils, it doth not argue a good temper of soul: Ps. cxvi. 7, Return to thy rest, my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.' We may own the Lord's bounty, and take notice what good we have done to the glory of his grace: Not I, but the grace of God which was with me,' 1 Cor. xv. 10.

2. We may mention it to our own comfort. Thus Paul, 2 Cor. i. 12. Jesus Christ is our rejoicing, but in one sense this is also our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience.' Wherefore is grace given us, but for the furtherance of our comfort? To bear false witness against ourselves is naught. Though the duties of the first table neither begin nor end in us, yet the whole law of charity begins at home.

3. For our own vindication. Thus Hezekiah: Isa. xxxviii. 3, Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee with a perfect heart.' This was his plea; but I suppose it was not before God as a judge, but before God as a witness. He called God to witness that he had walked before him with a perfect heart. He was slandered by Rabshakeh. They thought, when he broke down the altars of Baal and cut down their groves, that he had cut down the altars of the God of Israel; therefore, saith Rabshakeh, speaking to the humour and discontent of the people--and we must look upon it as a politic insinuation--Is not this he whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away and demolished?' 2 Kings xviii. 22. Now, saith Hezekiah, I have walked before thee with an upright heart.' Many a good magistrate is often put upon such pleas for God's honour, in things distasteful to the popularity.

4. What God hath wrought in us may be urged as an argument in prayer to obtain further grace many ways. Partly because God loves to crown his own mercies, and make one to be a step to another. We are endeared to God by his own mercies; he is very tender and choice of them. In whom he hath begun a good work he will perfect it: Zech. iii. 2, Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' What I shall all my former mercies be in vain? It is God's own argument, and he takes it well when his people urgeth it. In many cases, Deus donando debet--by giving one mercy, he makes himself a debtor to give another. Plutarch gives us a story of the Rhodians, when they came to sue to the Romans for help, that one urged what good turns they had done to the Romans; but the people urged what good turns the Romans did to them, and they obtained relief. Such a plea is accept able and honourable to God, when we urge what God hath done for us. And partly because sincerity, by the consent of all, hath the full room of an evidence and gospel-plea in the court of justification. When the business is how a sinner shall be accepted with God, for a law-plea we can only plead the merits of Christ and God's mercy; there all we have and can do is but dung and dross, Phil. iii. 8, 9, as to an acquittance from sin. But as to our acquittance from hypocrisy, as to the plea of a gospel-evidence, we may produce our sincerity and the fruits of our obedience, to show our title is good as the matter is ordered by the Lord's grace, that we have the gospel-title. To all the other our title is by the righteousness of Christ, but the evidence of our title is sincere walking.

Secondly, Let us come to David's request, Let me not wander from thy commandments.' It may be translated, Make me not to err;' that is, by the suspending of thy grace;' for that will necessarily follow. The Septuagint reads, Do not repel from thy commandments.' God seems to repel and cast off those that he doth not assist with his grace. Here

David saith, I have sought thee.' Observe the mischief that a heart which truly seeketh God desireth to fly from--sin, or wandering from the path of obedience. There is a communion with God, but in the way of his commandments; therefore they do not desire establishment of their interest and happiness only, but of God's glory, that they might not wander. Hence observe--

Doct. 1. The more experience men have of the ways of God, the more sensible will they be of their readiness to wander.

David, a man of so much experience, that sought God with his whole heart, Lord, let me not wander.' What is the reason?

1. Because they have a larger sense of duty.

2. A more tender sense of dangers and difficulties that do attend them.

First, They have a larger sense of duty to God. At first, while we are carnal, we take up duty by the lump, and by the visible bulk of it; we look only to ergon nomou, the work of the law.' Rom. ii. 15, and to avoid gross sins, or perform outward acts of worship. Oh! if I do sin, I am no adulterer, no extortioner, Luke xviii. 11. We think then it is well. But when we begin to have grace wrought in our heart, then we begin to serve God in the spirit, Phil. iii. 3: And my God, whom I serve with my spirit.' Rom. i. 9, then we begin to look after the regulation of the inner man, and subduing of the soul to God; and we cannot be contented with the visible bulk of obedience, and with some general conformity. Ay! but at first there is only a general purpose to serve God in the spirit; but afterward, when they begin to look into the breadth of the commandment, still they are sensible of their coming short, and how apt they are to wander in this and that point; still their sense of duty is increased, because their light, their love to God, and their power is increased, and because they draw near to their everlasting hopes.

1. Because their light is increased. By communion with God they see more of his holiness. The more a man is exercised in obedience, the clearer is his light and understanding, both to God and the will of God: Mat. v. 8, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' All sight of God, it is, as Nazianzen speaks, according to the proportion of our purity; and therefore the more communion we have with God, the more sight into the nature of God, and the will of God, and the more they are held under the awe of God. In moral disciplines, the further we wade in them, the more we see of our defects. Those that went to Athens, first they counted themselves sophoi`, wise men; afterward only philo'sophoi, lovers of wisdom; then they were only men that could talk a little; afterward they found themselves nothing. So a Christian in communion with God, the longer he converseth with God, the more he doth see of his perfection and holiness: Surely I am more brutish than any man,' was the expression of wise Agur, Prov. xxx. 2. This holy man of God, saith Chrysostom, speaks it not only humbly, but truly, as he thinks. Sure they did not compliment with God. These holy men, in the serious actings of their souls, they speak as they think. Why? Because they have a high sense of Cod's holiness, therefore a deeper sense of their own vileness. They think there are hardly any so bad as themselves. Now they are convinced that the holy God will not be put off with any slight matter; and they are become sensible of that precept, Mat. v. 48, Be perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

2. Their love to God is increased by acquaintance with him, and therefore their hearts are more tender and sensible of the least deflection. The more a man loves God, the more he will do for God: 1 John v. 3, This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.' That is a clear rule; the more we love God, the more chary we will be

of his commandments; and therefore they cannot sin upon such easy terms as before, nor go to heaven upon such easy terms as they thought before.

3. Their power is increased. He that is grown to a man's estate minds other work than what he did when a child; and as they have more strength, they look after more work. At first it was only to prevent excesses and breaking out of sin, but afterwards to subdue every thought to the obedience of Christ.

4. They are nearer to heaven, and therefore they look after greater suitableness to their everlasting estate. They think of that sinless and pure estate they shall enjoy there, therefore have a greater sense of duty upon them. Natural motion, saith the philosopher, is slower in the beginning, and swifter in the end and close; so spiritual motion in the end and close ariseth to a greater vigour of holiness; that which served before will not serve their turn now: Phil. iii. 14, they are pressing forward toward the mark,' &c.; they are hastening apace, and strain themselves when the prize is so near.

Secondly, As they have a larger sense of duty, so they have a greater experience of the dangers and difficulties that do attend them. Aristotle observes of young men, that they are more given to hope than the old are. They are of great and strong hopes. He renders three reasons for it--because they are eager of spirit, have little experience, and look but to a few things; and therefore they are forward to get abroad in the world, and to entangle themselves in the early cares of a family, until their rashness be confuted by their own miscarriage. So it is true of young Christians; they are all on a flame, ready to run into the mouth of danger upon the confidence of their present affections; and till they have smarted often, this confidence is not abated.

But men that have been exercised and experienced are more sensible of the naughtiness and inconstancy of their own hearts: Ps. li. 6, In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom;' and therefore are more diffident of their own strength, and desire the Lord to keep them from wandering. We see, then, a cautelous fear is necessary to the last; it is useful to us not only to begin, but to work out our salvation: Phil. ii. 12, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;' not only when we are novices, and so weak, and more liable to temptation, but to the close of our days: Prov. xxviii. 14, Blessed is the man that feareth always.' That fear which causeth diffidence, and doubting, and despair, is a torment, not a blessedness; yet the fear that is opposite to carnal security and presuming on our own strength, is a fruit of grace and spiritual experience. This is that which stirreth up care and diligence in our heavenly calling, and dependence upon God, and constant addresses to him; that keepeth us humble and waiting for the supplies of his grace.

Doct. 2. It is God alone that can keep us from wandering.

Reas. There is in man's heart a mighty proneness thereto: Jer. xiv. 10, you have hearts that love to wander.' Man is a restless creature, that loveth shifts and changes. For weakness they are compared to children, Hosea xi. 3, and for wandering compared to sheep, Isa. liii. 6. There is no creature so apt to go astray as sheep, and so unable to return. This is the disposition of men by nature. And mark, much of the old nature remains still with the saints. Have they not this wandering property to the last? David acknowledgeth it, though there were some good in him: Ps. cxix. 176, I have gone astray like a lost sheep.' Consider the saints; though they have sincerity, yet not perfection; and sometimes they wander through in advertency; they are overtaken, Gal. vi. 1, as Noah was--they do not run of their own accord. And

sometimes we err through the darkness that is in us. Though a child of God be light in the Lord,' yet he hath a great deal of darkness still.

It may be he is wise in generals, but ignorant in particulars, as the heathen; in general they had good notions of an infinite and eternal power, but they were vain in their imaginations.' Rom. i. 21, in their practical inferences and discourses, when they came to rest upon this God. So a child of God may have a general sense of his duty, but as to particulars he is apt to miscarry; the mind may be blinded by lust and prejudice.

Sometimes they err through frowardness of their own lust: there is a law in their members which wars against the law of their minds.' Rom. vii. There are boisterous lusts, and a man hath much ado to keep his path: Ps. lxxiii., My foot had well-nigh slipped.' Therefore we had need God should keep us continually. And the Lord hath undertaken to guide us: Isa. lviii. 11, The Lord shall guide thee continually;' and Ps. xlviii. 14, He will be our guide even unto death;' and Ps. lxxiii. 24, Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterward receive me to thy glory.' We need this constant guidance and direction from God, that he may still lead us, and keep us from wandering and turning aside.

Use. You see, then, what need we have of a guide and shepherd, and of constant dependence upon God. Of all titles, this is the title given to the saints; they are a flock, and the sheep of God's pasture;' and Christ is called the shepherd of souls,' 1 Peter ii. 25. There is no creature of such a dependence as sheep. Dogs and swine can roam, abroad all the day, and find their way home again at night, but sheep must have a guide to keep them in the fold, and to reduce them when gone astray, Luke xv. The good shepherd brought him home upon his shoulders. Lord, saith Austin, I can go astray of myself, but I cannot come back of myself. We need often to put up this request, Oh, let me not wander

from thy commandments.'

SERMON XII.

Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.--Ver. 11.

IN this verse you have David's practice, and the aim and end of it.

1. His practice, I have hid thy word in my heart.

2. The aim and end of it, that I might not sin against thee.

In the first, his practice, observe these circumstances--

1. The object or matter, the word.

2. The act of duty, I have hid.

3. The subject, the heart.

I shall open these circumstances.

1. The object, the word. The revelation of God's mind to his people is called his law, his testimonies, his ways, his precepts, his statutes, his commandments, his judgments, and now his word; whereby is meant God's expounding his mind as if he himself did speak to us. The expression is general, and compriseth promises, threatenings, doctrines, counsels, precepts. All these must be hid in the heart.

2. The act of duty, I have hid. A thing may be hidden two ways, either to conceal it, or else to cherish and keep it.

[1.] To conceal it; hid so as the unprofitable servant did hide his talent in a napkin, Mat. xxv. So David, typifying Christ, saith, I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and truth from the great congregation.'

[2.] To be kept as things of price, as jewels and treasures are hid den in chests and secret places, that they may not be embezzled or purloined. And herein there may be an allusion to the law, which was

kept in a chest or ark, Exod. xxv. 21. Thus the word is hidden, not in order to concealment, but safety. As to the conceit of hiding our knowledge, that we may not lose it by vainglory, which Chrysostom and Theodoret mention on the place, it is a conceit so foreign, that it need not to be mentioned. What we value most preciously we save most carefully.

3. The subject or place where the word is hidden, in the heart. Not the brain, or mind and memory only, but the heart, the seat of affections. To hide the word in our hearts is to understand and remember it, and to be affected to it and with it. Christ saith, John xiv. 21, He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' First we must have them, and then keep them. First we know them, then assent to them, and then approve them, because of the authority of the lawgiver, and the excellency of the thing commanded; and then respect them as a treasure that we are chary of; and having them still in our eye, do thereby regulate our practice and conversation. In short, by holding it in our hearts is meant not only a knowledge of the word, but an assent to it; not only an assent to it, but a serious and sound digestion of it by meditation; not only a digestion, but a constant respect to it, that we may not transgress it as it is a rule, nor lose it as it is a treasure, but may have it ready and forthcoming upon all occasions.

The points are these:--

Doct. 1. One duty and necessary practice of God's children is to hide the word in their hearts.

Doct. 2. That in hiding the word in our hearts, there must be a right end; our knowledge of it and delight in it must be directed to practice.

1. That one duty and necessary practice of God's children is to hide the word in their hearts. See it confirmed by a scripture or two: Josh.

i. 8, This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night;' Job xxii. 22, Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thy heart.' By the law is meant the whole word of God. Lay up his words,' as we would do choice things, that they may not be lost or embezzled; and lay them up as treasure to be used upon all occasions. In the heart;' let them not swim in the brain or memory only, but let the heart be affected with it: Col. iii. 16, Let the word of God dwell in you richly;' be so diligent in the study of the scripture, that it may become familiar with us, by frequent hearing, reading, meditating, conferring about it. As a stranger, let it not stand at the door, but receive it into an inner room; be as familiar as those that dwell with you. God complaineth of his people: Hosea viii. 12, I have written to them the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.' To be strangers to the word of God, and little conversant in it, is a great evil. What is it to hide the word in our hearts? (1.) To understand it, to get a competent knowledge of it; we take in things into the soul by the understanding: Prov. ii. 10, When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul.' There is first an entrance by knowledge. (2.) When it is assented unto by faith. The word is settled in the heart by faith, otherwise it soon vanisheth: Heb. iv. 2, The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it,' (3.) When it is kindly entertained: John viii. 37, Christ complains, Ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you,' ou chorei en humin. Men are so possessed with lust and prejudice, that there is no room for Christ's word. Though it break in upon the heart with evidence and power, yet it is not entertained there, but cast out again as an unwelcome guest. (4.) When it is deeply rooted. Many men have flashes for a time; their affections may be much

aloft, and they may have great fits and elevations of joy and delight, but no sound grace: John v. 35, Ye rejoiced in his light for a season.' But now the word must be settled into a standing affection, if we would have comfort and profit by it. We read of the ingrafted word,' James i. 21. There is a word bearing fruit, and a word ingrafted. Till there be the root of the matter in us, in vain do we expect fruit.

The reasons why this is one duty and practice of the saints, to hide the word in their hearts, are two:--

Reas. 1. First, that we may have it ready for our use. We lay up principles, that we may lay them out upon all occasions. Man hath an ingestive and an egestive faculty; when it is hid in the heart, it will be ready to break out in the tongue and practice, and be forthcoming to direct us in every duty and exigency. When persons run to the market for every pennyworth, it doth not become good housekeepers. To be to seek of comforts when we should use them, or to run to a book, is not so comfortable as to hide it in the heart. As Christ saith, A good scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old,' Mat. xiii. 52. He hath not only this year's growth, but the last year's gathering (for so is the allusion made); he hath not only from hand to mouth, but a good stock by him. So should a Christian have not only knowledge from hand to mouth, but a good stock and treasure in his heart, which is a very great advantage in these seven things.

1. It will prevent vain thoughts. What is the reason evil is so ready and present with us? Because our stock of knowledge is so small. A man that hath a pocket fuller of brass farthings than pieces of silver, will more readily draw out farthings than shillings; his stock is greater. So vain thoughts will be more ready with us, unless the word dwell richly in our hearts: Mat. xii. 35, A good man out of the good

treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.' The workings of our spirits are as our treasure and stock. The mind works upon what it finds in itself, as a mill grinds whatsoever is put into it, chaff or corn. Therefore, if we would prevent wicked thoughts, and musings of vanity all the day long, we must hide the word in our heart.

2. When you are alone and without outward helps, your hearts will furnish you with matter of counsel, or comfort, or reproof: Ps. xvi. 7, My reins instruct me in the night season.' When we are alone, and there is a veil of darkness drawn upon the world, and we have not the benefit of a bible, a minister, or Christian friends, our reins will instruct us; we may draw out of our heart that which will be for our comfort and refreshing. A Christian is to be a walking bible, to have a good stock and treasure in himself.

3. It will supply us in prayer. Barrenness and leanness of soul is a very great defect, which God's children often complain of. One great reason is, because the word of God doth not dwell plenteously in them, so that in every prayer we are to seek. If the heart were often exercised in the word, the promises would hold up our hearts in prayer, enlarge our affections, and we should be better able to pour out our spirits before him: Ps. xlv. 1, My heart is inditing a good matter.' What then? My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.' When the heart is full, the tongue will be loosed and speak freely. What is the reason we are so dumb and tongue-tied in prayer? Be cause our heart is so barren. When the spring is dry, there will be little water in the stream: Eph. vi. 17, Take the sword of the Spirit, that is the word of God;' then presently, praying with all manner of supplication.' When we have a good store of the word of God it will burst out in prayer.

4. It will be a great help to us in all businesses and affairs. Prov.

vi. 21, 22, speaking of the precepts of God, Bind them upon thy heart; when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.' Upon all occasions the word will be ready to cast in seasonable thoughts. When we awake, our most early thoughts in the morning will begin with God, to season the heart all the day; and as we are about our business, the word will hold our hearts in the fear of God; and when we sleep, it will guard thee from vain dreams and light imaginations. In a wicked man sin engrosseth all the thoughts; it employs him all the day, plays in his fancy all the night; it solicits him first in the morning, because he is a stranger to the word of God. But a man that is a bible to himself, the word will be ever upon him, urging him to duty, restraining him from sin, directing him in his ways, seasoning his work and employment. Therefore we should hide the word in our hearts.

5. It is a great relief against temptations to have the word ready. The word is called The sword of the Spirit,' Eph. vi. 17. In spiritual conflicts there is none to that. Those that ride abroad in time of danger will not be without a sword. We are in danger, and had need handle the sword of the Spirit. The more ready the scripture is with us, the greater advantage in our conflicts and temptations. When the devil came to assault Christ, he had scripture ready for him, whereby he overcame the tempter. The door is barred upon Satan, and he cannot find such easy entrance, when the word is hid in our hearts, and made use of pertinently: 1 John ii. 14, I write to you, young men, because ye are strong.' Where lies their strength? And the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.' Oh, it is a great advantage when we have the word not only by us, but in us, ingrafted in the heart! When it is present with us, we are more able to resist the assaults of Satan. Either a man for gets the word or hath lost his

affection to it, before he can be drawn to sin. The word of God, when it hath gotten into the heart, it will furnish us with seasonable thoughts.

6. It is a great relief in troubles and afflictions. Our faintings come from ignorance, or our forgetfulness: Heb. xii. 5, Ye have for gotten the consolation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.' If we had a herb growing in our gardens that would ease our smart, what are we the better if we know it not? There is no malady but what hath its remedy in the word. To have a comfort ready is a great relief.

7. It makes our conference and conversation with others more gracious: Mat. xii. 34, Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' When we have a great deal of hidden treasure in the soul it will get out at the tongue; for there is a quick intercourse between the heart and the tongue. The tap runs according to the liquor where with the vessel is filled. Come to men of an unsavoury spirit, pierce them, broach them, give them occasion again and again for discourse, and you get nothing but frothy communication from them and vain talk. But now a man that hath stored his heart with the word is ever and anon interposing for God. Like a bottle filled with wine, he must have vent. As the spouse's lips are said to drop as honey combs,' they are ever putting forth savoury expressions in their converse with others: Col. iii. 16, Let the word of God dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.' It will burst out presently if the word of God dwell in your hearts.

Before I go to the second reason, let me answer an objection: But is not this to take from the Spirit, and to give it to the word? and that to the word, not as written in God's book, but as it is in our hearts?

Will not this be to ascribe all to created grace? I answer--

1. Questionless it is the office of the Spirit to bring things to our remembrance, and the great help of the Spirit of God is by suggesting such passages as may be of most seasonable relief to the soul in temptations, in prayer, and in business, John xiv. 16. But what is given to the scriptures and grace is not to the wrong of the Spirit, for the scripture is of his inditing, and grace is of his working; yea, we still reserve the chief honour to the Holy Ghost, for he not only worketh grace, but worketh by grace. He not only indites the scripture, but works by it; it is he that quickeneth prayer; and therefore it is ill trusting to our own understanding and memory, for it is the Spirit that is the great remembrancer, and impresseth upon the mind savoury and seasonable thoughts.

2. I grant further, the children of God are subject to much forgetfulness of the truth that is impressed upon their hearts. Partly through the present cloud and mist which the temptation raiseth. The Psalmist had truths enough to support him, Ps. lxxiii. 17; yet he saith, Until I went into the sanctuary of God, I was foolish and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee.' There is so much dulness upon the children of God that they cannot remember seasonable thoughts; as Hagar had a fountain by her, yet she did not see it till God opened her eyes, Gen. xxi. So under the temptation all are benighted, and the light that is in the understanding is obscured. And partly through the little sense they have for the present of the need of the comforts which the word propoundeth; few so wise as to lay up for a dear year. And partly through sloth and negligence, being taken up with other things. It is possible sometimes that we may be guided by the Spirit, and act right merely by the guidance of the Holy Ghost, without any interposing and concurrence of our own understandings; as John xii. 13,

compared with ver. 16, They took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him; and cried, Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.' These things understood not his disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.' Mark, they were guided by the Spirit to do that they knew not for the present; they had only a back-look, not a foresight; they were ignorant of what they were doing until afterward; thoughts came not in their mind but only in the review: John ii. 22, When he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them.' They did not take up the meaning of them, yet they were guided aright. They did not carp against Christ, as the Jews did. They were guided by the Spirit in a case they were wholly ignorant.

3. The Holy Ghost makes use of a sanctified memory, bringing scriptures to our remembrance as we have need. It is made their act, because the Holy Ghost made use of their memories: They remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,' John ii. 17. They that neglect to search and hide the word in their hearts, they have not such seasonable refreshment; for God works more strongly with the strongest graces; there where there is the greater receptivity, there is the greater influence; those that are ignorant cannot expect such help as those that have the word dwell richly in their hearts.

The second reason is, therefore should we hide the word in our hearts, because God doth so in the work of conversion: Heb. viii. 10, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.' The mind is compared to tables of stone, and the heart to the ark; and so this is required of us to write them upon the table of our heart,' Prov. vii. 3; and here, I have hidden thy word in my heart.' How doth this

follow? because God doth so in conversion, therefore it is our duty?
I answer--(1.) God requires what he works, to show the creature's duty, as well as the power of his own grace. God is to convert and turn; yet do you turn, circumcise your heart, and I will circumcise; mortify your members, &c.; and yet, If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' He gives and requires; to engage the subserviency of our endeavours, and to make us sensible of our duty and obligation. (2.) This followeth because this work must be gone over again and again that it may be more explicit. We must revive the work, and put a fresh copy of the law into our heart, to keep the old work a-foot

Use 1. To persuade you to study the scripture, that you may get understanding, and hide the word in your hearts for gracious purposes. This is the book of books; let it not lie idle and unemployed. The world can as well be without the sun as the bible. Ps. xix., first he speaks of the sun, then of the law of God. This is to the Christian and gracious world as the sun is to the outward world. The use and profit of it should make us look after more acquaintance with it. Consider the great use of the word for informing the understanding and reforming the will. For informing the understanding: 2 Tim. iii. 17, the word of God is able to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished.' Who should have more knowledge than the man of God, that is to stand in God's stead, and teach the people? Then for reforming the will: ver. 9 of this psalm, Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.' A young man that is so heedless and headstrong, and in the very ruff and heat of his lusts, yet there is enough in the word to cleanse and tame him, and subdue him to God. Oh! therefore, let us get it into our hearts; let it not only move the lighter part of the soul, but get rooting, that it may have its full

power and force, that we may not only have a little knowledge to talk of it; but we are to hide it deeply, that it may take root, and spring up again in our lives and conversations. To this end meditate often of it, and receive it in the love of it.

1. Meditate often of it: Luke ii. 19, Mary kept all these sayings.' How did she keep them? She pondered them in her heart.' Musing makes the fire to burn, and deep and constant thoughts are operative; not a glance or a slight view. The hen which straggleth from her nest when she sits a-brooding produceth nothing; it is a constant incubation which hatcheth the young. So when we have only a few straggling thoughts, and do not sit a-brooding upon a truth; when we have flashes only, like a little glance of a sunbeam upon a wall, it doth nothing; but serious and inculcative thoughts, through the Lord's blessing, will do the work. Urge the heart again and again; as the apostle, when he had laid down the doctrine of justification and the privileges thereof: Rom. viii. 31, Now what shall we say to these things?' Is this a truth?--then what will become of me if I disregard it? Thus to return upon our heart when any light begins to shine in our minds from the scripture: is this the word of God, and doth it find no more entertainment in my heart?

2. Receive it in the love of it. The apostle makes that to be the ground of apostasy: 2 Thes. ii. 10, Because they received not the truth in the love of it,' &c. Oh! let it soak into the affections. If it lie only in the tongue or in the mind, only to make it a matter of talk and speculation, it will be soon gone. The seed which lies upon the surface, the fowls of the air will pick it up. Therefore hide it deeply; let it get from the ear into the mind, from the mind into the heart; let it soak further and further. First men have a naked apprehension of truth, then it gets into the conscience, and then it

lies in the heart, then it is laid up; but when we suffer it only to be made matter of speculation, it is soon lost. Know this, a man may receive a thing in the evidence and light of it, when he doth not receive it in the love of it. When it rests in naked speculation, then he receives a thing in the evidence and light of it; but when it hath a prevailing sovereignty in the heart, then we receive it in the love of it. When it is dearer than our dearest lust, then it will stick by us; when we are willing to sell all for the pearl of price, Mat. xiii. 46.

We are often put to it what we will part with--our lusts or the truth. When it breaks in upon the heart with evidence and power, you cannot keep both. Therefore let it soak into the affections, and hide the word in your hearts, that you may not sin against God.

Use 2. To direct you what to do in reading, hearing, meditating.

1. In reading. Hide the word in your hearts. The word may be reduced to doctrines, promises, threatenings. (1.) For doctrines, lay up knowledge, Prov. x. 14. It is a notable preservative against sin, and an antidote against the infection of the world, when we have a good stock of principles: Ps. xxxvii. 31, The law of God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.' As long as truth is kept lively and active, and in view of conscience, we shall not slide, or not so often slide. We have many temptations to divert us from the truth and obedience; but here we are in safety, when the law of God is in our heart. How often was the word of God in Joseph's heart: How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' Against God, that is of such a sovereign majesty!--against God, of such infinite goodness and mighty power, so able to save and to destroy! Every time you read the scriptures you should lay up something. The best way to destroy ill weeds is by planting the ground with right seed. Everywhere we shall meet with notable passages. Therefore, stock yourselves with good

principles. (2.) Then for promises, that part of the word. What have you hidden in your heart for comfort against temptations, desertions, afflictions? What have you laid up against a dear year? Job xxii. 22, Lay up his word in thine heart.' In a time of trial you will find one promise will give you more comfort and support than all the arguments that can be produced by reason: Ps. cxix. 50, This is my comfort in my affliction; thy word hath quickened me.' He had a word to support him. Therefore let us treasure up all the promises; all will be little enough when we need comforts. That we may not have them to seek in a time of distress, it is good they should be familiar. As you read the word, collect for your comfort and profit; happy is the man that hath his garner full of them. (3.) And so for threatenings, especially against the sins we are most inclinable to: Who among you will give ear, and hear for the time to come?' Isa. xlii. 23. You should think of what will come afterward. It is well with you for the present, but matters to come are put off, little cared for, Amos vi. 3.

2. In hearing. Do not hear slightly, but hide the word in your heart, that it be not embezzled by thy own negligence, forgetfulness, running into carnal distractions; that it be not purloined by Satan, that he may not snatch away the good seed out of thy soul. When the word is preached, there is more company present than is visible; there are angels and devils in the assembly. Whenever the sons of God meet together, Satan is present with them. The devil is present to divert the mind by wandering thoughts, by raising prejudices, that we may cast out the word; or by excuses, delays, evasions, putting it off to others when we begin to have some sensibleness of our sin and danger. The devil is loath to let us go too far, lest Christ get a subject into his kingdom. Oh! therefore, labour to get something into thy heart by every sermon; some fresh notion or consideration is given out to set you

a-work in the spiritual life. A conscientious waiting upon God will find something every time. It is sad to consider^how many have heard much, and laid up little or nothing at all; it may be they have laid it up in their note-books, but not laid up the word in their hearts.

3. For meditation. Meditate upon the word; do not study the word in a cursory manner, or content yourselves with a slight taste, or a little volatile affection; but ponder it seriously, that it may enter into your very heart. Hasty and perfunctory thoughts work nothing. Meat must be well chewed and digested, if you would have it turn into good blood and spirits. You must follow it close till it settle into some affection.

So much for David's practice, I have hid thy word in my heart.

The second thing is the aim and end of it, that I may not sin against thee.

Doct. 2. In hiding the word in our hearts there must be a right end; our knowledge of it and delight in it must be directed to practice.

1. We must not study the word merely out of curiosity, that we may know what is said there, as men will pry into civil art and discipline. So the Athenians flocked about Paul, Acts xvii. 18-21; so for novelty's sake men may have an affection and a delight in the word: John v. 35, Ye rejoiced in his light for a season.' There are certain adulterous affections we have to the word when it is new and fresh, but when it grows stale we loathe it. This affection to the word is soon spent.

2. We must not hide the word in our heart merely that we may be able to teach others, that we may make a gainful trade of it. Alas! a man may teach others and be himself a castaway. Look, as in coining of money, an iron stamp may impress the character and print upon a piece of gold and silver, so God may use the gifts and know ledge of some men to beget faith in others, and perish themselves: Mat. vii. 21, We have

prophesied in thy name;' yet Depart from me; I know you not.'

3. This must not be our end neither, not merely for delight. Largeness of knowledge brings a content with it, as it is an addition to our perfection. Truth is the object of our understanding, and may please an unsanctified mind. Not merely out of subserviency to some base and inferior ends, that we may get esteem in the world, or the repute of knowing persons, but as it is an elevation of the understanding. Every delight in truth is not a delight in God. There is a natural oblectation we have in the contemplation of any sublime truth; this is merely a delight in the work of our own faculties, when the affections are terminated in bare knowledge; as it is a high and mysterious truth, as it is a delectation to the understanding.

4. We are not merely to study the word for the comfortableness of it, and the suitableness to the conscience. As man is a reasonable creature, he will delight in knowledge; and as he hath a conscience presageous of death and judgment to come, he may delight in the comfort of it. Many search out promises that do not affect precepts. The stony ground seemed to have a joy; they may delight in the comfortable part of religion; but this joy comes to nothing this glad some forward spring is no sure prognostication of a plentiful harvest. Then do we receive the word aright when we look to the holy part, and mortify our natural desires and affections. Many deal with the word as great men do with fleshly companions--are willing to entertain them at their tables to hear their discourse, because of the pleasantness of their mirth; but to enter into bonds for them, and discharge them from debt, or better their fortunes, that they will not do. So many will give Christ and the word, and the comfortable part of it, entertainment; but they are loath to take the duty of the gospel upon themselves. Therefore, it is not enough to study the word merely that we may cherish our own

persons with the comfortable part of it; but we must also study the holy part of it, and that which doth require our duty. Let us labour to hide the word in our hearts, as David did: I have hid thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.'

SERMON XIII.

Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes.--Ver. 12.

IN these words you have:--

1. A compellation, blessed art thou, O Lord.

2. A supplication, teach me thy statutes.

First, The compellation carrieth the force of an argument: Because thou art blessed, O Lord, therefore teach me. And therefore I shall open the sense of this title that is here given to God, so as I may still make good the argument.

For the sense, God may be said to be blessed objectively or subjectively.

First, Objectively, as he is the object of our blessedness. It is our blessedness to enjoy God: Ps. cxliv. 15, Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.' That is our blessedness, to have God for our portion. As soon as we are admitted into covenant with God, we have a right to him: I am thy God;' and we have the full consummation of it when we enter into heaven; there we have the highest enjoyment of God that we are capable of. We have many fruitless and unquiet cares to enjoy the creatures, which are neither blessed in themselves, nor can make us blessed; but now God is our summum bonum, our chief good; the enjoyment of him is the chiefest good. Still we are capable of a higher happiness until we enjoy God. In other things we can neither have satisfaction nor security: the creature cannot satisfy, nor yet secure us in the enjoyment of itself. In this sense the argument will hold good: Blessed art thou, O Lord;' that is, Thou art the object of my blessedness; my blessedness lieth in the enjoyment of thee; therefore teach me thy statutes. If God be our chiefest good and our utmost end, it concerns

us nearly to learn out the way how we may enjoy him: John xvii. 3, This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' It concerns believers to study that wherein their eternal happiness consisteth, and what is the way to get it: Thou art blessed, and therefore teach me thy statutes.'

Secondly, Subjectively; and so again God is blessed either in an active or in a passive sense.

1. In an active sense. And here we must distinguish again; for so God is blessed either with respect to himself or with respect to us.

[1.] Blessed in himself, as he hath the fulness of perfection and contentment. Blessedness is often ascribed to God: 1 Tim. i. 11, The glorious gospel of the blessed God.' I will open that place by and by: 1 Tim. vi. 15, Who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.' Now, how is God blessed in himself? God's blessedness is that attribute by which the Lord, from himself, and in his own being, is free from all misery and enjoyeth all good, and is sufficient to himself, and contented with himself, and doth neither need nor desire the creature for any good that can accrue to him by us. Or, more shortly, God's blessedness is the fruition of himself, and his delighting in himself. Mark, it lieth not in the enjoyment of the creature, but in the enjoyment of himself. God useth us, but doth not enjoy us. As we enjoy a thing for itself, but we use it for another; so uti and frui differ: we use the means, but enjoy the end. God useth the creature in subserviency to his own glory. So it is said: Prov. xvi. 4, God made all things for himself.' His happiness lieth in knowing himself, in loving himself, in delighting in himself.

But how is this used as an argument, Blessed art thou, O Lord; therefore teach me thy statutes'? Either thus: God, that is blessed, hath enough for himself; surely there is enough in him for us too: Gen.

xvii. 1, I am God all-sufficient; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' I say, if God finds satisfaction enough in himself, our souls surely will find satisfaction in him. That which will fill a pottle, or greater measure, will fill a pint or a lesser measure; that which will satisfy a prince, and be enough for him in that estate, will satisfy a beggar, and supply his wants. God hath an infinite fulness of know ledge, comfort, and holiness; therefore surely enough to satisfy us, as empty as we are. Therefore we should desire to receive of this fulness in God's way. Or, again, thus: If God be blessed, we had need to inquire after his statutes, for these teach us the way how we may be blessed in God's blessedness, how we may be conformed to the nature of God, and live the life of God, and then surely we shall be happy enough. (1.) How we may be conformed to the nature of God: 2 Peter i. 4, That we may be partakers of the divine nature,' according to our measure, that ours may be such as his is. The promises, or the word, have an influence that way. If we see a man hath a rich trade, and secret ways of gain, every one would be acquainted with the mysteries and art of his getting, and desirous to know it. God is eternally blessed, therefore we should study to be like him. (2.) That we may live the life of God. Surely if we could learn to live such a life as God doth, we should be happy. However our prejudices darken it, yet the life of God cannot be a gloomy life. Now, ignorance of God's statutes is a great hindrance to the life of God: Eph. iv. 18, Being alienated or estranged from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.' Well, then, the consideration of this, that God is blessed, will certainly make us prize his statutes, prize his word, for by that we are conformed to the nature of God, and to the life of God; we are engaged in the same design wherein God himself is engaged: God loves himself, and acts for

himself, and pursueth his own glory. Now when the word of God breaks in upon the heart, we pursue the same design with God. Men are prejudiced against a course of holiness; it seems to look upon them with a sour and austere face. Surely God loves a pleasant life; whoever is miserable, he hath a full contentment. Doth he that made all things want true joy and contentment? Who should have happiness if God hath not? Now, when we learn, God's statutes, we come to be conformed to the nature of God; we love what he loves, and hate what he hates, and then we begin to live the life of God. The happiness of God lieth in loving himself, enjoying himself, and acting for his own glory; and this is the fruit of grace, to teach us to live as God lives, to do as God doth, to love him and enjoy him as our chiefest good, and to glorify him as our utmost end. This is the first sense wherein God may be said to be actively blessed, as he hath infinite complacency in himself.

[2.] God is actively blessed with respect to us as he is the fountain of all blessedness. He is not only blessedness itself, but willing to communicate and give it out to the creature, especially his saints. He fills all created things with his blessedness: Ps. cxlv. 16, Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.' There is not a creature in the world but hath tasted of God's bounty, but especially the saints: Eph. i. 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.' These are vessels into which God is still pouring more, until they be completely filled up. Now, this communicativeness that is in God, without any irking of mind, is a certain argument or encouragement to move us to seek of God grace to keep his statutes. This is often urged in this case, his communicativeness to all his creatures: ver. 64, The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy; teach me thy statutes.' Thou art bountiful to all creatures; and, O Lord, show

thy bounty to me. The same again: ver. 68, Thou art good, and dost good; teach me thy statutes.' Every good, the more good it is, the more it is diffusive of itself. And it is a part of God's blessedness that he is still of the giving hand: Acts xx. 35, Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.' It was a maxim which Christ commended to his disciples: Remember the words of the Lord Jesus;' that which he often inculcated, That it is more blessed to give than to receive.' The words formally indeed are not found in any evangelist; only there we may see the whole drift of Christ's doctrine was to press men to give; it is a more blessed thing. This is the happiness of God, that he gives to all, and receives of none; that he is so ready to communicate of his own fulness upon such free terms: John i. 16, Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace;' that is, grace for grace's sake. Thus we have seen how God is actively blessed.

2. God is passively blessed as he is blessed by us, or as worthy of all praise from us, for his goodness, righteousness, and mercy, and the communications of his grace. There are two words by which our thanksgiving is expressed--praise and blessing. You have both in Ps. cxlv. 10, All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee.' Praise relateth to God's excellency, and blessing to his benefits. His works declare his excellency: but his saints, which are sensible of his benefits, they bless him; they count him worthy of all honour and praise, and are ever ascribing to him, Rev. v. 13, Blessing, honour, glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' Why blessing? As for other things, so it was for opening the book which was sealed with seven seals, and revealing his mind to his people; as you may see, ver. 9. So David here, Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes.' As if he had

said, Lord, thou art, and thou shalt be blessed: I bless thee that thou hast taught me; and I desire thou wouldst teach me still, that I may ever bless thee. Thus it may be taken in a passive sense, as he is the object of our blessedness. [6]

Well, then, all that I have said upon this compellation may be reduced to these six propositions:--

1. That God is over all, and above all, blessed enough in himself, and needeth nothing from us to add to his happiness and perfection.

That he is blessed enough in himself: Rom. ix. 5, God over all, blessed for ever.' That he needs nothing from us to add to his happiness and perfection: Ps. xvi. 2, My righteousness, my goodness, extendeth not to thee.' He is above our benefits and injuries. If there could result any one happiness to God from the creature, surely then he would have made the world sooner; what hindered him? for why should he keep himself out of his own happiness? And therefore he made the world, not that he might be happy, but that he might be liberal. Before ever there was hill or mountain, man or angel, God was happy enough in himself. The divine persons took infinite delight and complacency in each other; as their rejoicing is expressed: Prov. viii. 30, 31, I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.' God had infinite complacency in Christ, and Christ in God, both in the Spirit, all in each, and each in all, before ever there was hill or mountain. The world is upheld, as stones are in an arch, by a mutual dependence, by a combination of interests. We need one another, but God doth not stand in need of us. The head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee;' the greatest stand in need of the meanest, of their labours, their service; the meanest parts have their use in the body. But now, God standeth in no need of us, for he giveth all, and he receiveth nothing back again; as the fountain hath no need of the stream, but the stream hath need of

the fountain. The sun fills the lap of the earth with blessings, and the earth returns nothing but vapours, that obscure its beams rather than add anything to its brightness. God filleth every living thing, especially his saints, with blessing, and receiveth nothing from us again.

2. Though God stand in no need of us, yet he is willing to communicate his blessedness, and to make us happy in the enjoyment of himself. There is a threefold consideration which doth advance the bounty of God--that to us, that himself to us, and that so readily and freely.

[1.] That to us, who can neither hurt him nor help him: Ps. viii. 3, 4, Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?' What a poor sorry creature is man! wilt thou set thine eyes upon such a one? What would God lose if we were all damned? or what would he gain if all were saved? He would lose no more by us than a bounteous man doth by the death of a company of beggars and maimed persons, which live upon his expense and charge. Wherein can we be useful to God?

[2.] Herein lieth the bounty of God, to give us such a blessing as the enjoyment of himself. When he had no greater thing to swear by, saith the apostle, he sware by himself. When God hath no greater thing to give us, he gives us himself: I am thy God.' He scatters and sheds abroad some common influences upon all creatures; but to us he gives not only that which is his, but gives us himself, that when our happiness is at the highest, we may immediately enjoy him.

For the opening of this blessedness in giving us the fruition of himself, consider we enjoy God two ways--mediately and immediately; one proper to this world, the other to the next.

(1.) Mediately. We enjoy God when he communicateth himself to us by secondary means, or the interposition of the creature between him and

us. Thus in common mercies, when he feeds us by his meat and drink, and enlighteneth us with his sun. Here in the world we have blessings at second or third hand: I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth,' &c., Hosea ii. 21, 22. Whatever one creature affordeth to another, it hath it first from God. The creature is but an empty hollow pipe through which the blessing runs, and it passeth from pipe to pipe. God poureth out his influences to the heavens, and the heavens pour out their influences upon the earth; and the strength of the earth runneth up into corn, wine, and oil, and by corn, wine, and oil Israel hath his refreshments. So still from pipe to pipe is the blessing conveyed to the creature. So for special mercies; we have them by degrees; life, comfort, grace by the word and seals. But the Lord will not only supply us at second and third hand, but--

(2.) Immediately. When God communicates himself to us without any other thing between us and him; when we are immediately present with God, and have immediate influences from God, this is the happiness of heaven. In the heavenly state God shall be all in all,' 1 Cor. xv. 28. He shall be both the dispenser and the dispensation. There we see him face to face, and in his face and presence there is fulness of joy,' Ps. xvi. 11.

That is our happiness in the next world, where immediate influences and virtue doth pass out from him. In heaven there is no temple, Rev. xxi. 22, But the Lamb is the temple of it' There is a service of God, and constant influences in that God supplieth all immediately from himself.

[3.] This is upon free terms: John i. 16, Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace.'

3. The word of God, especially the gospel part, doth only teach us the way how we may be blessed in the enjoyment of God.

That is a notable place to this purpose: 1 Tim. i. 11, The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.' Mark

there, first, he calls it the glorious gospel.' When he speaks of the law in that place he saith, We know that the law is good,'--compare it with ver. 8; but when he comes to speak of the gospel, he calls it the glorious gospel.' The law is good, but the gospel glorious, because more of the glory of God is displayed and discovered to the creature. And the glorious gospel of the blessed God.' Titles are always suited to the case in hand; therefore it is called The glorious gospel of the blessed God,' because there God is discovered as ready to bless us; there is the way how we may come to be blessed in God, how he may with respect to us be a fountain of blessedness; there we have the highest discoveries of this mystery, the most moving arguments to persuade us to look after it; and with this gospel there is a grace, a virtue dispensed to enable us to walk in this way. So that if we would enjoy the blessed God, we must consult with his statutes, and especially the gospel.

4. If we would profit by the word of God, we must go to God, and desire the light and strength of his grace.

If we would enjoy the blessed God, according to the direction of his word, we must not only consult with the word, but with God. Nothing else can draw us off from the world, and persuade us to look after heavenly things; nothing else will teach us the vanity of the creature, the reality of spiritual privileges. Until we see these things in a divine light, the heart hangs off from God; and therefore saith David, Ps. xvi. 7, I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel.' He had chosen God for his portion, and then I will bless the Lord,' &c. We shall still run after lying vanities until God doth open your eyes to see the mysteries of the word, and to be affected with the way. Those that are drawn to God must first be taught of God: John vi. 44, No man cometh to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him;' for

Christ adds presently, They shall be all taught of God.' Our hearts can never be drawn unto God until he take us into his own hands.

5. The more we are brought to attend upon the word, and the more influence the word hath upon us, the nearer the blessing.

Christians, we are not far from the kingdom of God. There is some blessedness when we begin to look after the directions of the word, and to wait upon the teachings of God: Prov. viii. 34, Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.' Then you are in a hopeful way to true blessedness when you begin to be careful to attend upon God's teaching, much more when you have the fruits of it, when you know him so as to love him, so as to have your hearts drawn off from sin and folly: Acts iii. 26, Him hath God sent to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' The great business of Jesus Christ is to make us blessed in the enjoyment of God. But how is it? only by bare knowledge? No, it is by turning every one from his iniquity. So the more this teaching of God prevails upon the heart, the more blessed we are: Ps. cxix. 1, Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.' Otherwise, to have a golden head and feet of clay, that is monstrous, as in Nebuchadnezzar's image; to have a naked knowledge of God, and not brought under the power of it. You read of the heathens, when they sacrificed to their gods, they were wont to hang a garland upon the heads of the beasts, and to crown them with roses, so they were led on to sacrifice. Many may have garlands upon their heads, ornaments of knowledge, yet are going on to destruction; therefore that light and teaching which conveyeth blessedness is such as prevaileth upon the heart, and doth effectually turn us to God.

6. It is not only an affront put upon God, but also a great wrong, to neglect the word of God, and the way he prescribes, and to seek

blessedness in temporal things.

Here you have the true way to blessedness set down in God's statutes; but in outward things there wants fulness, sincerity, eternity.

[1.] There wants fulness. That which makes us blessed, it must fill up the heart of man. As a vessel is never full until it have as much as it can hold, so we can never be said to have a full happiness and contentment until we have as much as we can hold. That which fills must be greater than the thing filled. Now man's heart is such a chaos of desires, that it can never be filled up but in God: Ps. xvi. 11, In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' Therefore, of the joy and happiness we have in God, it is said, Enter into thy master's joy,' Mat. xxv. When we speak of a cup of water, that enters into the man, that is taken down into the man; but if we speak of a river of water, or tub of water, that is greater than the man is capable of, or can receive,--the man enters into it; so this joy and happiness, which is truly and genuinely so, it must exceed our capacity, greater than we can receive, that we may enter into it; it is the infinite God can only satisfy the heart of man. In temporal things there is no kind of fulness; you have not one worldly comfort, but you desire more of it. Ahab was a king, yet still he wants something, Naboth's vineyard. A man is not satisfied with abundance, neither is his soul filled with increase of worldly things; yet we may desire more, Eccles. v.; and if we have one thing to the full, yet we shall need another. If a man be strong, he may need learning; it may be though he hath some kind of learning and know ledge, yet he hath not wisdom. Naaman was rich, wise, valiant, and honourable, but he was a leper. There is a but upon all worldly happiness; therefore there is no fulness in these things.

[2.] There is no sincerity in them. All that is in the world is but a

semblance and an appearance, that which tickles the senses; it doth not go to the heart. You would have thought Belshazzar was merry at the heart when he was quaffing and carousing in the cups of the temple; but how soon is the edge of his bravery taken off, Dan. v. 5, 6. Haman in the midst of his honours was troubled at the heart for want of Mordecai's knee. Those things which seem to affect us so much cannot allay one unquiet passion, certainly cannot still and pacify the least storm of the conscience; and therefore, whatever face men put upon temporal enjoyments, if they cannot see God's special love m them, they want sincere joy. There is many a smart lash they feel when the world hears not the stroke: Prov. xiv. 13, Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.' All the laughter and merriment which men seem to receive from the creature, it is but a little appearance, not such as will go to the conscience, that will indeed and thoroughly rejoice and comfort a man, and give him solid joy.

[3.] There wants eternity. An immortal soul must have an eternal good, pleasures for evermore,' Ps. xvi. 11. In this world we have but a poor changeable happiness: Luke xii. 20, it was said to the rich fool, This night thy soul shall be required of thee.'

Thus much for the first branch, blessed art thou, O Lord.

Secondly, I come from the compellation to the supplication, teach me thy statutes. And here observe (1.) The person teaching; he speaks to God, Do thou, O God, teach,' (2.) We may consider the person taught, Teach me;' I, that have hid the word in my heart. David, that was a prophet, is willing to be a disciple. Those that teach others have need that God should teach them. The prophet saith, Teach me, O Lord.' David, a grown Christian, he desires more understanding of God's will. Certainly we should still follow on to know the Lord,' Hosea vi. 3.

Heathens, that only knew natural and moral things, yet they saw a need of growth; and the more they knew, the more they discovered their ignorance; and always as they grew older, they grew wiser. How much more sensible would they have been of their defects in the knowledge of spiritual things, if they had in a little measure been acquainted with the mysteries of godliness, that pass all understanding, and are so much from human sense, and above the capacities of our reason! Prov. xxx. 3, Agur said, I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.' There is very much yet to be learned of God, and of his ways. Many think they know all that can be taught them. David, a great prophet, a man after God's own heart, yet is earnest that God would teach him his statutes. (3.) The lesson or matter to be taught, thy statutes;' so he calls the word, because the doctrines of it have the force of a law published; they do unalterably bind, and that the soul and conscience; and therefore the precepts, counsels, and doctrines of the word are all called statutes.

The point is--

Doct. If we would know God's statutes so as to keep them, we must be taught of God.

Here I shall inquire--

1. What it is, or how doth God teach us?

2. The necessity of this teaching.

3. The benefit and utility of it.

First, How doth God teach us?

Outwardly, by his ordinance, by the ministry of man.

Inwardly, by the inspiration and work of the Holy Ghost.

1. The outward teaching is God's teaching, because it is an ordinance which is appointed by him. Now both these must ever go together, external and internal teaching: Despise not prophecy, quench not the

Spirit.' If you would have any enlightening and quickening of the Spirit, you must not despise prophecy. We teach you here, and God blesseth. Jesus Christ, when he comes to teach his disciples, first he openeth the scripture, Luke xxiv. 37; and then, ver. 45, he opened their understandings.' Of Lydia it is said, God opened her heart in attending to the things spoken by Paul,' Acts xvi. 14. She was attending, and then God openeth her heart. When the eunuch was reading, then God sends an interpreter. The outward means are necessary; it is God's teaching in part; but the inward grace especially. Both these must go together; for it is said, John vi. 45, Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' There must be a hearing of the word, and so there is a teaching from God. But--

2. The inward teaching, which is the work of the Spirit, that needs most to be opened. What is that? It consists in two things--(1.) When God infuseth light into the understanding, so as we come to apprehend the things of God in a spiritual manner: Ps. xxxvi. 9, In thy light shall we see light.' There is no discerning spiritual things spiritually, but in God's light. There may be a literal instruction which one man may give to another, but in thy light only shall we see light;' such a lively affective knowledge as disposeth the heart for the enjoyment of God. There is a seeing, and a seeing in seeing: Isa. vi. 10, Lest in seeing they shall see.' A man may see a truth rationally that' doth not see it spiritually. Now, when we have the Spirit's light, then in seeing we see. Or, as the apostle calls it, Col. i. 6, A knowing of the grace of God in truth,' since you did not only take up the report, but feel it, and had some experience of it in your hearts. Again, (2.) God's teaching consisteth not only in enlightening the understanding, but in moving and inclining the heart and the will; for God's teaching is always accompanied with drawing:

John vi. 44, No man cometh to me, except the Father draw him;' which Christ proves, ver. 45, because they shall be all taught of God.' The Spirit's light is not only directive, but persuasive; it is effectual to alter and to change the affections, and to carry them out to Christ and to his ways; he works powerfully where he teacheth. When the Holy Ghost was first poured out upon the apostles, there was a notable effect of it; it came in the appearance of cloven tongues, like as of fire, Acts ii. 3, to show the manner of the Spirit's operation by the ministry; not only as light, but as fire: it is a burning and a shining light; that is, such a light as is seasoned with zeal and love, that affects the heart, that burns up our corruptions. And therefore, you know, when Christ would put forth a divine effect in his conference with his two disciples, it is said, Their hearts burned within them while he talked with them,' Luke xxiv. 32. There is a warmth and heat conveyed to the soul. Thus for the nature of this teaching.

Secondly, The necessity of this teaching will appear in several things.

1. If we consider the weakness of a natural understanding: 1 Cor. ii. 14, The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned.' They must be spiritually understood. There must be a cognation and proportion between the object and the faculty. Divine things cannot be seen but by a divine light, and spiritual things by a spiritual light, else they shall have no savour and relish. Can sense, which is the light of beasts, trace the workings or the flights of reason? Can you see a soul or an angel by the light of a candle? There is no proportion between them. So, can a natural man receive the things of the Spirit? He receives them not. Why? Because spiritual things must be spiritually discerned.

2. There is not only blindness, but obstinacy and prejudice. When we come to judge by sense and reason, the whole business of Christianity

seems to be a foolish thing to a carnal heart. To give up ourselves to God, and all our interests, and to wait upon the reversion of a happiness in another world, which is doubtful whether there will be any such thing or no, is a folly to him. To deny present lusts and interests, to be much in prayer, and be often in communion with God, is esteemed a like folly. When the apostle came to preach the gospel to the wits at Athens, they scoffed at him; they entertain his doctrine as fire is entertained in wet wood, with hissing and scorn. To do all, and suffer all, and that upon the account of a happiness to come, to a carnal heart this is but a fancy and a mere imagination.

3. As blind and obstinate, so we are apt to abuse truth. Carnal hearts turn all to a carnal purpose. As spiders assimilate and turn, all they suck into their own substance, so doth a carnal heart turn all, even the counsels and comforts of the word, to a carnal purpose. Or as the sea, whatever comes into it, the sweet rivers and droppings of the clouds, turns all into salt water: Hosea xiv. 9, Who is wise, and he shall understand these things; prudent, and he shall know them; but the transgressors shall stumble therein.' As right excellent and as notable as the doctrines of the word are, yet a carnal heart finds matter in them to stumble at; he picks that which is an occasion of ruin and eternal perdition from the scripture; therefore the apostle saith, Eph. iv. 21, If ye have learned of him as the truth is in Jesus.' We are never right, and truth never works us to regeneration, but it is only fuel for our lusts, until we have learned it as it is in Jesus. Carnal men undo themselves by their own apprehensions of the truths of God. Luther calls some promises bloody promises, because of the mistakes of carnal men by their perverse application. Therefore, that we may maintain an awe of God in our soul, we need to be taught of God.

4. We are apt to abuse our knowledge. Saving knowledge makes us more

humble, but carnal knowledge more proud. Where it is in gift rather than in grace, there men are puffed up. The more we know God or ourselves by a divine light, the more humble we shall be: Jer. xxxi. 18, 19, When I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.' The more light we have from God, the more we look into a vile heart. When Adam's eyes are opened, he runs into the bushes; he was ashamed. So when God opens the eyes, and teacheth a Christian, this makes him more humble.

5. There needs God's teaching, because we are so apt to forsake when we have known the things of God: Ps. cxix. 21, The proud do err from thy commandments.' What is the reason David was so stead fast in the truth? He did not take it up from the teachings of man, but from the teachings of God. When a man leads us into any truth, another man may lead us out again. But now, when God hath taught us, and impressed truth upon the heart, then it is durable. What is the reason believers are not as fickle as others, and not led away by the impure Gnostics, and like those libertines now among us? 1 John ii. 20, Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.' They had an unction which came down from Jesus Christ upon their hearts; and then a man is not led away by every fancy, but begins to grow stable in spirit.

6. We cannot tell how to master our corruptions, nor restore reason to its dominion again. It is not enough to bring light into the soul, but we must have power and efficacy, or true conversion will not follow. Man's reason was to govern his actions. Now, all literal instruction is weak, like a March sun, which draweth up the vapours, but cannot scatter them; it can discover sins, but cannot quell them: Rom. vii. 9, When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' He could not tell how to bridle his lusts; he found them more outrageous: The good that I would do, I do not; and the evil which I would not, that I do.'

Thirdly, The benefit and utility of God's teaching. When God teacheth, truth cometh upon us with more conviction and demonstration, 1 Cor. ii. 6, and so hath a greater awe and sovereignty. Those that have made any trial can judge between being taught of God and men. Those that are taught of men, the charms of rhetoric may sometimes stir up some loose affection, but it doth soon vanish and wear away again; but the work of God makes deep impression upon the soul, and truths are then more affective. Man's knowledge is sapless, dry, and unsavoury: 2 Peter i. 8, For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' There may be an empty belief, and a naked and inactive apprehension of Christ, which stirs up no affection; but the light which comes from God enters upon the heart, Prov. ii. 10; it affects the whole soul. It doth not only stay in the fancy, float in the brain, but affect the heart. And then it is renewing. Man's light may make us more learned but God's light more holy. We are changed by beholding the glory of God into the same image,' 2 Cor. iii. 18.

SERMON XIV.

With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.--Ver. 13.

FOR the coherence of these words, you may refer them either to the 11th or 12th verse. If to the 11th verse, there he speaks of hiding the word in his heart, and now it breaks out in his tongue. First it must be in the heart, and next in the tongue. First in the heart. It is but hypocrisy to be speaking and talking of good things, when we have not been refreshed and warmed by them ourselves. Christianity is not a religion to talk of, but to live by. There are many rotten-hearted hypocrites that are all talkers; like the moon, dark in themselves, whatever light they give out to others; or like negroes, that dig in rich mines, and bring up gold for others, when themselves are poor. The power of grace in the heart is a good foundation for grace on the lips. This is the method and order wherein David expresseth it: I have hidden thy word in my heart;' and then, With my lips have I declared,' &c. And as it must be first in the heart, so next in the tongue. John vii. 38, Christ speaks of him that believeth in him, that out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' By the belly is meant the heart. When there is true grace in the heart, the sweet influences thereof will flow forth in their common discourse for the refreshing of others; as a spring sendeth forth the streams to water the ground about it. If the heart be full, the tongue will drop what is savoury. I say, certainly if it be within, it will break out. The word is to be hid, but not like a talent in a napkin, but like gold in a treasury, to be laid out upon all meet occasions. Thus referring it to the 11th verse, there may be a fair connection.

Or if you refer it to the 12th verse, Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach

me thy statutes:' teach me that I may teach others. Our requests for knowledge are like to speed when we are willing to exercise this knowledge for the glory of God and the good of others. Talents thrive by their use: To him that hath shall be given,' Mat. xxv. 29; that is, to him that useth his talents. Trading brings increase; and so it may be used as an argument to back that petition, Lord, teach me; for I have been ever declaring with my lips all the judgments of thy mouth. Again, none can speak of God with such savour and affection as he that is taught by God: Teach me, and I have or will declare (it may be read either may) all the judgments of thy mouth. A heathen could say, Non loquendum de Deo sine lumine--we must not speak of God without light. The things of God are best represented with the light of his own grace. David shows that he would perform the duty of a good disciple; that he would teach others if God should teach him.

In the words two things are to be explained--

1. What he will declare, all the judgments of thy mouth.

2. In what sense he will declare them.

First, What he will declare. God's will, revealed in the scripture, is called The judgments of his mouth,' his judgments. I have showed that, ver. 7, at large. Briefly now I will add two reasons: First, Because it is the rule according to which we must judge of all spiritual truth: Isa. viii. 20, To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' Secondly, It is the rule according to which we must look to be judged both here and hereafter. Here, I will chastise them (or judge them) as their congregation hath heard,' Hosea vii. 12. According to the sentence of the word, so will the course of his providence be, and according to which we shall be judged hereafter: John xii. 48, The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.' God's

providences are a comment upon the scriptures. The scripture is not only a record of what is past, but a calendar and prognostication of what is to come. You may read your doom, your judgment there; for the statutes of the Lord are all called judgments, because of an answerable proceeding in the course of God's providence: if men escape here, they will not escape the judgment of the last day, when the sentence of that God shall infallibly be made good. Now, the verdict of the word is called the judgments of his mouth, as if God himself had pronounced by oracle, and judged from heaven in the case; and these judgments of his mouth the Psalmist saith shall be the matter of his discourse and conference with others.

Secondly, In what sense it is said that he will declare all the judgments of his mouth. In this speech David may be considered as a king, as a prophet, or as a private believer.

1. As a king; so some conceive that whenever he judged or gave sentence upon the throne, he would declare the judgments of God's mouth; that is, decree in the case according to the sentence of the law. In favour of this sense it may be alleged--

[1.] That certainly the king was bound to study the law of God, as you shall see, Deut. xvii. 18, 19, When he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites; and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life.' Every king was bound to have a copy of the law, the Rabbis say, written with his own hand, carried about with him wheresoever he went, in city or camp.

[2.] That the kings of Judah were bound up by the judicials of Moses, out of that which is before the priests and Levites;' that is, according to thy judicial laws, so will I pass sentence upon malefactors.

[3.] That, proceeding according to this rule, their declarations in court were the judgments of God's mouth: 2 Chron. xix. 6, He said to the judges, Take heed what ye do; for ye judge not for man but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment.' If this sense did prevail, we might observe hence, that a godly man useth the word to season the duties of all his relations. And again, that a good magistrate is so to judge upon the throne that his sentences there may be as the judgments of God's own mouth. But that which caused this misconceit was the word judgments, which is not of such a limited import and signification as those that pitched upon this interpretation did conceive, and therefore mistook the meaning of this place.

2. David may be considered here as a prophet, and so a pattern of all teachers. He asserts his sincerity in two respects--(1.) As to the matter of his doctrine; it should be the judgments of God's mouth, such as he had received from God. (2.) As to the extent; that he would declare all the judgments of his mouth.

[1.] As to the matter of his doctrine, it should be the judgments of his mouth. That which should be declared and taught in the church should not be our own opinions and fancies, but the pure word of God; not the vanity of our thoughts, but the verity of his revelations; otherwise we neither discharge our duty to God, nor to the children of God. Not to God, when we come in his name without his message: Jer. iv. 10, Ah Lord! thou hast greatly deceived this people,' saith the prophet Jeremiah to God. Thou hast done it; because the false prophets had done it in his name. The dishonour reflects upon him when his ordinance is abused to countenance the fancies of our own brain. Nor to the children of God, whose appetite carrieth them to pure unmixed milk: 1 Peter ii. 2, As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow there by,' logikon adolon gala--unmixed milk. The more natural the

milk is, and without any mixture, the more kindly to a gracious ap petite. To mix it with sugar, and the luscious strains of a human wit, doth but disguise it, and hide it from a spiritual taste. But to mix it with lime, as Jerome saith of heretics, makes it baneful and noxious^ Thus he speaks of his faithfulness as a prophet, a public teacher in the church.

[2.] As to the extent; all the judgments of thy mouth, without adding or diminishing. No part of God's counsel must be forborne, either out of fear or favour. Our work is not to look what will please or displease, but what is commanded: Acts xx. 27, I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.' If it be the counsel of God, let it succeed how it will, it must be spoken. So David here, all the judgments of thy mouth.

3. David may be considered as a private Christian; and so, I. would declare all the judgments of thy mouth in a way of conference and gracious discourse. This is the sense I shall manage. The consideration I shall insist upon is this:--

Doct. It concerns all that fear God to declare upon meet occasions the judgments of his mouth.

How? In the way of public teaching? Shall every one that hath, knowledge and parts teach? I answer--No. There are some separate for that work: Acts xiii. 2, Separate unto me Paul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have called them.' Paul and Barnabas were gifted and called by the Spirit, yet were to be solemnly authorised by prophets and teachers at Antioch, by officers of the church.

Was it not enough that they were called by the Holy Ghost? What can man add more?

There must be order in the church. Though they were called, yet they were to be ordained, and to have a solemn commission. It is true, all

Christians are prophets, yet they are not to invade the office ministerial; as they are also all kings, yet they are not to usurp the magistracy, or to disturb the ruler in his government. If Christians would but meditate more, and see how much they have to do to preach to their own hearts; if they would but regard the unquestionable duty that they owe to their families more, this itch of public preaching would be much abated, and many other confusions and disorders among us would be prevented; and they would sooner find the Lord's blessing upon interchangeable discourse, gracious conferences, than this affectation of sermoning and set discourses.

Well, then, we are to declare the judgments of his mouth, not by way of public teaching, but by way of private conference, edifying others, and glorifying God by the knowledge and experience that we have--

First, In our own families.

Secondly, In our converses.

1. In our own families, in training up children and servants in the way of the Lord, and inculcating the doctrine of God upon them. This is a commanded duty, as you may see, Deut. vi. 6, 7, And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart.' What then?' And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' Morning and evening, rising up and lying down, at home and abroad, they should be instructing their families. When the word of God is in the heart, thus it will break out. And chap, xi. 19, you have the same again. This is a duty God reckoneth upon, that you will not omit such a necessary piece of service: Gen. xviii. 19, I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.' God promiseth himself, that from Abraham and his family he

should have respect. God hath made many great promises to Abraham, as he doth now to all believers; but if you would have him bring upon you that which he hath spoken, you must not disappoint him. The seasoning of youth betimes in your families is a very great advantage. The family is the seminary of the church and state; and usually those that are ill-bred in the family, they prove ill when they come abroad. A fault in the first concoction is not mended in the second; and therefore here you should be declaring the mind and counsel of God to them. Many that afterwards prove eminent instruments of God's glory will bless you for it to all eternity. It is the best love you can express to your children, when you take care to season them with the best things. A husband is charged to love his wife. How shall he express this love? Eph. v. 25, 26, Even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it,' &c. I suppose the degree is not only commended for a pattern, but the kind; it must be such a love as Christ bore to his church: He gave himself for her, that he might sanctify her.' It must be such a love as tends to sanctification. It is a poor kind of love parents express to their children in providing great estates and portions for them, or bringing them up in trades that they may thrive in the world. But when you train them up for heaven, there is the best love: Prov. iv. 3, 4, For I was my father's son' (he was the darling) , tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.' And wherein was that love expressed? He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live.' So for servants; it is not enough to provide bodily maintenance for them--so we would do for the beasts if we would use their strength and service; but we are to instruct them according to our talents. And that is the best love we can show, to provide for their souls.

2. In our converses, speaking of God and of his word in all companies, instructing the ignorant, warning and quickening the negligent, encouraging the good, casting out some savoury discourse wherever we come. So Ps. xxxvii. 30, The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.' A good man studieth in his speeches to glorify God, to edify those he speaks to: I will declare thy judgments,' saith David. Wise and gracious discourse drops from him. So Cant. iv. 11, Thy lips, my spouse, drop as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under thy tongue.' The passages of that song are to be understood in a spiritual sense. Now the lips and the^ tongue being instruments of speech, and milk and honey things by which the word is expressed, I suppose it is meant of a conference; and because the word of God is compared to milk and honeycomb, it shows that their conference should be gracious and edifying. This is that which drops from a sanctified mouth.

For the reasons of this:--

1. I shall argue from the interest which God hath in the lips and tongue, and therefore they must be used for God. He made them, bought them, and, if we belong to him, we gave them up with other things to him. We did not reserve our tongues. When we resigned and surrendered ourselves to the Lord's use, we did not make exception. The same argument which holds good for the whole body, why it should be possessed in sanctification and honour, holds good for every part of it: 1 Cor. vi. 20, Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies, and in your spirits, which are God's.' Thy whole is God's, thy spirit, thy body, and every part; thy wit, strength, hand, tongue, all are God's; and therefore he expects to be glorified by thy tongue. They were rebels that said, Ps. xii. 4, Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?' There is nothing we have that is ours, but God's. Our

hearts are not our own, to think what we will; nor our tongues our own, to speak what we will. God expects service from the tongue, otherwise we must be answerable for it when our sovereign Lord calls us to an account. Now, it is strange God should have so clear a right to our speech and language, and yet so little a share therein: Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' Thy tongue and thy lips, whose are they? If thou couldst make thy tongue of thyself, then thou mightst use it for thyself; but since you had it from God, you must use it for God. But, alas I how little are men mindful of this I Follow them all the day, you get not one word of God from them; they use their tongues as if they were their own, not God's.

2. It is the glory of the tongue to serve God in this kind. It is the most excellent member in the body when it is well used for the glory of God and edification of others; therefore called our glory often in the psalms: Awake, my glory;' that is, my tongue; and what is glory in the Old Testament is rendered tongue in the New, Acts ii. Our tongue is our glory. Why? Because we have this advantage by it, we may speak for God: Therewith bless we God,' James iii. 9. The benefit of speech is our privilege above angels and beasts. Angels they have reason, but no tongues; and beasts they have tongues, but no reason to guide them and act them. But now we have tongues and reason both, that we may declare our maker's praise. Surely this member and instrument was not given us to savour meats and drinks--that is not the highest use of it--but to express the sense and affections of the mind; not to utter vain, frothy, frivolous things what an abuse is that!--but to comfort and instruct one another in the things of God. It is our glory.

3. Every creature hath a voice like itself, and therefore so should the new creature have. The ox bellows, the ass brayeth, goats and sheep may

be known by their bleat, and so is a man by the tenor of his discourse. As the constitution of the mind is, so are the words. A wicked man hath a vain heart, and therefore his discourse is idle and frivolous: Prov. x. 20, The tongue of the just is as choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is little worth.' The antithesis shows it should have been said, The tongue of the wicked is little worth;' but he would point at the cause of it, the heart of the wicked.' There is a quick intercourse between the tongue and the heart. Now, because the heart of the wicked is nothing worth, all his thoughts and musings are vain; he goes grinding chaff in his mind all the day; his mind, like a mill, is always at work, not upon corn, that it might be bread for his soul, but upon chaff; therefore, because his heart is nothing worth, his tongue is nothing worth. The tongue of the just is as choice silver, it brings in a great deal of treasure. But take a wicked man, all the workings of his heart, his thoughts and discourses, when summed up together, the product and total sum at night is nothing but vanity: The Lord seeth all their thoughts are but vain.' A vain heart will have vain speeches, and so a cankered sinner will have cankered discourse, as a putrid breath discovereth rotten lungs. Every man's speech is as his humour is. Come to a covetous person, he will be discoursing of farms, oxen, bargains, wares, and such like. Come to an epicurean gallant, to a voluptuary, and he will be telling you of horses, games, dogs, meats, drinks, merry company. Go to the ambitious, they will be talking of honours, offices, and the like. As they are of the flesh, so their talk savours of fleshly things. Every man hath a voice like himself, he speaks according to the constitution of his mind. Go to the discontented man, he will be talking of his adversaries, telling of affronts, wrongs, and public offences received. But a godly man hath a voice too like himself; he will be declaring the judgments of God's

mouth; he will be speaking out of the word of God, of things within his sphere, and suitable to his kind: Mat. xii. 35, A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things.' Still the tap runs according to the liquor with which the vessel is filled, and a man's speech bewrays him of what kind he is; and therefore, since every creature hath a voice like himself, so should the new creature have.

4. I shall argue from the nature of good, which is communicative, and loves to propagate itself--omne bonum sui diffusivum: Luke xxii. 32, Thou being converted, strengthen thy brethren.' He had had experience of a changeable heart; now go strengthen others. Fire turneth all things about it into fire; leaven pierceth through the whole lump. So grace seeks to propagate and diffuse itself. Therefore, when the work of God is written upon a man's mind and laid up in his heart, he will be declaring and speaking of it to others. Naturalists observe that mules and creatures which are of a mongrel race do not procreate after their kind; so the false Christians are not for propagating and enlarging Christ's interest; they are not so warm, spiritual, and heavenly in their discourses. Andrew, when acquainted with, Christ, calls Peter, and both call Nathanael: John i. 41-45, We have found the Messiah,' John calls his disciples. As a hen, when she hath found a worm or a barleycorn, clucks for her chickens that they may come and partake of it with her, so a man acquainted with Christ, who hath tasted that the Lord is gracious, he cannot hold; he will be calling upon his friends and relations to come and share with him of the same grace. As they have more of God, they will improve it for the comfort of others, and are willing to take hold of all opportunities to this end.

5. It discovereth plenty of knowledge and a good esteem of the word.

(1.) Plenty of knowledge, when it is so apt to break out. When these

living waters run out of the belly, it is a sign of a good spring there: Col. iii. 16, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.' It is a sign we have gotten the riches of understanding; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. So Prov. xvi. 23, The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.' When our speech hath weight and worth in it, and we are ready upon all occasions, it argueth a good stock of the word. You know a man that puts his hand in his pocket, and brings up gold at every draught, it is a sign he hath more plenty of it than silver; so when we are ready to bring out gracious discourses, it argueth a treasure and stock within. (2.) It argueth a good esteem of the word. Things that are dear and precious to us, we use to discourse of them. What we love, admire, and affect, the tongue will be occupied about such things: John iii. 31, He that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth;' and 1 John iv. 5, They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world.' I know it is spoken in the first place of ordinary teachers. All men, whose original is of the earth, they savour of it in their speech; when they speak of divine things, there is some earthiness in it. The other scripture is meant of false teachers, they savour of the world, all their teaching doth savour of their affections. But both places give this general truth: What a man's affections are upon, it is most ready in his mouth. Therefore it argueth we are affected with the word of God when we are declaring it upon all occasions.

6. It is for our benefit to be talking of good things to others. The breasts that are not sucked do soon grow dry, but the more they are milked out and drawn, the greater is the increase; so in spiritual things, we gain by communicating; by discourse, truths are laid more in view. We find in any art of common learning, the more we confer about

things with others, the more understanding we get ourselves: Prov. xi. 25, The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.' It is spoken of alms; it is true of spiritual alms, as plain experience shows. By watering and refreshing others, the more are we comforted and refreshed ourselves. The loaves were increased in the dividing. Solomon compares conference to the whetting iron upon iron; the more one iron is whetted upon another, both are sharpened; so by conference our gifts are increased. Earthly goods, the more they are given out, we have the less in view and visible appearance, though God can increase them; but now, in heavenly and spiritual things, in the very giving out to others, they are increased upon our hands.

Use 1. To shame us for our unprofitableness in our relations and converses; for these are two things wherein a Christian should take occasion to declare the judgments of God's mouth.

1. In our relations, that we do no good there in declaring the judgments of God's mouth to one another. Surely every relation is a talent, and you will be accountable for it, if you do not improve it for your master's use. The husband is to converse with his wife as a man of knowledge; 1 Peter iii. 7; and the wife to gain upon the husband, 1 Peter iii. 2; and both upon the children and servants. The members of every family should be helping one another in the way to heaven. With what busy diligence doth an idolatrous family carry on their way and their course! See Jer. vii. 18, The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire,' &c., saith the Lord. Every one will have his hand in the work, and are quickening and inflaming one another. Fathers, children, husbands, wives, all find some employment or other about their idolatrous service. Oh, that every one would be as forward and zealous and helpful in the work of God! Oh, that we were as

careful to train and set our families a-work in a course of godliness! Christians should reason thus: What honour hath God by making me a father, a master of a family? Every such an one hath a charge of souls, and he is to be responsible. It will be no grief of heart to you when by your means they become acquainted with God: Ye are my crown and my rejoicing,' says the apostle, of the Thessalonians converted by his ministry. It will be a crown of honour and rejoicing in the day of the Lord, when you have been instrumental, not only for their prosperity in the world, but of their increasing in grace.

2. In our converses, how little do we edify one another! If Christ's question to the two disciples going to Emmaus were put to us: Luke xxiv. 17, What manner of conversation had you by the way?' what cause should we have to blush and be ashamed! Generally our discourse is either--(1.) Profane and sinful; there is too much of the rotten communication which the apostle forbids: Eph. iv. 29, Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearer.' Rotten discourse argueth a rotten heart. Or, (2.) Idle and vain, as foolish tales. The apostle bids Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 7, to refuse profane and old wives' fables,' or vain compliments,' though we are to give an account for idle words, Mat. xii. 36. Or else, like the Athenians, we spend our time in hearing and telling news,' Acts xvii. 21. Or we please and solace ourselves with frothy flashes of wanton wit, and jesting that is not convenient,' which the apostle forbids, Eph. v. 4. The praise of a Christian lieth not in the wittiness, but in the graciousness of his conversation. That which is Aristotle's virtue is made a sin with Paul--foolish jesting. You should rather be refreshing one another with what experiences you have had of the Lord's grace; that is the comfort and solace of Christians when they meet together.

But when men wholly give up themselves to move laughter, all this is idle and vain discourse. It is not enough to say it doth no hurt, but what good doth it do? doth it tend to the use of edifying'? A Christian that hath God and Christ, and his wonderful and precious benefits to talk of, and so many occasions to give thanks, he cannot want matter to discourse of when he comes into company; therefore we should avoid vain discourse. Or, (3.) We talk of other men's matters or faults, as the apostle speaks of those, 1 Tim. v. 13, that wandered from house to house; that were not idle only, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not: Lev. xix. 16, Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people.' The Hebrew word signifies a merchant, or one that goeth about with spices to sell; thence the word is used for one that wandereth from place to place, uttering slanders as wares. These pedlars will always be opening their packs. Men fill up time by tattling and meddling with others: Thus have I heard of such or such an one. Or, (4.) our discourse is wholly of worldly business, not a word of God: They are of the earth, and speak of the earth,' John iii. 31. The habituating ourselves to worldly discourse together, without interposing something of God, is a great disadvantage. Or, (5.) vain jangling; if we speak of anything that hath an aspect upon religion, we turn it into a mere dispute about opinion; we do not use conferences as helps to gracious affections. How many are there sick of questions, as the apostle saith, and dote upon strife of words'? 1 Tim. vi. 4. Thus if we did put ourselves to question at night, What have I spoken? what good have I done? what good have I received from such company?--it would make the word more sensible and active upon our souls.

Use 2. To press us to holy conference, both occasional and set.

1. Occasional. We are not left at random in our ordinary discourse, to

speak as we will; but at all times and with all persons we should have an eye to the good of those with whom we speak: Col. iv. 6, Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.' In visits, walks, journeys, let your speech be always with grace. We should ever be drawing to good discourse, as remembering we must give account: James ii. 12, So speak as those that shall be judged by the law of liberty.' Certainly a gracious heart will thus do. He that doth not want a heart will not want in occasion of interposing somewhat for God. This was Christ's manner: Luke xiv. 15, when he was eating bread in the Pharisee's house, he discourseth, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.' There will be a feast in heaven, when we shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God.' So when Christ was at Jacob's well, John iv. 14, he discourseth of the well of living waters which springeth up to eternal life'; still he draweth towards some gracious improvement of the occasion. So John vii. 37, when he was at the feast of tabernacles, and it was the custom there to fetch water from Siloa, and pour it out upon the altar of burnt-offerings--they were to make a flood of it--Christ improves it: If any man will come to me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water;' he spiritualiseth the occasion. If our hearts were as they ought to be, we would have a gracious word more ready; we would either be beginning or carrying on good conference where-ever we came. But Christians are to seek, either through barrenness or leanness of soul; they have not that good treasure or stock of knowledge in them, or through the custom of vain speech. And the great cause of all is the prevalency of an unsanctified and worldly heart; this hindereth us from being more fruitful in our converse.

2. It should press us to holy conferences set. There may be, and should be, some set time for mutual edification. It is not the duty only of

the ministers, but also of private Christians, keeping within the bounds of their station and the measures of their knowledge, to teach and to instruct one another. The scriptures are full of this: Col. iii. 6; Col. i. 5-11; Heb. iii. 13; Jude 20. Christians should often meet together for prayer and spiritual edification. So Heb. x. 24, 25; Rom. xv. 14. I heap up these places because of the error of the Papists, who will not have the laity speak of scripture, or things pertaining to scripture. Whereas you see these injunctions are plain and clear, and it is a great part of that holy communion that should pass between saints, this mutual exhorting, quickening, and strengthening one another's hands in the work of the Lord. These places are not to be under stood of public communion, of church societies, but of private conferences, by way of interchangeable discourse and mutual edification. It is not necessary these set conferences should be always, and all the members of the church meet and confer together; but a company of savoury Christians, whose spirits suit best in commerce, and most likely to help one another. Though I am to love all the brotherhood, and carry a respect to all in relation to me, yet I am to single out for my advantage some of the most eminent, or the most suitable; for great regard is to be had to that. Christ made a distinction in his little flock, in his family, shall I call it; some he singleth out for more immediate converses, as Peter, James, and John, in his transfiguration, in Mat. xvii. 1, and in his agonies; these were the flower, the choice, that he singled out for his special converse. I speak not of public meetings, in public societies, but set conferences with gracious Christians with whom our spirits suit best, and are likely to be of greatest help in maintaining of the spiritual life. These set times the people of God have ever made conscience of. It is a great comfort and refreshing to be conscious to the exercise of

each other's grace: Rom. i. 12, That I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.' And it is a mighty strengthening in evil times: Mal. iii. 16, Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it.' And you will find the benefit of the manifold graces of God, that what one wants will be supplied by the help of another. God doth riot so give his gifts to one but that he needs others' help. Paul calls Aquila and Priscilla fellows or helpers in Christ Jesus;' and Apollos, a mighty man in the scriptures, had a great deal of help by Aquila and Priscilla, Rom. xvi. 3; 1 Cor. xii. 21, The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you.' The meanest have their use, quickening and strengthening one another. This mutual edification differeth from ministerial or church society; because the one is an act of authority, the other of charity; the one in the face of the congregation, the other by a few Christians in private; and it may be improved to awaken each other to consider of God, of the ways of God, the word of God, the works of creation and providence, redemption, the judgments he executes in the world, mercies towards his people, the experiments and proofs of his grace in your Christian warfare: Ps. lxvi. 16, Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.' Ferus speaks of some old monks, Conveniebant in unum, audiebatur verbum Dei, &c.--they were wont to meet together, and after they had read the word of God, every one did acquaint one another with his weaknesses, with his temptations, and mutually asked counsel, and comforted one another out of the word of God; and after this they concluded all with prayer, and so every man went to his home. These examples, did we observe them, they would be most useful to us; we might drive on a trade to heaven, and be of very great profit in the spiritual life; if the gifts of private Christians

were managed without pride, vainglory, and without despising of the weak, it would be of exceeding honour to God, use and comfort to the saints.

SERMON XV.

I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments, as much as in all riches.--Ver. 14.

THESE words may respect the 12th verse, as another argument where with to back his request, Teach me thy statutes; for I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments as much as in all riches.' Many are for worldly wealth, but I have other desires: Lord, teach me how to understand and keep thy statutes, and this will be a greater benefit than any worldly possession whatsoever. Or you may refer them to the 13th verse, as a reason of his practice; every man will be speaking of that wherewith he is delighted: Lord, thy testimonies are my rejoicing;' therefore, I have and will be speaking of them upon all occasions. Or this may be the fruit of what was mentioned before: those that are exercised about the word, the study, and practice of it, and conference about it, have a sweet sense of the goodness of it in their own souls, so as they delight and rejoice in it above all things; and if we have not felt this effect, it is because we are strangers to the word.

In the words there is--

1. A delight asserted.

2. The object of it, in the way of thy testimonies.

3. The degree of it, as much as in all riches.

By way of explication: The testimonies' of God are his word, for it testifieth of his will. Now the prophet saith not only, I have rejoiced in thy testimonies,' but in the way of thy testimonies.' Way is one of the words by which the law is expressed. God's laws are ways that lead us to God; and so it may be taken here, the way which thy testimonies point out and call me unto; or else, his own practice, as a man's

course is called his way; his delight was not in speculation or talk, but in obedience and practice: In the way of thy testimonies.' The degree, as much as in all riches.' As much, not to show the equality of these things, as if we should have the same affection for the world as for the word of God; but as much, because we have no higher comparison. This is that worldlings dote upon and delight in. Now, as much as they rejoice in worldly possessions, so much do I rejoice in the way of thy testimonies. For I suppose David doth not compare his own delight in the word with his own delight in wealth; but his own choice and delight with the delight and choice of others. If he had spoken of himself both in the one respect and in the other, the expression was very high. David, that was called to a crown, and in a capacity of enjoying much in the world, gold, silver, lands, goods, largeness of territory, and a compound of all that which all men jointly, and every man severally, doth possess, yet was more pleased in the holiness of God's ways, than in all the world.' For what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' Mat. xvi. 26.

Doct. A gracious heart finds more true joy in the way of God's word than in all worldly things whatsoever.

To explain this, consider--

1. What this delight is.

2. How a gracious heart finds more delight in the word of God than in all worldly things.

3. The reasons why they do so,

1. What this delight is. I shall give you several distinctions.

[1.] There is a sweetness in the study of God's word, or when we give up ourselves to attain the knowledge of it. The very speculation and study produces a delightful taste, for three reasons:--

(1.) Truth is the good of the understanding; therefore, when the

faculty is suited with a fit object, this correspondence causeth a rejoicing and delectation: Prov. xxiv. 14, My son, eat thou honey because it is good; and the honeycomb, because it is sweet to thy taste: so shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul when thou hast found it.' Every truth, if it be but a natural or philosophical verity, when we come to consider and see it with our own eyes, and have found it out by search, and do not repeat it by rote only, breedeth a delight. Pleasure is applicatio convenientis convenienti; so it is true in theological truths; we are the more affected with them the more they are represented with evidence to the soul.

(2.) Scriptural truths are more sublime than other truths, and do en noble reason with the knowledge of them: Deut. iv. 6, Surely this great nation is a wise and an understanding people.' Such doctrines as we meet with in the word of God concerning angels and the souls of men, the creation and government of all things, the redemption of men, must needs affect the heart, and breed a joy in the view and contemplation of them.

(3.) Because these truths are suitable to our necessities. To every man that hath a conscience, it cannot but be very pleasing to hear of a way how he may come to the pardon of sins, and sound peace of conscience, solid perfection, and eternal glory. Man is naturally under fear of death, Rom. i. 32, and would be glad of pardon; weak, and unable to find out or attain to moral perfection, he would be glad of an exact rule, and gropeth and feeleth about for an everlasting happiness, Acts xvii. 27. So far as anything is found to this purpose in the writings of men, they have a marvellous force and influence upon us. Any beam of this truth scattered in Plato or Socrates, of man's reconciliation with a just God, there is nothing in their writings; the then world was under perplexity; but yet of moral perfection, and an eternal state of

blessedness, there were some glimmerings. Now, when these are represented to the understanding with such evidence and satisfaction as they are in the scriptures, where you have the only sufficient direction to true happiness, no wonder if they are greedily catched at. Now this delight, though good, I speak not of, because it may be in temporaries, who have a taste of the good word, to invite them to seek for more, Heb. vi. 4, and is a fruit of common illumination. The stony ground received the word with joy, Luke viii. 13; and though it may affect the heart, yet if not above all riches, it doth not prevail over carnal affections.

[2.] There is a sweetness found in the way of God's testimonies which ariseth from the conscience of practical obedience, not from contemplation only; and it is best to be found when we come to practise and perform what we know. It is said of wisdom, Prov. iii. 17, All her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' There is not only a sweetness in our privileges, but in our duties. No man knoweth the contentment of walking closely with God but he that hath tried. So Micah ii. 7, Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?' not only speak good, but do good. There is a certain performance of what the word saith, when it is said: it may be accounted done; but to whom? To them that know it, and are able to talk of it? No; but to them that walk. And will every slight endeavour and the presumption of conformity to the rule serve the turn? No; to them that walk uprightly, that sincerely frame themselves to obey God's will with the greatest exactness and care they can use. Oh, what good, what reviving of heart and cheerfulness do they find in this work! Briefly, this delight in the way of God's testimonies (that you may not be mistaken) differeth from that contentment and serenity of mind which is the fruit of integrity or moral sincerity. There is some degree of

comfort that accompanieth any good action, as heat doth fire; the conscience, so far as he doth good, hath some kind of peace in it. The heathens by God's general bounty and goodness had a conscience excusing when they did good, as well as accusing when they did evil: Rom. ii. 15, Their thoughts in the meantime accusing, or else excusing one another,' metaxu allelon--by turns,' and this excusing cannot be without some sweetness and contentment of mind. Sacer intra nos spiritus sedet bonorum malorumque nostrorum observator et custos; hic prout a nobis tractatus est, ita nos ipse tractat, saith Seneca. This may be without faith; whereas we speak of such a joy as is founded in faith, though found in the ways of obedience in Christ's service: Mat. xi. 29, Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' In short, there is delight in the duty and the dispensation; for it is both promised and required. Delight in God's ways is promised as a gift of God, and as the result of our obedience: Isa. lviii. 13, 14, If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, &c., then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord,' &c.; and Cant. ii. 3, I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.' There is sweetness God bestoweth, or sensible consolation, which must be distinguished from that delight which is a fruit of our gracious esteem. I can exclude neither, though that delight which is the fruit of our esteem of the word is principally here intended; the one is more durable than the other. A gracious affection to the word and ways of God should ever remain with us; but we are not always feasted with spiritual suavities. Now and then we have them, and when they have done their work they return to God. As in the vision made to Peter, the sheet that was showed him was received up again into heaven, Acts x. 16, when Peter

was informed of God's will; so this comfort returneth to the giver when it hath done its work, refreshed our hearts, and engaged us to wait upon God.

2. How a gracious heart rejoiceth more in the way of God's testimonies than in all riches.

[1.] There is a broad difference in the things themselves, and therefore there should be in our affections to them; for our affections should be carried out according to the worth of things; otherwise, if an object of less worth have more of our hearts than an object of more value, they are like members out of joint, they are not in their proper place. There is a great distance between the things themselves, as much as there is between the enjoyment of God and the creature, and therefore there must be a considerable difference in our affections to them. If the difference be so nice that thou canst hardly distinguish which thy heart is more affected with, the enjoyment of God in the way of his testimonies, or the enjoyment of wealth and worldly accommodations, or if the disproportion be on the world's side, that hath more of thy esteem and complacency, then God is not thy chiefest good; thou lovest the creature more than God, which is inconsistent with grace: for this is the prime act of grace, to choose God for our chiefest good.

[2.] We must distinguish between the sensitive stirring of the affections and the solid complacency of the soul. It is possible a child of God may be more sensibly moved by temporal things, as they do more strike upon the senses; but the supreme and prevailing delight of the soul is in spiritual things, in the way of God's testimonies. To exemplify this by the contrary affection, as in sorrow; a temporal loss may to sense more stir the affections, as to bodily expression of them, than a spiritual; as the drawing of a tooth or any present pain may

make us cry out more than the languishings of a consumption; whereas the other may go nearer to the heart, and causeth a more lasting trouble. So in joy; a man may be pleased with earthly conveniences, and yet his solid esteem is more in spiritual things; as a trifle may provoke laughter more than a solid benefit that accrueth to us. Therefore the case is not to be decided by the intensiveness of the sensitive expression so much as by the appreciation of the soul. In this sense the point is to be understood; he would lose all the world rather than dispense with his obedience to God. This is selling all for the pearl of price spoken of, Mat. xiii. 46. All other things are trampled upon and renounced for this one's sake, that we may enjoy God in Christ. And truly this affection to the word is not easily to be found; for we often see that men for a little gain will break all the commandments of God, as things not to be stood upon when any temporal commodity is in chase, and in the pursuit of worldly riches care not how they neglect Christ and heavenly things.

3. The reasons why they rejoice more in the way of God's testimonies than in all riches.

[1.] Because of the suitableness of these things to the new nature. Everything hath a kind of joy when it enjoys that which is good for it. The ground doth pleasantly receive a shower of rain after drought; the natural man eateth and drinketh, and his heart is filled with gladness; so the spiritual man is affected with that which is agreeable to the divine nature. Everything is preferred according to the suitableness and proportion which it carrieth to our necessities and desires. The cock in the fable preferred a barleycorn before a jewel; the barley corn is more suitable to its natural appetite. So believers have not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 12; therefore the way of God's testimonies is more suitable and

proportion able to that nature which they have. Their wealth and worldly things they indeed suit with the sensitive nature, but that is kept under, therefore the prevalent inclination is to the word more than to the world.

[2.] There is nothing in the enjoyment of worldly things, but they have it more amply in the exactest and sincerest way of enjoyment by the word, and walking in the way of its precepts. Satan's baits whereby he leads men to sin are pleasure and profit; when bonum honestum, the good of honesty and duty, is declined, there remains nothing but bonum utile et jucundum, the good of pleasure and profit. If we be moved with these things, it is good to look there where we may have them at the highest rate and in the most sincere manner. Now, it is the word of God believed and obeyed which yieldeth us the greatest profit and the greatest pleasure. You have both in one verse: Ps. xix. 10, More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than the honey and the honeycomb.' Because of the profit it is compared to gold, and because of the sweetness and pleasure we have by it, it is compared to honey.

The word of God will truly enrich a man and make us happy. The difference between God's people and others doth not lie in this, that the one seeketh after riches, the other not; they both seek to enrich themselves; only the one seeketh after false, and the other true riches, as they are called, Luke xvi. 11, and so differ from one another as we and the Indians do, who reckon their wealth by their wampenpeage, or shells of fishes, as we do ours by gold and silver; the one hath little worth but what their fancies put upon it; the other hath a value in nature. Or, to speak in a more home comparison, counters, glass beads, and painted toys please children more than jewels and things of greater price, yea, than land of inheritance, or

whatever, when we come to man's estate, we value and is of use to us for the supply of present necessities. So worldly men, preferring their kind of wealth before holiness and the influences of grace, do but cry up baubles before jewels. To evidence this, and that we may beat the world with their own notions, and so the better defeat the temptation, let us consider what is the true riches.

1. What is indeed true riches.

2. Why these are the true riches.

1. What is indeed riches.

[1.] Gracious experiences or testimonies of the favour of God. He is a rich man indeed that hath many of these. So it is said, Rom. x. 12, God is rich to all that call upon him;' it is meant actively, not passively; it only noteth that God doth give out plentiful experiences of his grace.

[2.] Knowledge: Let the word of God dwell in you richly, in all wisdom,' Col. iii. 16. And the apostle mentions the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ,' Col. ii. 2. This is a treasure in deed, that cannot be valued; and he is a very poor soul that wants it.

[3.] Faith: James ii. 5, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith?' He is a rich man that is emptied of himself that he may be filled with God.

[4.] Good works: 1 Tim. vi. 10, Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, &c., but rich in good works,' miserable man! that hath nothing to reckon upon but his money and his bags, so much by the year, and makes it all his business to live plentifully in the world, laying up nothing for heaven, and is not rich in gracious experiences, knowledge, faith, and good works, which are a

Christian s riches!

2. Why are these the true riches?

[1.] That is true riches which maketh the man more valuable, which gives an intrinsic worth to him, which wealth doth not that is without us. We would not judge of a horse by the richness of his saddle and the gaudiness of his trappings; and is man, a reasonable creature, to be esteemed by his moneys and lands, or by his graces and moral perfections?

[2.] That is riches which puts an esteem upon us in the eyes of God and the holy angels, who are best able to judge, One barbarous Indian may esteem another the more he hath of his shells and trifles; but you would count him never the richer that should bring home a whole ships lading of these things: Luke xii. 20, such a fool is he that heapeth up treasure to himself, and is not rich towards God;' that hath not of that sort of riches which God esteemeth. We are bound for a country where riches are of no value; grace only goeth current in the other world.

[3.] That is riches which steads us in our greatest extremities. When we come to die, the riches of this world prove false comforts, for they forsake a man when he hath most need of comfort. In the hour of death, when the poor shiftless naked soul is stripped of all, and we can carry away nothing in our hands, grace lieth near the heart to comfort us. It is said by a voice from heaven of those that die in the Lord, Their works follow them;' their wealth doth not. Our graces continue with us to all eternity.

[4.] That is the true riches which will supply all our necessities, and bear our expenses to heaven. Wealth doth not this, but grace: Mat. vi. 33, Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added;' 1 Tim. iv. 8, Godliness is

profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' Heaven and earth are laid at the feet of godliness.

[5.] That is true riches which will give us a title to the best inheritance. The word of God is able to enrich a man more than all the riches of the world, because it is able to bring a man to an everlasting kingdom. All this is spoken because there is an evil desire that possesseth the whole world; they are vehemently carried after riches, and as they are increased, so are they delighted. But, saith David, my delight is to increase in knowledge and grace; if I get more life, more victory over lusts, more readiness for God's service, this comforts me to the heart. Now how do you measure your thriving? by worldly or spiritual increase?

Here is the true delight. Spiritual delight in spiritual objects far exceedeth all the joy that we can take in worldly things. The pleasures of the mind are far more pure and defecate than those of the body; so that if a man would have pleasures, let him look after the chiefest of the kind. He spoke like a beast rather than like a man that said, Eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast goods laid up for many years,' Luke xii. 19. That is the most that worldly things can afford us, a little bodily cheer: Ps. xvii. 14, Thou hast filled their bellies with hid treasures;' there is the poor happiness of a rich world ling. He may have a bellyful, and fare at a better rate than others do: Hab. i. 16, Their portion is made fat, and their meat plenteous.' When men have troubled themselves and the world to make themselves great, it is but for a little belly-cheer, which may be wanted as well as enjoyed; a modest temperance and mean fare yieldeth more pleasure. But what is this to the delights of the mind? A sensualist is a fool, that runneth to such dreggy and carnal delights. Noble and sublime thoughts breed a

greater pleasure. What pleasure do some take in finding out a philosophical verity!--the man rejoiceth, the senses are only tickled in the other. Of all pleasures of the mind, those of the spiritual life are the highest, for then our natural faculties are quickened and heightened by the Spirit. The reasonable nature hath a greater joy than the sensitive, and the spiritual divine nature hath more than the mere rational. There is not only a higher object, the love of God, but a higher cause, the Spirit of God, who elevateth the faculty to a higher manner of sense and perception. Therefore both the good and evil of the spiritual life is greater than the good and evil of the rational. The evil of the spiritual is greatest: A wounded spirit who can bear?' And the good of the spiritual life is greatest, joy unspeakable and glorious.' The higher the life, the greater the feeling; groans not uttered.' Peace passing all understanding,' though it maketh no loud noise, yet it diffuseth a solid contentment throughout the soul. All this is spoken because the way of God's testimonies is looked upon as a dark and gloomy course by carnal men; yet it is the life of the blessed God himself: Eph. iv. 18, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.' And surely he wants no true joy and pleasure that lives such a life.

Use 1. Here is an invitation to men to acquaint themselves more with the way of God's testimonies, that they may find this rejoicing above all riches. It is hard to pleasant natures to abjure accustomed delights; and carnal men picture religion with a sour austere face: We shall never see cheerful day more if we are strict in religion. Oh! consider, your delight is not abrogated, but perfected; you shall find a rejoicing more intimate than in all pleasures. Cyprian saith he could hardly get over this prejudice, in his epistle to Donatus. Austin,

thirty years old, parted with his carnal delights, and found another sweetness--quam suave mihi subito factum est! It is your disease maketh you carnal; when freed from the fervours of lust, these things will have no relish with you. If it seem laborious at first, it will be more joyful than all riches. The root is bitter, but the fruit sweet. At first it is bitter to nature, which loveth carnal liberty, to render itself captive to the word; but after a little pains, and when the heart is once subdued to God, it will be sweet and comfortable. Ask of the spies that have been in this good land if it be not a land flowing with milk and honey. David tells you, In the way of thy testimonies.' This way would be more trodden if men would believe this; if you will not believe, make trial; if Christ's yoke seem burdensome, it is to a galled neck.

Use 2. Trial.

1. Have we a delight in obedience to God's precepts? Ps. cxii. 1, they that fear God, delight greatly in his commandments. It is not enough to serve God, but we must serve him delightfully; for he is a good master, and his work hath wages in the mouth of it. It is a sign you are acquainted with the word of God, when the obedience which it requireth is not a burden but a delight to you. Alas! with many it is otherwise. How tedious do their hours run in God's service I no time seemeth long but that which is spent in divine worship. Do you count the clock at a feast? and are you so provident of time when about your sports? Are you afraid that the lean kine will devour the fat, when you are about your worldly business? What causeth your rejoicing? the increase of wealth, or grace?

2. Is this the supreme delight of the soul? It is seen not so much by the sensible expression, as by the serious constitution of the soul, and the solid effects of it.

[1.] Doth it draw you off from worldly vanities to the study of the word? What are your conceptions of it? What do you count your riches? To grow in grace, or to thrive in the world? To grow rich towards God, or to heap up treasures to yourselves? Is it your greatest care to maintain a carnal happiness?

[2.] Doth it support you in troubles and worldly losses? and bear you out in temporal adversities? You cannot be merry unless you have riches and wealth and worldly accommodations; then, soul, eat, drink, and be merry!

[3.] Doth it sweeten duties? The way of God's commandments is your way home. A beast will go home cheerfully. You are going home to rest. Let the joy of the Lord be your strength. Certainly you will think no labour too great to get thither, whither the word directs you. As one life exceedeth another, so there is more sensibleness in it. A beast is more sensible of wrong and hurt and of pleasure than a plant; and as the life of a man exceedeth the life of a beast, so is he more capable of joy and grief; and as the life of grace exceedeth the life of a mere man, so its joys are greater, its griefs greater. There are no hardships to which we are exposed for religion, but the reward attending it will make us to overcome.

SERMON XVI.

I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.--Ver. 15.

ALL along David had showed what he had done; now, what he will do. Ver. 10, I have sought;' ver. 11, I have hid;' ver. 13, I have declared;' ver. 14, I have rejoiced.' Now, in the two following verses, he doth engage himself to set his mark towards God for time to come: I will meditate in thy precepts,' &c. We should not rest upon anything already done and past, but continue the same diligence unto the end. Here is David's hearty resolution and purpose to go on for time to come. Many will say, Thus I have done when I was young, or had more leisure and rest; in that I have meditated and conferred. You must continue still in a holy course. To begin to build and leave unfinished is an argument of folly. There is always the same reason for going on that there was for beginning, both for necessity, profit, and sweetness. We have no license to slack and give over till all be finished: Phil. ii. 12, Work out your own salvation; otherwise all you do is in vain, yet not in vain: Gal. iii. 4, in vain as to final reward, yet not in vain as to increase of punishment. You lose your cost, your watchings, striving, prayings; but you will gain a more heavy punishment, so that it had been better you had never be gun: 2 Peter ii. 20, 21, For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.' You bring an ill report upon God; your sense of the

worth of heavenly things must needs be greater for your making trial; and therefore your punishment for neglect the greater. Into the vineyard they came at several hours, but all tarried till the close of the day. Some called sooner, some later, but all held out till the end: Heb. vi. 10, 11, you have ministered and must minister; you have prayed and must pray; you have heard the word with gladness, and must hear still. Many in youth are zealous, but when their first heats are spent, grow worldly, careless, and ready to sound a retreat from God. The fire of the altar was never to go out; so should the life, and warmth, and vigour of our affections to the word of God be ever preserved. God is the same still, and so is the word; and therefore we should ever be the same in our respects to it. The devil in policy lets men alone for a while, to manifest some respect to the ways of God, that they may after do religion a mischief. They are full of zeal, strict, holy, diligent in attendance upon ordinances. He never troubleth them, but is at truce with them all this while, till they get some name for the profession of godliness, and then he knoweth their fall will be the more scandalous and ignominious, not only to themselves, but to their profession. They are forward and hot men a while, till they have run themselves out of breath, and then by a notable defection shame themselves, and harden others.

Compare it with the 13th verse, I have declared;' now I will meditate.' To be warm and affectionate in our expressions of respect to the word before others, and to slight it in our own hearts, argueth gross hypocrisy; therefore David would not only confer, but meditate. Many talk with others, but not with their own soul: Commune with your hearts, and be still.' True zeal is uniform; when there is no witness but God, it acts alike.

Refer it to the 14th verse, David had spoken of his delight in the law;

now, that he would meditate therein; in both not to boast, but to excite others by his example: that is to be understood all along when he speaketh of his diligence in and about the law of God. But mark, first the word was his delight, and then his meditation, Delight causeth meditation, and meditation increaseth delight: Ps. i. 2, But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' A man that delighteth in the law of God will exercise his mind therein. Our thoughts follow our affections. It is tedious and irksome to the flesh to meditate, but delight will carry us out. The smallest actions, when we have no delight in them, seem tedious and burdensome. It was no great matter for Haman to lead Mordecai's horse, yet a burdensome offensive service, because it was against his will. The difficulty that we find in holy duties lieth not in the duties themselves, but in the awkwardness of our affections. Many think they have no parts, and therefore they cannot meditate. He that findeth a heart to this work will find a head. Delight will set the mind a-work, for we are apt to muse and pause upon that which is pleasing to us. Why are not holy thoughts as natural and as kindly to us as carnal? The defect is in the heart: I have rejoiced in thy testimonies,' saith David, and therefore I will meditate in thy statutes.'

In the words there is a double expression of David's love to the law of God:--

1. I will meditate in thy precepts.

2. I will have respect to thy ways.

Concerning which observe--

1. In both the notion by which the word of God is expressed and diversified, precepts, ways. The word precepts implieth God's authority, by which the counsels of the word are ratified. Ways implieth a certain direction for our walk to heaven. There are God's

ways to us declared in his promises. So it is said, Ps. xxv. 10, All the paths of God are mercy and truth.' Our ways to God, ver. 4 of that psalm: Show me thy ways, teach me thy paths.' These are his precepts.

2. Observe, the one is the fruit of the other: I will meditate;' and then, I will have respect.' Meditation is in order to practice; and if it be right, it will beget a respect to the ways of God. We do not meditate that we may rest in contemplation, but in order to obedience: Josh. i. 8, Thou shalt meditate in the book of the law day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.' So Phil. iv. 8, 9, Think of these things,' do these things'--logizesthe. When you cast up your accounts, and consider what God hath required of you, it is that you may set upon the work. Meditation is not a flourishing of the wit, that we may please the fancy by playing with divine truths (sense is diseased that must be fed with quails), but a serious inculcation of them upon the heart, that we may urge it to practice. Nor yet an acquainting ourselves with the word that we may speak of it in company: conference is for others, meditation for ourselves when we are alone. Words are but the female issue of our thoughts, works the male. Nor merely to store ourselves with curious notions and subtile inquiries; study searcheth out a truth, but meditation improveth it for practical use: it is better to be sincere than subtile.

3. Observe, this practical obedience is expressed by having respect unto the ways of God. To respect God's ways is to take heed that we do not turn out of them, to regard them and ourselves: Observe to do them,' Josh. i. 8; and it is called elsewhere, pondering our path: Prov. iv. 26, Ponder the path of thy feet,' that we may not mistake our way, nor wander out of it. Respect to God's word was opened ver. 6 and 9. The main point is this--

That one great duty of the saints is meditating on the word of God, and such matters as are contained therein.

Let us inquire what meditation is, because the practice and know ledge of the duty is almost become a stranger to us. Before I can define, I must distinguish it. Meditation is--

1. Occasional.

2. Set and solemn.

1. Occasional meditation is an act by which the soul spiritualiseth every object about which it is conversant. A gracious heart is like an alembic; it can distil useful thoughts out of all things that it meeteth with. Look, as it seeth all things in God, so it seeth God in all things. Thus Christ at Jacob's well discourseth of the well of life, John iv.; at the miracle of the loaves, discourseth of manna, John vi. and vii.; at the feast of tabernacles, of living waters; at the Pharisee's supper, discourseth of eating bread in the kingdom of God, Luke xiv. 15. There is a holy chemistry and art that a Christian hath to turn water into wine, brass into gold, to make earthly occasions and objects minister spiritual and heavenly thoughts. God trained up the old church by types and ceremonies, that the things they ordinarily conversed with might put them in mind of God and Christ, their duties, and dangers, and sins. And our Lord in the New Testament taught by parables and similitudes taken from ordinary functions and offices amongst men, that in every trade and calling we might be employed in our worldly business with a heavenly mind; that whether in the shop, or at the loom, or in the field, we might still think of Christ, and grace, and heaven. There is a parable of the merchantman, a parable of the sower, a parable of the man calling his servants to account, &c., that upon all these occasions we might wind up our minds, and extract some spiritual use from our common affairs. Thus the

creatures lift up our minds to the creator. David had his night meditation: Ps. viii. 3, When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands, the moon, and the stars which thou hast ordained,' &c.;--the sun is not mentioned. When he was gone abroad in the night, his heart was set on work presently: and Ps. xix. 5, there is a morning meditation, for he seemeth to describe the sun coming out of his chambers in the east, and displaying his beams like a cloth of gold upon the world. A holy heart cannot want an object to lead him to the meditation of God's power, and goodness, and glory, and wise providence, who hath made and doth order all things according to the counsel of his will. There is a great deal of practical divinity in the very bosom of nature, if we had the skill to find it out. Job biddeth us, Ask the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.' They speak by our thoughts.

2. There is set and solemn meditation. Now this is of several sorts, or rather, they are several parts of the same exercise.

[1.] There is a reflective meditation, which is nothing but a solemn parley between a man and his own heart: Ps. iv. 4, Commune with your own heart and be still;' when we have withdrawn ourselves from company, that the mind may return upon itself, to consider what we are, what we have been, what straits and temptations we have passed through, how we overcame them, how we passed from death to life. This is a necessary part of meditation, but very difficult. What can be more against self-love and carnal ease than for a man to be his own accuser and judge? All our shifts are to avoid our own company, and to run away from ourselves. The basilisk dieth by seeing himself in a mirror, and a guilty man cannot endure to see his own natural face in the glass of the word. The worldly man choketh his soul with business, lest, for

want of work, the mind, like a mill, should fall upon itself. The voluptuous person melteth away his days in pleasure, and charmeth his soul into a deep sleep with the potion of outward delights, lest it should awake and talk with him. Well, then, it is necessary that you should take some time to discourse with yourselves, to ask of your souls what you have been, what you are, what you have done, what shall become of you to all eternity: Jer. viii. 6, No man asketh of himself, what have I done?' You would think it strange of two men that conversed every day for forty or fifty years, and yet all this while they did not know one another. Now, this is the case between us and our own souls; we live a long time in the world, and yet are strangers to ourselves.

[2.] There is a meditation which is more direct, when we exercise our minds in the word of God and the matters contained therein. This is twofold:--

(1.) Dogmatical, or the searching out of a truth in order to know ledge: Proving what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' Rom. xii. 2. This is study, and differeth from meditation in the object, and supposeth the matter we search after to be unknown, either in whole or in part; whereas practical meditation is the inculcation or whetting of a known truth upon the soul: and it differs in the end; the end of study is information, and the end of meditation is practice, or a work upon the affections. Study is like a winter sun, that shineth, but warmeth not; but meditation is like blowing up the fire, where we do not mind the blaze but the heat. The end of study is to hoard up truth; but of meditation, to lay it forth in conference or holy conversation. In study, we are rather like vintners, that take in wine to store themselves for sale; in meditation, like those that buy wine for their own use and comfort. A vintner's cellar may be better stored than a nobleman's; the student may have more of notion and knowledge,

but the practical Christian hath more of taste and refreshment.

(2.) Practical and applicative. This we now speak of; and it is that duty and exercise of religion whereby the mind is applied to the serious and solemn consideration and improvement of the truths which we understand and believe, for practical uses and purposes. Not like a man that soweth and never reapeth; or a woman that often conceives, but never brings forth living children.

(1st.) It is a duty; for it is commanded, Josh. i. 8, This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.' As the promise is general, I will not leave thee nor forsake thee,' Heb. xiii. 5, so is the command. To meditate in the law is a part of the description of a godly man: Ps. i. 2, His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in that law doth he meditate day and night.' It is commended to us by the practice and example of the saints in scripture. Isaac, Gen. xxiv. 63, went out to meditate in the field in the eventide,' to pray, as in the margin; the word in the original is indifferent to both senses; it properly signifieth muttering, or an imperfect or suppressed sound. The Septuagint sometimes renders it by aei'dein, to sing; but others by adolesche?sai , which signifies to exercise himself. The word is used here en tais entolais sou adolesche'so. Symmachus, lalesai, to speak; Aquila, omilesai, to discourse with God and his own soul. The original word, Isvch, signifieth to mutter, or such a speaking as is between thoughts and words. He made his duty his refreshment and solace at night. So David often in this psalm. Reason enforceth it. God, that is a spirit, deserveth the most pure and spiritual worship by the mind, as well as that which is performed by the body. Thoughts are the eldest and noblest offspring of the soul, and it is fit they should be consecrated

to converse with God.

(2d.) It is a necessary duly; not a thing of arbitrary concernment, a moral help that may be observed and omitted at our pleasure; but of absolute use, without which all graces wither. Faith is lean unless it be fed with meditation on the promises: Ps. cxix. 92, I had fainted in my affliction, unless thy word had been my delight.' Hope is not lively unless we contemplate the thing hoped for, and, with Abraham, walk through the land of promise, Gen. xv., and think often and seriously on the glory of the riches of the inheritance of the saints,' Eph. i. 18, and get upon the mount of meditation, upon the top of Pisgah, to get a view of the land. So for love; the more we study the height, and breadth, and depth of God's love in Christ,' Eph. iii. 18, 19, the more is the heart melted and drawn out to God, and more quickened to obedience: Ps. xxvi. 3, Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes.' And as it helpeth our graces in their exercise, so all other duties; as hearing of the word. To hear and not to meditate is unfruitful. The heart is hard and the memory slippery, the thoughts loose and vain; and therefore, unless we cover the good seed, the fowls of the air will catch it away. It is like a thing put into a bag with holes--lost while it is received: James i. 23, 24, Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls; for if a man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of person he was.' Bare hearing begets but transient thoughts, and leaveth but a weak impression in the soul; like a flash of lightning, as soon gone as come, or the glance of a sunbeam upon a wave. A man never discerneth the scope, the beauty, the order of the truths delivered, till he cometh to meditate on them, and to go over them again and again in his thoughts: Ps. lxii. 11, God hath

spoken once, twice have I heard this,' &c., i.e., when we repeat it upon our thoughts, inculcate it, and meditate upon it, this maketh a deeper impression, and that which is spoken rebounds again and again; it is twice heard. David saith, Ps. cxix. 99, I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation.' The preacher can but lay down general theorems and deduce practical inferences; but that which fasteneth them upon the heart is our own thoughts; and so we come to be wiser, to see more clearly and practically as to our own case than he that preacheth; we see a further use than he was aware of. So for prayer; what we take in by the word we digest by meditation, and let out by prayer. These three duties help one another. What is the reason men have such a barren, dry, and sapless spirit in their prayers? It is for want of exercising themselves in holy thoughts: Ps. xlv. 1, My heart inditeth a good matter;' and then My tongue is as the pen of a ready writer.' It alludeth to the mincah, the meat offering; the oil and flour were to be kneaded together, and fried in a pan, and so offered to the Lord. When we come with raw dough-baked offerings, before we have concocted and prepared our thoughts by mature deliberation, we are barren or tumultuary in our prayers to God. Prayer is called by the name of meditation, because it is the product and issue of it; as Ps. v. 1, Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation.' So Ps. xix. 14, Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight;' implying that prayer is but the vent and expression of what we have deliberated and meditated upon. So David findeth his desires more earnest after grace, the more he mused and meditated: Ps. cxliii. 5, 6, I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the works of thy hands; I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land.' Well,

then, it is the life and strength of other ordinances, without which how slight and perfunctory are we! I might instance in conference; the stream of good discourse is fed by serious thoughts. The Lord's Supper, a duty which is mainly despatched by our thoughts; there we come to put reason to the highest use, to be the instrument of faith and love; of faith in believing applications; of love, in resolutions of duty and thankfulness. In that one ordinance there is a union of mysteries, which we take abroad in holy and serious thoughts. To have an unfruitful understanding, then, is a great damp and deadness to the heart. Now, we shall never en large ourselves in pertinent and savoury thoughts, unless we use to meditate; for spiritual dispositions do not come upon us of a sudden, and by rapt motions, but by progressive and orderly degrees and preparations.

(3d.) It' is a profitable duty as to temporals. Isaac went out to meditate, and of a sudden he espieth the camels coming upon which Rebecca was brought to him, Gen. xxiv. 63, 64. Was this a mere accident, think you, or a providence worthy of remark and observation? Isaac goes to meet with God, and there he gets the first view of his bosom-friend and spouse. This was a mercy cast into the bargain. Godliness hath the promises of this life, and that which is to come.' There is nothing lost by duty and acts of piety. Seneca said the Jews were a foolish people, because they lost the full seventh part of their lives--Septimam aetatis partem perdunt vacando; in tending their sabbath-time. This is the sense of nature, to think all lost that is bestowed upon God. Flesh and blood crieth out, What need this waste? they cannot spare time from their callings, they have families to maintain. Oh! let me tell you, by serving God you drive on two cares at once. Worldly interests are cast into the way of religion, and though not designed and intended by us, these things are added to us. For

comforts and manifestations of God, we have them many times in our recess and the privacy of our retirements, in a more plentiful manner than elsewhere. The spouse inviteth the bridegroom, Cant. vii. 11, Come, my beloved, let us go forth in to the field.' Upon which Bernard, O sancta anima, fuge publicum, fuge. An nescis te verecundum habere sponsum, qui nequaquam tibi velit indulgere praesentiam suam coram aliis? We have most experiences of God when we are alone with him, and sequestered from all distractions of company and business, solacing ourselves with God. Exod. iii. 1, Moses drove the sheep to the back side of the wilderness, and came to the mount of God: he goeth aside from the other shepherds, that he might converse with the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, and there he seeth the vision of the fiery bush. Usually God cometh to us in our deep meditation; when the soul is most elevated, and fittest to entertain the comforts of his presence, then we have sensible experience of God.

The standing spiritual benefits of meditation are many. It imprints and fastens a truth upon the mind and memory. Deliberate thoughts stick with us, as a lesson we have conned is not easily for gotten. Civet long kept in a box, the scent remaineth when the civet is taken out. Sermons meditated on are remembered by us long after they are delivered: it sets the heart a-work. The greatest matters will not work upon him that doth not think of them. Tell them of sin, and God, and Christ, and heaven and hell, and they stir them not, because they do not take these truths into their deep thoughts; or if they be stirred a little, it is but a fit, while the truth is held in the view of conscience. We had need inculcate things if we would have them to affect us. The steel must beat again and again upon the flint, if we would have the sparks fly out; so must the understanding bear hard upon the will, to get out any affection and respect to the ways of God. It

showeth the beauty of truths. When we look upon them in transitu, we do not see half that is in them; but upon a deliberate view it more appeareth; as there is a secret grace in some, that is not discerned but by much converse and narrow inspection. It helpeth to prevent vain thoughts. The mind of man is restless, and cannot lie idle; therefore it is good to employ it with good thoughts, and set it a-work on holy things; for then there will be no time and heart for vanity, the mind being prepossessed and seasoned already; but when the heart is left to run loose, vanity increaseth upon us. O Christians! meditation is all; it is the mother and nurse of knowledge and godliness, the great instrument in all the offices of grace. We resemble the purity and simplicity of God most in the holiness of our thoughts. Without meditation we do but talk one after another like parrots, and take up things by mere hearsay, and repeat them by rote, without affection and life, or discerning the worth and excellency of what we speak. It is meditation that maketh truths always ready and present with us: Prov. vi. 21, 22, Bind them continually upon thy heart; when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou wakest, it shall talk with thee.' But I forbear.

1. Whereby the mind is applied to serious and solemn consideration. I add this, to distinguish it from occasional meditation, and those good thoughts that accidentally rush into our minds, and to note the care and attention of soul that we should use in such an exercise. It is musing makes the fire burn: glances or transient thoughts, or running over a truth in haste, is not meditation, but a serious attention of mind. It is not to take a snatch and away, but to make a meal of truth, and to work it into our hearts. Alas! a slight thought, that is like a flash of lightning, gone as soon as come, doth nothing. Constant thoughts are operative; and a truth, the longer it is held in the view

of conscience, the more powerful it is: Deut. xxxii. 46, Set your hearts to all the words which I testify among you this day.' A sudden thought may be none of ours; it may be unwelcome, and find no entertainment with us, but set your hearts to it: Luke ix. 44, Let these things sink down into your hearts;' let them go to the quick: Prov. xviii. 1, Through desire a man having separated himself, intermeddleth in all wisdom.' Then is a man fit for these pure and holy thoughts, for intermeddling in all wise and divine matters, when he hath divorced himself from other cares, and is able to keep his understanding under a prudent confinement.

2. Of the truths which we understand and believe. In meditation we suppose the object understood; for it is the work of study to search it out, of meditation to enforce and apply it; and we suppose it believed and granted to be a truth. The work now is to improve our assent, that it may have an answerable force and efficacy upon the soul.

3. It follows in the description, for practical uses and purposes. Meditation is not to store the head with notions, but to better the heart. We meditate of God that we may love him and fear him; of sin, that we may abhor it; of hell, that we may avoid it; of heaven, that we may pursue it. Still the end is practical, to quicken us to greater diligence and care in the heavenly life.

Use 1. To reprove those that are seldom in this work. Worldly cares and sloth and ease divert us; if we had a heart, we would have time and leisure. The clean beasts did chew the cud. We should go over, and over, and over again the truths of God in our thoughts. But alas!--

1. Either men muse on trifles; all the day their minds are full of chaff and vanity. Oh! hast thou thoughts for other things, and hast thou no thoughts for God's precepts? Hast thou not a God and a Christ to think of? And is not salvation by him, and everlasting glory, worthy

of your choicest thoughts? You have thoughts enough and to spare for other things--for base things, for very toys--and why not for God and the word of God? Why not for Christ and that everlasting redemption he hath accomplished for us? If a man would throw his meat and drink down the kennel, rather than give to him that asketh him, the world would cry shame upon him. Will you cast away your thoughts upon idle vanities rather than God shall have them? Oh, shame! Your thoughts must be working. What! shall they run waste, and yet God have no turn?

2. Or else men muse on that which is evil. There are many sins engross the thoughts.

[1.] Uncleanness sets up a stage in the heart, whereon a polluted fancy personates and acts over the pleasures of that sin. Our thoughts are often panders to our lust: 2 Peter ii. 14, Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin.' The unclean rolling of fancy on the beauty of women is forbid: Mat. v. 28, He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.'

[2.] Revenge; the thoughts of it, how sweet are they to a carnal heart! Men dwell upon their discontents and injuries till, like liquors that sour in the vessel when long kept, they sharpen revenge. We are apt to concoct anger into malice: Frowardness is in his heart; he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord,' Prov. vi. 14.

[3.] Envy stirreth up repining thoughts; it is a sin that feedeth on the mind: 1 Sam. xviii. 9, And Saul envied David from that day forward.' David's ten thousands ever ran in Saul's mind. Envy muses on the good of others to hate them.

[4.] Pride, in lofty conceits and whispers of vanity: Luke i. 51, He hath scattered the proud in the imaginations of their hearts.' Proud men are full of musings. Is not this great Babylon that I have built,

for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?' Dan. iv. 30. Proud men please themselves with the suppositions of applause, and the echoes of praise in their minds.

[5.] Covetousness consists chiefly in a vain musing: Ezek. xxxiii. 31, Their heart goeth after their covetousness;' 2 Peter ii. 14, Hearts exercised with covetous practices.'

Use 2 is of exhortation, to press us to meditate on God's precepts. Many think it is an exercise that doth not suit with their temper; it is a good exercise, but for those that can use it. It is true there is a great deal of difference among Christians. Some are more serious and consistent, and have a greater command over their thoughts; others are of a more slight and weak spirit, and less apt for duties of retirement and recollection; but our unfitness is usually moral rather than natural, not so much by temper as by ill use. Now, sinful indispositions do not disannul our engagements to God, as a servant's drunkenness doth not excuse him from work. Inky water cannot wash the hands clean. That it is a culpable unfitness appeareth partly because disuse and neglect is the cause of it; those that use it have a greater command over the thoughts. Men count it a great yoke; custom would make it easy. Every duty is a help to itself; and the more we meditate the more we may. They that use it much find more of sweetness than difficulty in it. If a man did use to govern his thoughts, they would come more to hand. Partly, want of love. We pause and stay upon such objects as we delight in. Love naileth the soul to the object or thing beloved: Ps. cxix. 97, Oh, how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day.' Carnal men find no burden in their thoughts; their heart is in them. Well, then, though you have not such choice and savoury thoughts as others have, yet set upon the work; you can think of anything you love.

Oh! but, as some press it, it requireth art and skill, and logical disposition of places of argumentation.

Ans. We cannot tie you to a method. Serious thoughts, no question, are required, and dealing with the heart about it in the best way of reasoning that we can use. Take these directions:--

1. Look how others muse how to commit a sin; and shall not we muse how to redress it? Wicked men sit a-brood: Isa. lix. 5, They hatch the cockatrice egg, and weave the spider's web; they devise mischief upon the bed;' Micah ii. 1, Woe to them that devise mischief on their beds.' So do you muse how to carry on the work of the day with success: Prov. xvi. 30, The wicked man shutteth his eyes to devise froward things;' it signifies his pensive solitary muttering with himself.

2. As you would persuade others to good. Surely you do not count admonition so hard a work. What words you would use to them, use the same thoughts to yourself: heart answereth to heart.

3. You understand a truth; you have arguments evident and strong why you should believe it; repeat them over to the soul with application: Job v. 27, See it, and know it for thy good.' This application is partly by way of trial, partly by way of charge. By way of trial: How is it with thee, my soul? Rom. viii. 31, What shall we say to these things?' By way of charge and command: Ps. lxxiii. 28, It is good for me to draw nigh to God; I have put my trust in the Lord, that I might declare all thy works.'

SERMON XVII.

I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.--Ver. 16.

DAVID had spoken much of his respect to the word, both as to his former practice and future resolutions. A godly man, the more good he doth, the more he desireth, delighteth, and resolveth to do. Spiritual affections grow upon us by practice and much exercise. The graces of the Spirit and the duties of religion do every one fortify and strengthen one another; lose one, and lose all; keep one, and keep all. Meditation breedeth delight, and delight helpeth memory and practice. He had said, I will meditate on thy precepts;' and now, I will delight myself in thy statutes;' and that produceth a further benefit, I will not forget thy word.'

The spiritual life is refreshed with change as well as the natural; but it is with change of exercise, not of affection. There is hearing, praying, conferring, meditating, and all with delight; for when one fontinel is drawn dry, we may, as the lamb doth, suck another that will yield new supply and sweetness. David had spoken of his various exercises about the word, in the use of all which he would maintain a spiritual delight.

In this verse observe again a double respect to the word of God:--

1. I will delight myself in thy statutes.

2. I will not forget thy word.

These are fitly suited. Delight preventeth forgetfulness; the mind will run upon that which the heart is delighted in; and the heart is where the treasure is, Mat. vi. 21. Worldly men, that are intent upon carnal interests, forget the word; it is not their delight. If anything

displease us, we are glad if we can forget it; it is some release from an inconvenience to take off our thoughts from it; but it doubleth the contentment of a thing that we are delighted in to remember it and call it to mind. In the outward school, if a scholar by his own averseness from learning, or by the severity and imprudence of his master, by his morosity or unreasonable exactions, hath no delight in his book, all that he learneth is lost and forgotten; it goeth in at one ear, and out at the other: but this is the true art of memory, to cause them to delight in what they learn. Such instructions as we take in with a sweetness, they stick with us, and run in our minds night and day. So saith David here, I will delight in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.'

Doct. 1. One great respect which the saints owe to the word of God is to delight therein.

David resolveth so to do: I will delight,' or solace or recreate my self in thy statutes; this should be his refreshment after business. David had many things to delight in;--the splendour and magnificence of his kingdom; as Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iv. 30, Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?' His great victories, which Aristotle saith are delightful to all. To` nikan edu`, ou mo'non tois philone'ikois alla` pasi; phantasi'a ga`r uperoches gu'gnetai. It is an appearance of excellency (Arist. Rhet. i. cap. 1 Or in his instruments of music; as those, Amos vi. 5, that chaunt to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David.' No; this was not the mirth that he chose for his portion. Wicked men throng their hearts with such delights as these, lest an evil conscience flee upon them;' but I will delight myself in thy statutes.' He might take comfort in a subordinate way in these things; but the solace of his

life, and the true sauce of all his labours, was in the word of God. As David, so Jeremiah, chap. xv. 16, Thy words were found, and I did eat them; they were unto me as the joy and rejoicing of my heart.' That was the food and the repast of his soul, and he felt more warmth and cherishing in it than any can in their bodily food. So Paul: Rom. vii. 22, I delight in the law of God in the inward man.' Not to know it only, but to feel the power of it prevailing over his lusts; that was his delight as to the better part of his soul. So it is made a general character of the blessed man: Ps. i. 2, that he delighteth in the law of God, and in that law doth he exercise himself day and night.' God's people will delight in his law; it is one of the greatest enjoyments they have on this side heaven, in the time of their absence from God. It is the instrument of all the good that they receive--comfort, strength, quickening. But now, how do they delight in God's statutes?

1. In reading the word. The eunuch, returning from public worship, was reading a portion of scripture, Acts viii. 28. It is good to see with our eyes, and to drink of the fountain ourselves; if it seem dark without the explication of men, God, that sent Philip to the eunuch, will send you an interpreter.

2. In hearing of the word. The command is, James i. 19. Wherefore be swift to hear.' The saints have had experiment of the power of it, and therefore delight in it. I was glad when they said, Come, let us go up unto the house of the Lord,' Ps. cxxii. 1. You should be glad of these occasions of hearing, not as, with the minstrel, to please the ear, but to warm the heart. Seeing is in heaven, hearing in the churches upon earth; then vision, now hearing.

3. In conferring of it often. What a man delighteth in he will be talking of; so should you at home and abroad: Deut. vi. 7, Thou shalt be talking of them when thou sittest in thy house, and as thou walkest

by the way,' seasoning thy journey. He that would have God to be in his journey, as travelling and walking abroad, should be speaking of divine things.

4. In meditating and exercising his mind upon it: Ps. i. 2, He delighteth in the law of God, and in that law doth he meditate day and night.' Delight causeth a pause or consistency of mind: as the glutton rolleth the sweet morsel under his tongue, and is loath to let it go, so a godly man's thoughts will run along with his delight. Clean beasts chew the cud; God's children will be ruminating, going over the word again and again.

5. In practice. This delight is not a bare speculation--so hypocrites have their tastes and their flashes--but in believing, practising, obeying: Ps. cxix. 14, I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies.' Delight breedeth obedience, and is increased and doubled by it. It is not the delight which an ordinary beholder taketh in a rare piece of painting, merely to admire the art; but the delight which an artist taketh in imitating it, and copying it out. Here in the text it is in thy statutes.' A gracious heart is alike affected with the rule as the promise; not only with discoveries of grace, but discoveries of duty.

Now thus it must be ordinarily.

1. The duties of every day must be carried on with delight. This must be our divertisement, and the refreshment of our other labours, that when tired out with the incumbrances of the world, we may look upon reading, meditating, hearing, as our recreation, and the salt and solace of our lives, that other things may go down the better. The labours of the mind do relieve those of the body, and those of the body those of the mind. Ainsworth saith, the word in the text signifieth, I will solace and recreate myself;' and Ps. i. 2, His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in that law doth he exercise himself day and

night,' as was before cited.

2. Especially upon the Lord's day: Isa. lviii. 13, Thou shalt call the sabbath a delight;' call it so, that is, account it so. When our whole time is to be parted into meditation, and prayer, and hearing, and conference, then it is our advantage to lie in the bosom of God all the day long. A bell is kept up with less difficulty when it is once raised; and when the heart is once got up, it is the better kept up in a holy delight in God.

The reasons of it are two--

1. The word of God deserveth it.

2. This delight will be of great use to them. First, The word of God deserveth it.

1. In regard to the author, they delight in it for the author's sake, be cause it is the signification of his mind; as a letter from a beloved friend is very welcome to us. Aristotle, mentioning the causes of delight, saith (Rhet. i. cap. 11), Hoi erontes, kai` dialego'menoi, kai` gra'phontes, kai` poiountes aei` ti` peri` tou erome'nou chai'raousin--lovers are mightily pleased when they hear anything of the party beloved, or receive any thing from them, a letter or a token. The word is God's epistle and love-letter to ourselves; it is the more welcome for his sake. The contrary God complaineth of: Hosea viii. 12, I have written to them the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.' God is the author, whosoever be the penman; it is a writing from him to us. Now, to be strangers to it, or little conversant about it, argueth some contempt of God; as to slight the letter of a friend showeth little esteem of the writer. But now the saints put it into their bosoms, view it with delight, it is God's epistle.

2. In regard of its own excellency, in three respects; it is--

[1.] Their direction.

[2.] Their support.

[3.] Their charter.

[1.] It is their direction; it is a light that shines in a dark place,' 2 Peter i. 19. The world is a dark place, beset with dangers, and ever and anon we are apt to stumble into the pit of destruction, without taking heed to this light. The word discovereth to them evils, that they may see them, repent of them, forsake them; and showeth us our ready way to heaven, that we may walk therein. It discovereth the greatest dangers, and pointeth out the surest way to safety and peace. They are called true laws and good statutes, Neh. ix. 13, to show the full proportion that they bear to the soul. Verum and bonum,--truth and goodness, are proper for our most eminent faculties, the understanding and will. It doth a man's heart good to study these statutes. A child of God, that seeth others stumble and fall, how may he stand and bless God for the direction of the word, that God hath given him counsel in his reins, that he hath a clue to lead him out of those labyrinths in which others have lost their way, and know not know to escape!

[2.] It is their support. The word is koi`non iatreion, as Basil expresseth it. It is God's shop, from whence they fetch all their cordials in a time of fainting, and so are freed from those fears and discontents and despairing thoughts under which others languish: Ps. cxix. 50, This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath quickened me.' When a believer is damped with trouble, and even dead at heart, a promise will revive him again: ver. 92, Unless thy law had been my delight, I had perished in my affliction.' And many such like experiences the saints have had. The worth of the word is best known in an evil time. One promise in the word of God doth bear up the heart more than all the arguings and discourses of men, though never so

excellent. In time of temptation, in the hour of death, oh, what a reviving is one word of God's mouth!

[3.] It is their charter, that which they have to show for their everlasting hopes. There we have promises of eternal joy and blessedness under the greatest assurance, and this makes way for strong consolation, Heb. vi. 18. A man that hath a clear evidence to show for a fair inheritance, it is not irksome to hear it read, or to look over it now and then, as a covetous man is pleased to look into his bills and bonds which he has under hand and seal.

Secondly, This delight will be of great use to them.

1. To draw us off from carnal vanities. We have another delight, and the strength of the soul runneth out in another way; there will not be such room for worldly affections. As fear is cured with fear, the fear of men with the fear of God, so is delight by delight; delight in God's statutes is the cure of delight in worldly things. Love cannot lie idle, it must be occupied one way or another; either carried out to the contentments of the flesh, or else to holy things. Now, if you can find a more noble delight, there is a check upon that which is carnal: Ps. cxix. 37, Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.' The enlargement of the heart straitens the flesh.

2. It will take off the tediousness of religious exercises. What we delight in is not irksome. In hunting, fowling, and fishing, though there be as much labour as in our ordinary employments, yet we count the toil nothing because of the delight in them. We are very apt to be weary of well-doing, and to tire in a holy course; but now, when it is our delight, it goeth on the more easily. In one sense we must make religion our business, in another, our recreation; our work to prevent slackness, our recreation to prevent tediousness; it is not a task, but a pleasure.

Use 1. This informeth us of the ill choice that many men make of their delights and recreations; they must have cards and dice and foolish mirth to pass away the time, or else idle stories and vain romances. A Christian is everywhere like himself; he showeth himself a Christian in his recreations as well as his business. Castae deliciae meae sunt scripturae tuae, saith Austin--Lord, my chaste delights are thy Holy Scriptures. If we were as we should be, it would be our recreation to understand our duty, to contemplate the way of reconciliation to God by Christ, and to take a view of our everlasting hopes. Were we seriously persuaded of the benefits which men have by the word, that there is a sure direction to resolve our doubts and our scruples, and the offers of a pardon and a glorious estate by Christ, what need a Christian any other recreation? Will not the sense of God's love and the hopes of heaven make us merry enough? Indeed, because of the weariness of the flesh, we need temporal refreshments; but here should be our great delight, I will solace or recreate myself in thy statutes.'

Use 2. Caution to us to fix our delight aright.

1. It is a considerable affection. All the affections depend upon pleasure or pain, delight or grief--the one is proper to the body, the other to the soul--which grow from the contentment or distaste which we receive from the divers objects which we meet with. If we love, it is for that we find a sweetness in the object beloved; if we hate, we apprehend a trouble in what we hate; if we hope, we promise ourselves a happiness or satisfaction in the possession of the thing hoped for: if we despair, it is because the thing cannot be obtained from which our contentment would arise. Desire is of some good which we judge pleasing. By fear and flight we shun things which we apprehend would breed us vexation. So that, in effect, delight sets all the other affections a-work.

2. It is a choice affection, more proper to fruition than use, and therefore not for the means so much as end, and so reserved for God, who is the last end. There are fruenda and utenda, God and heavenly things to be enjoyed, but earthly things to be used: for means, those that are in the nearest vicinity to the end, as the law of God and grace: earthly things are to be used with a kind of indifferency, and therefore should have little of our joy; but our solid complacency must be in God, next in the things of God, his law and grace, which are means in the nearest vicinity with our end: Ps. xxxvii. 4, Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart;' Phil. iv. 4, Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.'

3. Delight, if not right set, of all the affections, is apt to degenerate. We have a liberty to delight in earthly things; the affection is allowed, the excess is forbidden. Thou mayest delight in the wife of thy youth, in thy children, estate, in the provisions heaped upon thee by the indulgence of God's providence. Pleasure is the sauce of life, to better digest our sorrows. It is allowed us, but it must be well guarded. We are most apt to surfeit of pleasant things, and to miscarry by sweet affections. Sorrow is afflictive and painful, and will in time wear away of itself. Pleasure is ingrained in our natures, born and bred with us; and therefore, though we may delight in the moderate use of the refreshments of the present life, in estate, honour, reputation, yet we should take heed of excess, that our hearts be not overjoyed, and too much taken up about these things. Carnal joy is the drunkenness of the mind; it besotteth us, maketh us unmindful of God, weakens our esteem of his favour and blessing; it chaineth us to present things. Pleasure is the great witch and sorceress that enchants with the love of the world, maketh us unmindful of the country whence

we came, and whither we are going; therefore we should be jealous of our delight, and how we bestow it.

Use 3. To exhort us to this delight in God's statutes, or this spiritual rejoicing.

1. Here is no danger of exceeding; the greatest excesses here are most praiseworthy. In other things we must exercise it with jealousy, feed with fear, rejoice as if we rejoiced not. A man may easily go beyond his bounds when he rejoiceth in the creature; but here enlarge thy heart as much as is possible, and take thy fill of pleasure: Cant. v. 1, Eat, friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, beloved.' This is ebrietas quae nos castos facit--chaste flagons: Eph. v. 18, Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be ye filled with the Spirit.'

2. We shall never be ashamed of these joys: 2 Cor. i. 12, Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience,' &c. All carnal joys have a turpitude affixed to them, and therefore affect to lie hid under a veil of secrecy. The world would cry shame of him that would say of his bags or his dishes, Here is my joy. As much as men affect these things, yet they desire to conceal them from the knowledge of others.

3. We shall never be weary of these joys. The delights of the senses become nauseous and troublesome; our natural dispositions become weary and importunate; a man must have shift and change, pleasures refreshed with other pleasures. But these delights add perfection to nature; therefore, when fully enjoyed, they delight most. A good conscience is a continual feast, a dish we are never weary of. The blessed spirits in heaven are never weary of beholding the face of God. God is new and fresh every moment to them. The contemplation of such excellent objects doth not overcharge and weaken the spirits, but doth raise and fortify them. It is true, the corporeal powers being weak, may be tired in such an employment, as much reading is a weariness to the flesh; but the

object doth not grow distasteful, as in carnal things.

How shall we get it?

1. Get a suitableness to the word. Every man's delights are as his principles: Rom. viii. 5, They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit.' A man is much discovered by his savour and relish of things. All creatures must have suitable food. There must be a suitableness between the faculty and the object; spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

2. Be in a condition to delight in the word. A guilty soul readeth its own doom there; it revealeth themselves to themselves, accuseth and condemneth them. As Ahab said of Micaiah, He prophesieth evil against me,' and therefore could not endure to hear him: John iii. 20, Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.'

3. Purge the heart from carnal distempers, lust, envy, covetousness r love of pleasures; these are diseases that need other diet than the word. Such persons must have other solaces; they cater for the flesh, to please the senses. An earthly heart will not delight in spiritual things.

Doct. It standeth God's children upon to see that they do not forget the word.

1. What is it to forget the word? A man may remember or forget two ways--notionally and affectively.

[1.] Notionally, when the notions of things formerly known are either altogether or in part worn out: James i. 25, He is like one that looks at his natural face in a glass, but goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of person he was.'

[2.] Affectively, when, though, he still retain the notions, yet he is

not answerably affected, nor doth act according thereunto. Thus the butler did not remember Joseph; that is, did not pity him. Thus God is said not to remember the sins of them that repent, when he doth not punish them, and to forget the afflictions of his people, when he doth not deliver them; and we are said to forget God, Ps. cvi. 21, when we do not obey him, and to forget his word when we do not remember his commandments to do them,' Ps. ciii. 18. In this place both are intended, the notional and practical remembrance.

2. The reasons why we should not forget his word.

[1.] Meditation will fail else. A barren, lean soul is unfit to enlarge itself in holy thoughts, shall never grow rich in the spiritual understanding: Col. iii. 16, Let the word of God dwell in you richly, in all knowledge,' &c. Men of small substance grow rich by continual saving, and holding together what they have gotten; but if they spend it as fast as they get it, they cannot be rich: Luke ii. 19, Mary kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart.'

[2.] Delectation will grow cold, unless the memory be rubbed up ever and anon. When they fainted under affliction, the cause is intimated: Heb. xii. 5, Have ye forgotten the exhortation that speaketh unto you as unto children?' Distrust in straits is from the same source: Mark viii. 17, They remembered not the miracle of the loaves, for their hearts were hardened. Ye see and hear, and do not remember. David was under great discomfort till he remembered the years of the right hand of the Most High,' Ps. lxxvii. 10; Lam. iii. 21, This I recall to mind, therefore I have hope.'

[3.] Practice and conscience of obedience will grow more remiss; Nothing keepeth the heart in a holy tenderness so much as a presence of the truth; and when we can bring our knowledge to act, and have it for our use upon all occasions, it urgeth us to practice: James i. 25,

being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer.' Most of our sins are sins of forgetfulness and incogitancy. Peter would never have been so bold and daring, and done what he did, if he had remembered Christ's prediction. The text saith, Luke xxii. 61, When he remembered, he wept bitterly.' A bad memory is the occasion of much mischief to the soul, when we do not call truths to mind in their season, and when fit occasion and opportunity is offered. Memory is a handmaid to understanding and conscience, and keeps truths, and brings them forth when called for.

Use is to press us to caution. Let us not forget the word. Helps to memory are:--

1. Attention. Men remember what they heed and regard: Prov. iv. 21, Attend to my sayings; keep them in the midst of thy heart.' Where there is attention, there will be retention. Oh! lay up truths with much earnestness and care. Sensitive memory is seated in the hinder part of the head, as one would say in a chamber backward, from the noise of the street. Now, oh! lay up truth safe, and lay it out when ever you have need. But rational memory lieth near the understanding and conscience, in the midst of thine heart. Reverence in the admission of the word helps us in the keeping of it: Heb. ii. 1, Let us take hoed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time they slip front us.' If we did receive it with, more heed, we would retain it with more constancy; lay them up, keep them choicely.

2. Affection, that is a great friend to memory. What we esteem most we best remember. Omnia quae curant senes meminerunt--an old man will not forget where he laid his bag of gold. Delight and love will renew and revive the object upon our thoughts. Here in the text we have this truth asserted, I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.' Affection to truths cometh from the application. In a public edict a man will be sure to carry away what is proper to his

case.

3. Meditation. We must be often viewing and meditating of what we have laid up in the memory. It availeth not to the health of the body to eat much, but to digest what is eaten. Tumultuary reading and hearing, without meditation, is like greedy swallowing much meat. When little is thought on, it doth not turn to profit. This concocteth and digesteth what we have heard. The more a thing is revolved in the mind, the deeper impression it maketh.

4. Beware of inuring the mind to vain thoughts; for this distracts it, and hindereth the impression of things upon it. The face is not seen in running waters; nor can things be written in the memory, unless the mind be close and fixed. Lead is capable of engraving, because it is firm and solid; but quicksilver, because it is fluid, will not admit it. An inconsistent, wandering mind reapeth little fruit from what is read or heard.

5. Order is a help to memory. Heads of doctrine are as cells wherein to bestow all things that are heard from the word. He that is well instructed in the principles of religion will most easily and firmly remember divine truths. Methodus est catena memoriae, to link truths one to another, that we may consider them in their proportion.

6. Get a lively sense of what you hear or read, and you will remember it by a good token: Ps. cxix. 93, I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me.' They that are quickened by a sermon will never forget such a sermon.

7. Holy conference. The speaking often of good things keeps them in the heart; and the keeping of them there causeth us to speak to those that are about.

8. Get the memory sanctified, as well as other faculties, and pray for the Spirit; for that faculty is corrupted as well as others.

SERMON XVIII.

Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.--Ver. 17.

IN the former part we heard of the virtue and excellency of the word, and therefore how much the saints desire to understand it, meditate of it, speak of it, and transfer it into their practice. Now, whosoever will resolve upon such a course, will necessarily be put upon prayer; for mark how David's purposes and prayers are intermingled, I will, and I will; and then presently prayeth again, Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.'

In this request observe--

1. It is generally expressed, together with his own relation to God, deal bountifully with thy servant.

2. It is particularly explained wherein he would have this bounty expressed:--

[1.] In the prorogation of his life, that I may live.

[2.] In the continuance of his grace, and keep thy word; the one in order to the other. David doth not simply pray for life, but in order to such an end; and the general request concerneth both parts, yea, rather the latter than the former, that whilst I live I may keep thy word, as counting that to be the greatest benefit or argument of God's bounty, to have a heart framed to the obedience of his will.

I might observe many things; as (1.) What a great honour it is to be God's servant. David, a great king, giveth himself this title, thy servant;' and Constantine counted it a greater honour to be a Christian than to be head of the empire. (2.) That all we have or expect cometh from God's bounty to us. So doth David express himself, Deal

bountifully with thy servant;' as intimating not only the measure, but the rise and source of what he expected from God. (3.) That among all the benefits which we expect from the bounty of God, this is one of the greatest, to have an heart to keep his word.' (4.) God's word must not only be understood, but obeyed; for this is the meaning of keeping the word: John xiv. 21, He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them,' &c. Hath implieth knowledge. We must have them before we can keep them; but when we have them, we must keep them, and do what we know. But omitting all these points, which will be more fitly discussed elsewhere, I shall only point out two lessons:--

1. The cause of life, and that is God's bounty.

2. The end and scope of life; God's service.

First, The cause of life, deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live. Observe

Doct. The prorogation of our lives is not the fruit of our merits, but the free grace of God.

1. Long life is in itself a blessing, and so promised, though more in the Old Testament than in the New, when eternity was more sparingly revealed. That it is promised as a blessing is evident: Prov. xxviii. 16, He that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.' And in the fifth commandment: Exod. xx. 12, That thy days may be long in the land of the living.' So Ps. xci. 16, With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation;' not only Leaven hereafter, but long life here. It is in itself a benefit, a mercy to the godly and the wicked. To the godly, that they may not be gathered till ripe; for God hath set a mark upon it: Prov. xvi. 31, The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in a way of righteousness.' It is some kind of resemblance of God, who is the Ancient of days. It was a title of honour, Paul the aged.' It giveth many advantages of glorifying God, and doing good to

others. It is no small benefit to those that employ it well. To those that are in a state of sin, the continuance of life is a mercy, as it affords them time to repent and reconcile themselves to God. And the contrary is threatened as a curse: Eccles. viii. 13, He shall not prolong his days, because he feareth not God.' For wicked men to have the sun go down at noon-day, and to be cut off before their preparations or expectations, and so thrown headlong into hell by a speedy death, is a great misery.

2. It is such a mercy as we have by God's gift. He is interested in it upon a double account.

[1.] There is a constant providential influence and supportation, by which we are maintained in life, and without which all creatures vanish into nothing; as the beams of the sun are no longer continued in the air than the sun shineth, or as the impress is retained no longer upon the waters than the seal is kept on. When God suspendeth his providential influence and supportation, all doth vanish and disappear: Heb. i. 3, He upholdeth all things by the word of his power;' as a weighty thing is held up in the air by the hand that sustaineth it, or the vessels of the house hang upon a nail in a sure place.' God, that made all things by his word, upholdeth all things by the same word. A word made the world, and can undo the world. So Acts xvii. 28, In him we live and move and have our being.' We cannot draw breath without him for a moment; as the pipe hath no breath but what the musician puts into it. We can neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor drink, without this intimate support and influence from him. The scripture sets it out by a man's holding a thing in his hand: Job xii. 10, In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.' Now, if God do but loosen his hand, his almighty grasp, all cometh to nothing: Job vi. 9. Let him loose his hand, and cut me off.' Life, and the comforts

of life, depend upon God in every kind.

[2.] There is a watchful eye and care of his providence over his people, whereby their life is preserved against all the dangers where with it is assaulted. God taketh care of all his creatures: Ps. xxxvi. 6,. He preserveth man and beast;' but man much more: 1 Cor. ix. 9, Doth God take care of oxen?' He dealeth bountifully with his enemies, but much more doth he preserve the feet of his saints,' 1 Sam. ii. 9. The care of his providence hath its degrees; it is more intensively exercised about things of worth and value, and most of all about the life of his saints. When Satan had a commission to exercise Job, first his person was exempted: Job i. 12, Upon himself put not forth thy hand;' next his life: Job ii. 6, Behold he is in thy hand, but save his life.' A godly man hath an invisible guard and hedge round about him. We are not sensible of it; but Satan, who is our enemy, he is sensible of it: when he would make his assault, he cannot find a gap and breach, till God open it to him. Both these notions are sufficient to possess us how much God is interested in prolonging our lives.

3. The next thing is, that we have it by the mere bounty and free grace of God. It is not from his strict remunerative justice, but his kind love and tender mercy. The air we breathe in, we have it not by merit, but by grace: Lam. iii. 22, It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.' The reasons are two:--

[1.] We deserve nothing at his hand.

[2.] We deserve the contrary.

(1.) We cannot merit of God: Job. xxii. 2, Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise is profitable to himself?' Job xxxv. 7, If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he at thy hand?' Whatever God doth for creatures, he doth it freely, because he cannot be obliged or pre-engaged by us. In innocency Adam could impetrare, but

not mereri--obtain it by covenant, not challenge by desert. Therefore God conferreth as freely as he createth.

(2.) If God would deal with us upon terms of merit, we cannot give him a valuable compensation for temporal life--Gen. xxxii. 10, I am less than the least of all thy mercies.' None of God's mercies can simply be said to be little; whatever cometh from the great God should be great in our value and esteem; as a small remembrance from a great king. Yet in comparison between the blessings, one may be said to be least, the other greatest. Temporal life with its appendages, compared with spiritual and eternal, is in the rank of his least mercies. God giveth life to the plants, to the trees, to the beasts of the field; and yet, when we and our deservings come into the balance, we are found wanting: I am not worthy,' &c. All our righteousness doth not deserve the air we breathe in. It is so defective, if a man were to pay for his life, it could not merit the continuance of it.

[2.] We have deserved the contrary; we have put ourselves out of God's protection by sin. Death waylaid us when we were in our mother's womb; and as soon as we were born, there was a sentence in force against us: Death came upon all, for that all have sinned.' Rom. v. 12; and still we continue the forfeiture, and every day provoke God to cut us off; so that it is a kind of pardoning mercy that continueth us every moment. Of this we are most sensible in case of danger and sickness, when there is but a step between us and death; for then the old bond beginneth to be put in suit, and God cometh to execute the sentence of the law; and deliverance in such a case is called forgiveness and remission, and that even to the wicked and impenitent. As Ps. lxxviii. 38, And he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not.' It is called a remission improperly, because it was a reprieve for the time from the temporal judgment; it was not an executing the

sentence, or a destroying the sinner presently; and that not from anything in the sinner, but from God's pity over him as his creature. But now a godly man hath a true pardon renewed at such time, and he is loved from the grave;' for so it is in the Hebrew: Isa. xxxviii. 17, Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of destruction.' To be loved out of a danger, and loved out of a sickness, oh! that is a blessed thing.

Use 1. To acknowledge the Lord's goodness in these common mercies. We did not give life to ourselves, and we cannot keep it in ourselves. God made us, and God keepeth us. It was not our parents that fashioned us in the womb; they could not tell what the child would prove, male or female, beautiful or deformed. They could not tell the number or posture of the veins, or bones, or muscles; it was all the curious workmanship of a wise God; and it is the same God that hath kept us hitherto: Isa. xlvi. 3, 4, By me ye are borne from the belly, and carried from the womb; even to old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you,' &c. We have been supported and tenderly handled by God, as parents and nurses carry their younglings in their arms. Many times wanton children are ready to scratch the faces of those that carry them; so have we put many affronts upon him, yet to the very last doth he carry us in the arms of his providence. In infancy we were not in a capacity to know the God of our mercies, and to look after him; but nevertheless he looked after us. Afterwards we knew how to grieve him and offend him, long before how to love and serve him. Oh, how early did our naughty hearts appear! and all along how little have we done for God, in whom we live and move and have our being!' He is not far from us,' in the effects of his care and providence; but we are far from him by the distance of our thoughts and affections, by the carnal bent of our hearts. It is a good morning exercise for us humbly and thankfully to consider of his continual mercies. For God's compassions

are new every morning,' Lam. iii. 22--as fresh as if never tired with former acts of grace, nor wearied with former offences. It is some recompense for the time of sleep; half our time passeth away, and we do not show one act of love and kindness unto God; therefore, as soon as we are awakened we should be with God, Ps. cxxxix. 18. How many are gone down to the chambers of death since the last night!

2. It quickeneth us to love and serve God, who is the strength of our lives, and the length of our days,' Deut. xxx. 20. Thy life is wholly in God's hands. Man cannot add a cubic to his stature, nor make one hair white or black at his own pleasure. It is the Lord's providential influence that keepeth thee alive; in point of gratitude, thou shouldst serve him: Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live.' But I may urge also, in point of hope, God's servants can best recommend themselves to his care and keeping by prayer, and expect to walk continually under divine protection. Those that provoke God continually, they may be continued by the bounty and indulgence of his providence; but yet they can look for no such thing, and in the issue it proveth to be in wrath, for their sins are more and judgments greater: it is but to treasure up wrath to the day of wrath.'

3. If life temporal be the fruit of God's bounty, much more life eternal: Rom. vi. 23, The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.' One is wages, the other a gift.

4. It informeth us that we may lawfully pray for life, with submission to the will of God, and that death may not come upon us suddenly, contrary to the ordinary course of nature. I was loath to make a distinct doctrine of it, yet I could not decline the giving out of this truth.

How will this stand with our desires of dissolution, and willingness to depart and to be with Christ, which certainly all Christians that

believe eternity should cherish in their hearts?

To this I answer--1. By concession; that we are to train up ourselves in an expectation of our dissolution, that we may be willing when the time is come, and God hath no more work for us to do in the world; we are to awaken our desires after the presence of Christ in heaven, to show both our faith in him and love to him. Since Christ was willing to come down to us, though it were to meet with shame and pain, why should we be loath to return to him? Jacob's spirit revived when he saw the waggons which Joseph sent to carry him. Death is the chariot to carry you to Christ, and therefore it should not be unwelcome to us.

2. By correction; though it be lawful and expedient to desire death, yet we are not anxiously to long after it till the time come; there may be sin in desiring death, as when we grow weary of life out of desperation, and the tiresomeness of the cross; and there may be grace in desiring life, that we may keep his word, longer express our gratitude to him here in the world, to mourn for sin, to promote his glory. More fully to make this evident to you, I shall show how we may desire death, how not. To answer in several propositions:--

[1.] There is a great deal of difference between serious desires and passionate expressions. The desires of the children of God are deliberate and resolved, conceived upon good grounds, after much struggling with flesh and blood to bring their hearts to it. Carnal men are loath that God should take them at their word; as he in the fable that called for death, and when he came, desired him to help him up with his burden. Alas! they do not consider what it is to be in the state of the dead, and to come unprovided and unfurnished into God's presence. We often wish ourselves in our graves; but if God should take us at our word, we would make many pauses and exceptions. Men that in their miseries call for death, when sickness cometh will run to the

physician, and promise many things if they may be recovered. None more unwilling to die than those that in a passion wish for death.

[2.] We must carefully look to the grounds of these wishes and desires. First, Carnal wishes for death arise either--(1.) Out of violent anger and a pet against providence; as Jonah iv. 8, The sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than live.' The children of Israel murmured when they felt the famine of the wilderness: Exod. xvi. 3, And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt,' &c. When men are vexed with the world, they look upon death as a relief, to take vengeance upon God, to deprive him of a servant. (2.) In deep sorrow; as Job iii. 3; Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 4: He requested for himself that he might die; and he said, It is enough: now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers.' (3.) From the peevishness of fond and doting love: 2 Sam. xviii. 33, And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O Absalom, my son, would God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!' like the wives of the East Indians, that burn themselves to follow their dead husbands. (4.) From distrust and despair, when the evil is too hard to be resisted or endured: Job vii. 15, My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than my life.' In all these cases it is but a shameful retreat from the conflict and burden of the present life, from carnal irksomeness under the calamity, or a distrust of God's help. There may be murder in a rash wish, if it proceed from a vexed heart. These are but froward thoughts, not a sanctified resolution. Secondly, Such desires of death and dissolution as are lawful, and must be cherished, come from a good ground, from a heart crucified and deadened to the world, and set on things above: Col. iii. 1, If ye then be risen with

Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.' From a competent assurance of grace: Rom. viii. 23, Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.' From some blessed experience of heavenly comforts, having tasted the fruits, clusters of Canaan, they desire to be there. So Simeon: Luke ii. 29, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation;' the eyes of his faith, as well as the eyes of his body. Now, Lord, I do but wait, as a merchantman richly laden desireth to be at his port. A great love to Christ excites desires to be with him: Phil. i. 23, I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better;' Phil. iii. 19, 20, For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' They long to see and be where he is; heart and head should be together. Weariness of sin, and a great zeal for God's glory, are powerful incentives in the saints: Rom. vii. 23, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' They would be in heaven, that they may sin no more.

[3.] You must look to the end; not have a blind notion of heaven, look for a Turkish paradise full of ease and plenty; a carnal heaven, as the Jews looked for a carnal Messiah; but for a state of perfect union and communion with the blessed and holy God.

[4.] The manner must be regarded; it must be done with submission, Phil. i. 24; otherwise we encroach upon God's right, and would deprive him of a servant without his leave. A Christian will die and live as the Lord willeth; if it be the Lord's pleasure, a believer is satisfied with long life: Ps. xci. 16, With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation;' he will wait till the change come,' when God shall give him a discharge by his own immediate hand, or by enemies.

God knoweth how to choose the fittest time, otherwise we know not what we ask.

Secondly, Now let me speak of the scope of our lives. David simply doth not desire life, but in order to service. The point is--

That if we desire long life, we should desire it to glorify God by obedience to his word.

Let me give you some instances, then reasons.

1. Instances: Ps. cxviii. 17, I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.' This was David's hope in the prolongation of life, that he should have farther opportunity to honour God; and this argument he urgeth to God when he prayeth for life: Ps. vi. 5, For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks?' It would be better for him to be with God; but then the life is worth the having, when the extolling of Christ is the main scope at which we aim. So Paul: Phil. i. 20, According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death,' &c. Paul was in some hesitation which he should choose, life or death; and he determineth of both as God might be magnified by either of them, and so was at a point of indifference. If God should give him his option or wish, he would give the case back again to God, to determine as it might be most for his service and glory. He was not swayed by any low and base motives of contentment in the world, or any low and creature enjoyments; these are contemptible things to come into the balance with everlasting glory. It was only his service in the gospel, and the public good of the church, that made the case doubtful.

Reas. 1. This is the perfection of our lives, and that which maketh it to be life indeed. Communion with God is the vitality of it, without

which we are rather dead than alive. Life natural we have in common with the beasts and plants; but in keeping the word, we live the life of God: Eph. iv. 18, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God.' To natural men it is a gloomy thing; but to believers this is the life of life, and that which is the joy of their hearts. To increase in stature, and to grow bulky, that is the life of plants; the greatest and biggest of the kind are most perfect. To live and enjoy pleasures without remorse, that is the perfection and life of beasts, that have no conscience, that shall not be called to an account. To gratify present interests, and to be able to turn and wind worldly affairs, that is the life of carnal men, that have no sense of eternity. But the perfection of the life of man as a reasonable creature is to measure our actions by God's word, and to refer them to his glory.

Reas. 2. It is the end of our lives that God may be served: All things are by him, and through him, and to him.' Rom. xi. 36; angels, men, beasts, inanimate creatures. He expects more from men than from beasts, and from saints than from men; and therefore life by them is not to be desired and loved but for this end: Rom. xiv. 6-8, He that regardeth a day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord eateth not, and giveth God thanks: for none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.'

Use 1. For reproof. Every man desireth life. The whole world would all and every one of them put up this request to God, Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live;' but there is not one man in a hundred

that considereth why he should live. Some would live to please the flesh, and to wallow in the delights of the present world; a brutish wish! An heathen could say, he doth not deserve the name of a man that would spend his time in pleasure one day. These would not leave their husks and their hog trough. This was not David's desire, but that he might keep the law, and faithfully worship God.

Some, again, desire to see their children well bestowed, or to free their estate from incumbrance; this is distrust, as if we did not leave a God behind us, who hath promised to be a father of the fatherless, and to take care of our little ones. Can we venture ourselves in God's hands, and can we not venture our families with him, whose goodness extendeth to all his creatures? Some are loath to leave such as are dear to them, wife and children and friends; and is not God better, and Christ better? These must be loved in God and after God. We set friends in the place of God and Christ, when we can be content to be absent longer from God merely upon this ground, because we are loath to be separated from our friends. He that loveth father and mother, and husband and wife, more than me, is not worthy of me,' saith Christ. Oh, how far are these from any Christian affection! Surely to a believer it is a piece of self-denial to be kept out of heaven longer; therefore it must be sweetened by some valuable compensation; something there must be to calm the mind contentedly to spare the enjoyment of it for a while. Now, next to the good pleasure of God, which is the reason of reasons, there is some benefit which we pitch upon. Nothing is worthy to be compared but our service, if God may have glory, if our lives may do good. A gracious heart must be satisfied with gracious reasons. Some may desire life, because they are dismayed with the terrors of death; but this is unbelief. Hath not Christ delivered us not only from the hurt of death, but the fear of death? Heb. ii. 14, And deliver them who

through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.'
Where is your faith? Death is yours,' 1 Cor. iii. 22. It is a sin
simply to desire life; but look to the causes and ends of it.
Use 2. It directeth us how to dispose of our lives. For this end take a
few considerations.
[1.] This life is not to be valued but by opportunities of service to
God. It is not who liveth most plentifully, but most serviceably to
God's glory: Acts xiii. 36, David, after he had served his generation,
by the will of God he fell asleep.' Every one was made to serve God in
his generation, and hath his office and use as an instrument of divine
providence, from the king to the peasant. We are undone if the
creatures, made to serve us, should fail in their season. We were made
to serve God in our season.
[2.] This service is determined by the course of God's providence. He
is the great master of the scenes, that appointeth us what part to act,
and sets to every man his calling and state of life. John xvii. 4, our
Saviour saith, I have finished the work thou hast given me to do.' We
must not be our own carvers, prescribe to God at what rate we will be
maintained, nor what kind of work we will perform. Those that are free
may covenant with you, and make their bargain, what kind of service
they will undertake; but we are at God's absolute dispose, to be used
as vessels of honour or dishonour, as fitted and disposed.
[3.] In the management of this work we must measure our actions by
God's word, and refer them to his glory. By God's word: Ps. cxix. 105,
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.' His glory:
Col. iii. 17, And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name
of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.'
[4.] Death shall not prevent us, till we have ended our appointed
service. As long as God hath work for us to do, he will maintain life

and strength: Gal. i. 15, Who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace.' The decree taketh date from the womb. God frames parts and temper; God rocketh us in our cradles, taketh care of us in our infancy, and all the turns of our lives.

[5.] If God will use us to a great age, we must be content. You may adorn your profession, and bring forth fruit in old age. The longest life is too short to honour God: Ps. xcii. 13, Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.' We should count it our happiness to be still used, and that we are fully rewarded by being employed in further service.

[6.] Life must be willingly laid down when we cannot keep it but with forsaking the word: Luke xiv. 26, If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.'

[7.] The life of eternity must be subordinate to this great end, the glory of God; our desire of it must be, that we may be to the praise of God.

SERMON XIX.

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.--Ver. 18.

THE heathens thought that man had not a power over his life, but a power over his actions--Quod vivamus, Deorum munus est; quod bene vivamus, nostrum. But the Psalmist acknowledgeth God in both: Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy law;' that he could not live nor keep the word without God's grace. This latter he amplifieth in this verse, that he was so far from keeping it, that he could not so much as know it savingly and practically without divine grace: Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' Here is--

1. A request, open thou mine eyes.'

2. The reason, from the end, benefit, and fruit of it, that I may,' or then I shall, behold wondrous things out of thy law.'

In which reason is intimated the necessity of divine illumination, and then the profit of it.

1. The necessity, that I may behold, &c.--i.e., otherwise I cannot.

2. The profit, then I shall behold wondrous things out of thy law.

Doct. 1. That we need that God should open our eyes, if we would have a right understanding of his word.

1. What is meant by opening the eyes.

2. The necessity of such a work in order to a right understanding of the word of God.

First, What is meant by opening the eyes. Before I come to the particular explication of the terms, let me premise two observations.

1. The saints do not complain of the obscurity of the law, but of their

own blindness. The Psalmist doth not say, Lord, make a plainer law,' but, Lord, open mine eyes.' Blind men might as well complain of God that he doth not make a sun whereby they might see. The word is A light that shineth in a dark place,' 2 Peter i. 19. There is no want of light in the scripture, but there is a veil of darkness upon our hearts; so that if in this clear light we cannot see, the defect is not in the word, but in ourselves.

2. The light which they beg is not anything besides the word. When God is said to enlighten us, it is not that we should expect new revelations, but that we may see the wonders in his word, or get a clear sight of what is already revealed. Those that vent their own dreams under the name of the Spirit and divine light, they do not give you mysteria, but monstra, portentous opinions; not show you the wondrous things of God's law, but the prodigies of their own brain; unhappy abortives, that die as soon as they come to light: Isa. viii. 20, To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' The light which we have is not without the word, but by the word.

Now to the phrase. The Hebrew signifieth unveil mine eyes.' There is a double work--negative and positive: there is a taking away the veil, and an infusion of light. Paul's cure of his natural blindness is a fit emblem of our cure of spiritual blindness: Acts ix. 18, Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith.' First the scales fall from our eyes, and then we receive sight.

1. There is a taking away the veil before we can have a true discerning of the mysteries that are revealed in the word of God: 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15, the apostle, speaking of the Jews, saith, But their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away, in

the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ: but even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts.' Now this veil is diverse.

[1.] The veil of ignorance. Though man hath reason, and is capable of understanding the sense and importance of the words that are used about the mysteries of godliness, yea, and the matter too, yet he gets not the saving knowledge of them by his natural abilities. There is a grammatical knowledge and a spiritual knowledge; a man may know things grammatically and literally that is ignorant of them spiritually; as a child may read the letters and words that doth not conceive of the sense. So a man may know what is said concerning God and Christ, and sin and grace, the vanity of the creature, the excellency of heaven, and have yet no saving knowledge of these things; and therefore the scripture useth the expression that they oversee in seeing; as Acts xxviii. 26, Hearing, ye shall hear, and not understand; seeing, ye shall see, and not perceive.' Though truths are never so plainly delivered, never so powerfully pressed, and though they are capable to understand the words, yet they do not take the truth into their hearts, so as to profit by it. So Deut. xxix. 2-4, Ye have seen,' yet ye have not an heart to see.' Most will declaim against the vanity of the creature and evil of sin; but they do not see with an affective heart-piercing light; they have on them the veil of spiritual ignorance.

[2.] The veil of carnal knowledge and wisdom, that puffeth up, 1 Cor. viii. 1, 2, by which, seeing not, we think we see. This is a great hindrance to the entertaining of the word. So Christ telleth the Pharisees, who were conceited of their own knowledge, John ix. 39, For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see, and they which see might be made blind.' The Pharisees were the rabbis

of the age, the most seeing and learned men of that time. Carnal men are puffed up with a conceit of their own abilities, and so are obstructed by them from profiting by the gospel.

[3.] The veil of prejudice and corrupt affections. The passions of the mind, love and fear, desire and anger, hinder us from judging aright in the things of God. Our hearts are overcast with strong affections to the world, and so cannot clearly judge either of practical truths or of the controversies of the age. Not of practical truths: When Christ had taught that they could not serve God and mammon,' it is said, Luke xvi. 14, And the Pharisees, that were covetous, derided him.' Holy mortifying truths are unpleasing to a carnal ear, though they be represented with never so much evidence. How will men distinguish themselves out of their duty! They shift, and stretch, and turn and wind hither and thither, and prove truth to be no truth, rather than part with their lusts. So present truths, as the apostle calls them, 2 Peter i. 12, when the dust of interest is raised, are not discerned. The orthodoxy of the world is usually an age too short: 2 Cor. iv. 4, The god of this world hath blinded their eyes.'

[4.] The veil of carnal sense: 2 Peter i. 9, He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.' There are so many mists and clouds in the lower world, that men cannot outsee time, and without the prospective of faith have a sight of eternity. Nature is short sighted, so inured to present things that we receive no light concerning things to come. These are the scales that are upon our eyes.

2. There is an infusion of light, without which men of excellent wit and sharp understanding in other things are stark blind in the things of God. What this light is will appear by the degrees of knowledge and the uses of this light.

[1.] The degrees of knowledge.

(1.) In some there is a simple nescience, both of terms or notions, and things, as in those that have not a revelation, or have not regarded it when the revelation is made. As the Gentiles, that have not a revelation: Eph. iv. 18, Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.' Or rude and ignorant Christians, that have not the advantage of education, so as to understand the notions in which the doctrine of God is propounded: Isa. xxviii. 9, 10, Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts: for precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little.' So sottish and brutish are some, that a man had need teach them as he teacheth little children, letter after letter, and line after line, little good done.

(2.) In others there is a grammatical knowledge but not a spiritual, a repeating things by rote, a talking of all that a Christian enjoyeth.

(3.) Besides the grammatical knowledge, there is a dogmatical knowledge, when the truths of the word are not only understood, but begin to settle into an opinion that we bustle for in the world. An opinionative receiving of the truth is different from a saving receiving of the truth. Many are orthodox, or have so much judgment and knowledge as to hold the truth strictly, but the heart is not possessed with the life and power of it. Those are intended in Rom. ii. 20, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which have the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.' And such are described 2 Tim. iii. 8, Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.' It is not to be imagined that this is always in design, though many times carnal men swim with the stream, and take up with the opinions that are

current in their age; but also out of conviction of judgment; there is somewhat of conscience in it. A sound judgment is a different thing from a sound heart. The truths of God have great evidence with them; and therefore a rational man, being helped with some common work of the Spirit, may close with them, though they have no experience of the power and prevailing influence of them.

(4.) Besides this dogmatical knowledge, by which we see round about the compass of truths revealed in the word, there is a gracious illumination when men are taught so as drawn to God, John vi. 44, 45, and they do so understand Christ's doctrine as to apply and make a right use of it; such a knowledge as is called not only sight, but taste: 1 Peter ii. 3, If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious;' and a feeling of what we understand: Phil. i. 9, And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.' This sense and experimental knowledge is that which the saints seek after.

[2.] The uses of this spiritual illumination.

(1.) To give us a clear sight of the truths of God.

(2.) An applicative sight.

(3.) An affective sight.

(4.) A transforming sight.

(5.) Such a sense of the truth as is prevalent over lusts and interests.

(1.) A clear sight of the truths of God. Others have but an hear say knowledge, gathered out of books and sermons, and the common report which is made of Christ; but he that is divinely enlightened drinks of the fountain, and so his draught is more fresh and sweet. They do not talk of things by rote after others, but it is written upon their hearts: Heb. viii. 10, I will put my laws into their mind, and write

them in their hearts;' and so groweth more intimate and satisfactory, and moving upon them.

(2.) An applicative sight; not only knowledge, but prudence: Prov. viii. 12, I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence.' Wisdom is the know ledge of principles; prudence is an ability to apply them to our comfort and use, that we may know It for our good, Job v. 28. Many are right in generals; but the Spirit doth not only reveal the truths of the gospel, but applieth those truths to awaken the conscience that was asleep in sin. Many men that are unrenewed may be stored with general truths concerning the misery of man, redemption by Christ, the privileges of a Christian; but they do not reflect the light of these truths upon themselves, so as to consider their own case; and so it serveth rather for matter of opinion and discourse than for life and conversation; it is not directive.

(3.) An affective sight: Prov. ii. 10, When wisdom entereth upon thy heart,' which is the seat of affections, it stirs up in the soul answer able motions to every truth; whereas when truths rest in empty barren notions, without feeling and an answerable touch upon the heart, the knowledge of them is like a winter's sun, that shineth, but warmeth not; the misery of man is not affective, and doctrines of redemption by Christ are apprehended without any joy and relish.

(4.) A transforming sight: 2 Cor. iii. 18, We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' It is a light that is both directive and persuasive. A man may hear the gospel nomikos, when it is only known as a rule, not as a means to convey the Spirit; whereas a believer hears the law euangelikos. The apostle preferreth the gospel above the law in the afore-mentioned place, for comfortableness, perspicuity, efficacy, &c.

(5.) It is a light that prevaileth over our lusts and interest, such a light as hath fire in it to destroy lusts: 1 John ii. 3, 4, He that saith I know him, and doth not keep his commandments, is a liar.' A true knowledge and sight of God is able to bridle lusts and purify the conscience. Therefore it is said, He that doth evil hath not seen God,' 3 John 11; hath not a true sight, whatever speculations he may have about the nature of God. Other light doth not check and control vicious desires; reason is not restored to its dominion: Rom. i. 18, the reputed wise men of the world held the truth in unrighteousness.' Truth may talk its fill, but can do nothing; as a man that is bound hand and foot may rave and evaporate his passions,' but cannot relieve himself from the oppressor or the force that he is under.

Secondly, Reasons that show the necessity of this work.

1. Spiritual blindness is natural to us, as that man that was blind from his birth, John ix. 1. We are not all born blind in body, but all in mind. By tasting the tree of knowledge, all Adam's sons have lost their knowledge. Satan hath brought a greater shame upon us than Nahash the Ammonite would have brought upon the men of Jabesh-Gilead in putting out their right eyes. The eye of the soul is put out, so as we cannot see the light that shineth in the word. By the fall we lost the true and perfect light of reason, but retain the pride of reason. It is no small part of our blindness that we cannot endure to hear of it: Rev. iii. 17, Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' Man desireth to be thought sinful rather than weak, and will sooner own a wickedness in morals than a weakness in intellectuals. Men are dishonest out of choice, and therefore think there is more of liberty and bravery in it; but to be simple argueth imperfection; Job xi. 12, Vain man would be accounted

wise, though man be born like a wild-ass's colt;' not only for untamedness and affectation of liberty, but for rudeness and grossness of conceit; yet man would be accounted wise. The Pharisees took it ill that Christ charged them with blindness: John ix. 40, Are we blind also?' We all affect the reputation of wisdom, more than the reality; that is the reason why we are so touchy in point of error; we can easier brook a sin reproved than an error taxed. Till we have spiritual eye-salve, we do not know it, and will not hear of this blindness, Rev. iii. 17. It is a degree of spiritual knowledge to know that we know nothing.

2. Observe how much spiritual blindness is worse than bodily. Those that are under bodily blindness are glad of a remedy, glad of a guide.

[1.] Glad of a remedy. How feelingly doth that man speak, Mark x. 51, What wouldst thou have me to do? Lord, that mine eyes may be opened.' Those that are blind spiritually are not for a remedy; not only ignorant, but unteachable; and so their blindness groweth upon them; to their natural, there is an adventitious blindness. If we cannot keep out the light, we rage against it.

[2.] Glad of a guide; as Elymas the sorcerer, when he was stricken blind, looked about for somebody to lead him by the hand, Acts xiii. 11. But the blind world cannot endure to be directed, or the blind lead the blind, and both fall into the ditch.' He that prophesieth of strong wine is the teacher of this people, saith the prophet. Men love those that gratify their lusts and humours: let one come soundly, and declare the counsel and will of God to them, he is distasted.

3. We cannot help ourselves out of this misery without God's help. Our incapacity is best understood by opening that noted place, 1 Cor. ii. 14, The natural man receiveth not the things that are of God, for they are folly to him; neither can he know them, because they are

spiritually discerned.' Let us a little open that place: a'nthropos psu'chikos, the soully man,' that is, a man considered in his pure naturals. Jude 19; psuchikoi, pneuma me' echontes, sensual, having not the Spirit.' However, he useth the best word by which a natural man can be described; he doth not say sa'rkikoi, not only those that are brutish and depraved by vicious habits, but take nature in its excellency, soul-light in its highest splendour and perfection, though the man be not absolutely given up to vile affections. Well, it is said of him that he neither doth nor can receive the things of God, ou de'chetai, and ou du'natai gnonai. The ta` tou pneu'matos, the things of the Spirit,' are such truths as depend upon mere revelation, and are above the reach and knowledge of nature. There are ta` tou Theou, things of God,' that may be known by a natural light: Rom. i. 19, That which may be known of God, is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them;' but ta` tou pneu'matos, things revealed in the word, though a natural man be able to understand the phrases and sentences, and be able to discourse of them, yet he wanteth faith, and a spiritual sense and relish of them; they are folly to him. It noteth the utter contempt of spiritual things by a carnal heart, who looketh upon redemption by Christ crucified, with the consequent benefits, as things frivolous and vain. Paul at Athens was accounted a babbler,' Acts xvii. 18. The same disposition is still in natural men; for though these truths, by the prescription and consent of many ages, have now obtained veneration and credit, yet carefully to observe them, to live to the tenor of them, whatever hazards and inconveniences we are exposed to in the world, is still counted foolish. Mark, for greater emphasis, it is mori'a, folly, as carnal wisdom is e'chthra, enmity against God.' Rom. viii. 7. Neither can he know them.' It is out of sloth and opposition and moral impotency; as it is said, Rom. viii. 7, The carnal mind is enmity

against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be.' Reason is a short and defective light, not only actually ignorant, but unable to conceive of them. It is not only through negligence he doth not, but through weakness he cannot. Take mere nature in itself, and, like plants neglected, it soon runs wild; as the nations barbarous and not polished with arts and civility have more of the beast than the man in them: Jude 10, But what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.' Suppose they use the spectacles of art, and the natural light of reason be helped by industry and learning, yet how erroneous in things of religion: Rom. i. 21, When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened,' &c. The most civil nations were most foolish in matters of worship; and many placed fevers, and human passions, and every paltry thing, among the gods. The Scythians worshipped thunder, the Persians the sun; the most stupid and blockish nations seemed most wise in the choice of their gods; others were given up to more gross superstitions. All the arts in the world could not fully repair the ruins of the fall. The heathens invented logic for polishing reason; grammar and rhetoric for language; for government, and as a help to human society, laws; for bodily necessities, physic; for mollifying and charming the passions, so far as concerned human conversation, ethics; for families and private societies, economics: but for the soul and religious concernments, how blind and foolish were they! Nay, go higher. Suppose, besides the spectacles of art, nature be furnished with the glass of the word; yet John i. 5, The light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.' We see how great scholars are defective in the most useful and practical points. Nicodemus, a teacher in Israel, was ignorant of regeneration, John iii.

10. They always err in one point or another. And in these things of moment, if they get an opinion and a dogmatical faith, and have an exact model and frame of truth, yet as long as they are carnal and unregenerate, how much doth a plain godly Christian exceed them in lively affection and serious practice! And whilst they are disputing of the natures and offices of Christ, and the nature of justification and sanctification, others enjoy what they speak of, and have a greater relish and savour and power of these truths upon their hearts. For ever it was a truth, and ever will be, Rom. viii. 5, They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.' Nature can go no farther than itself, than a fleshly inclination moveth it. They have not this transforming light, and that sense of religion which is prevalent over lusts and worldly interests.

The next reason is, because they must be spiritually discerned;' that is, to know them inwardly, thoroughly, and with some relish and savour; there must be a higher light, there must be a cognation and proportion between the object and the faculty. Divine things must be seen by a divine light, and spiritual things by a spiritual light. Sense, which is the light of beasts, cannot trace the workings or flights of reason in her contemplations. We cannot see a soul or an angel by the light of a candle; so fleshly wisdom cannot judge of divine things. The object must be not only revealed, but we must have an answerable light; so that when you have done all, you must say, How can I understand without an interpreter?' Acts viii. 31. And this interpreter must be the Spirit of God--Ejus est interpretari, cujus est condere. To discern, so as to make aright judgment and estimate of things, dependeth upon God's help.

4. When this blindness is in part cured, yet still we need that God should open our eyes to the very last. We know nothing as we ought to

know. David, a regenerate man, and well instructed, prayeth to have his eyes opened; for we need more light every day: Luke xxiv. 45, Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures.' Christ first opened the scriptures, then he opened their understandings.

Use 1. To show us the reason why the word prevaileth so little when it is preached with power and evidence; their eyes are not opened: Isa. liii. 1, Who hath believed our report; and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' No teaching will prevail till we are taught of God.

Use 2. What need we have to consult with God, whenever we make use of the word, in reading, hearing, study. In reading, when thou openest the Bible to read, say, Lord, open mine eyes.' When thou nearest, beg a sight of the truth, and how to apply it for thy comfort. Haec audiunt quasi somniantes, Luther saith of the most--in seeing they see not, in hearing they hear not. There was a fountain by Hagar, but she could not see it: Gen. xxi. 19, God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water, and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad to drink.' So for study; it is dangerous to set upon the study of divine things in the strength of wit and human helps. Men go forth in the strength of their own parts, or lean upon the judgment of writers, and so are left in darkness and confusion. We would sooner come to the decision of a truth if we would go to God, and desire him to rend the veil of prejudices and interests.

Use 3. Is to press us to seek after this blessing, the opening of the eyes. Magnify the creating power of God: 2 Cor. iv. 6, God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' Make use of Christ: Col. ii. 3, In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;' beg it earnestly of him. The

apostle prayeth, Eph. i. 17, 18, That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the leather of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being en lightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling,' &c. Yea, mourn for it in cases of dubious anxiety. John wept when the book of the seven seals was not opened, Rev. v. 4. Mourn over your ignorance; refer all to practice: John vii. 17, If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' Wait for light in the use of means, with a simple, docile, sincere, humble mind: Ps. xxv. 9, The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way.'

Doct. 2. Those whose eyes are opened by God, they see wondrous things in his word, more than ever they thought.

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' Law is not taken strictly for the covenant of works, nor for the decalogue as a rule of life; but more generally for the whole word of God, which is full of wonders, or high and heavenly mysteries. In the decalogue or moral law there is wonderful purity, when we get a spiritual sense of it: Ps. cxix. 96, I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandments are exceeding broad;' and Ps. xix. 7, 8, The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.' A wonderful equity: Rom. vii. 12, The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just, and good.' A marvellous wisdom: Deut. iv. 6, Keep therefore, and do them; for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' In the whole word of God, the harmony and

correspondence between all the parts, how the mystery grew from a dark revelation to clearer, is admirable. In the gospel, every article of faith is a mystery to be wondered at. The person of Christ: 1 Tim. iii. 16, Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,' &c. A virgin conceiveth, the Word is made flesh, the redemption and reconciliation of mankind, are the wonderful works of the Lord's grace. It is the hidden wisdom of God in a mystery,' 1 Cor. ii. 7. We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world to our glory;' and it is called the mystery hidden from ages,' Eph. iii. 9. The glory of heaven is admirable: Eph. i. 18, The riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints in light.' That a clod of earth should be made an heir of heaven, deserves the highest wonder. All these are mysteries. So the wonderful effects of the word in convincing sinners: 1 Cor. xiv. 25, Thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth,' Heb. iv. 12: The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' It is a searching and discovering word: John iv. 29, See a man that hath told me all that ever I did.' In changing sinners: 1 Peter ii. 9, That ye may show forth the praises of him that hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,' Peter's getting out of prison was nothing to it. In comforting, every grace is a mystery, to depend upon what we see not, to be as a rock in the midst of a storm. Dying, yet we live; as poor, yet making many rich.' 2 Cor. vi. 9, 10. All the operations of the Spirit are wonderful: 1 Peter i. 8, Joy unspeakable and full of glory,' Phil. iv. 7, Peace that passeth all understanding;' Rom. viii. 26, Groans that

cannot be uttered.'

And now, what divine illumination contributeth to the sight of these wonders?

1. It revealeth the truth of them, which otherwise is incomprehensible to the flesh: Mat. xvi. 17, Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' Without this, no certain knowledge of Christ's person and office.

2. It more intimately acquainteth us with them: Mat. xiii. 11, To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; to others it is not given.' All God's works are full of wonder, yet blind men cannot see them, though the sun shineth never so clearly. A beautiful room into which there is but a crevice, when we lay our eye close to it, we see it

Use 1. From hence we may learn, that it is one degree of profit to see so much in the word of God as to admire it; either at the mysteries of godliness or ungodliness, which the word discovereth, o ba'thos. They that are most enlightened have most cause to wonder; for then they find truths which exceed all common reason, such as do not come into the minds of others, or, if they do, they seem incredible.

Use 2 is to encourage us to study the word; the wonders of God's works are many, but the wonders of his word greater. Quot articuli, tot miracula, the Papists say of Aquinas's Sums; but more truly may it be said of the word of God; all the doctrines of the word are a continued mystery. After man was fallen, it came not into the head of any creature how to satisfy justice, to make up the breach. Oh, the folly of them that despise the word, as curious wits and world lings do, as if it were a mean knowledge in comparison of what may be acquired from Aristotle and Plato or the politicians of the world! If there be in it some rudiments, something common with other writings, yet there are

greater things than these: The deep things of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 11; never such a revelation made to the world. And worldly men, that despise this study of the word, they despise that which angels wonder at, Eph. iii. 10, and desire to pry into,' 1 Peter i. 12, and make great matters of trifles. The Sun of righteousness, is not he worth the beholding?

Use 3. Let us cease wondering at worldly things, great places, honours, heaps of wealth, fair buildings, as the disciples, Mark xiii. 1, Master, see what manner of stones and buildings are here!' It is said of Christ, Col. ii. 9, In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily!' Fulness of the Godhead! oh, wonderful! The people wondered at that mass of money provided by David to build God a house, 1 Chron. xxix. 7, 8. Oh! but the unsearchable riches of grace, the rare plot of man's redemption, me'ga muste'rion, how wonderful! All in and about Christ is rare. His name is Wonderful. All the promises of God are ta` me'gista kai` ti'mia epange'lmata, exceeding great and precious promises,' 2 Peter i. 4; they transcend man's capacity. It condemneth the stupidness of them that are nothing moved or taken with things so great and wonderful--great in themselves, and should be precious to us.

SERMON XX.

I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.--Ver. 19.

IN the 18th verse David had begged divine illumination, Open mine eyes,' &c. He doth not desire God to make a plainer law, but to give him a clearer sight. That request he backs with three reasons in the following verses:--

1. His condition in the world, I am a stranger in the earth.' Strangers in a foreign country need guidance and direction.

2. His earnest affection to the word, ver. 20, My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.' David had an earnest longing to be acquainted more with the will of God.

3. God's judgments upon those that contemn the word, Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.' It is dangerous to walk beside the rule: Rom. i. 18, The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,' &c. God hath owned both tables; he hath punished ungodliness, a violation of the first table; and unrighteousness, a violation of the second table. Here God hath declared how he will own his name, therefore he begs illumination.

Now, the text giveth you this first reason, his condition in the world.

Here observe two things:--

1. A representation of his case, I am a stranger upon earth.

2. His request to God, hide not thy commandments from me.

First, A representation of his case with respect to his quality,--what he was, a stranger; and the place where, upon earth; not in heaven, he was familiar there. And how a stranger upon earth, in point of

happiness,--I do not find here that which satisfieth my soul; he had his home, his rest elsewhere; but not in point of service, for he had much work to do.

Doct. God's children are strangers upon earth, and do so account themselves.

They live here as others do, but they are not at home; their hearts are above, they do not take up their rest here; they are strangers, and account themselves to be so when they have most of worldly conveniences.

First, To open it. Sometimes it may be understood in a literal sense, and sometimes in a moral.

(1.) Sometimes in a literal sense. Thus the patriarchs, that had a wandering life, and were forced to flit from place to place without any certain abode, they confessed themselves to be strangers. Jacob saith, Gen. xlvii. 9, Few and evil have the years of my life been.' (2.) Morally also, and more generally, it is true of the saints, they are strangers. In some sense it is true of good and bad. We are all travelling into another world, and are every day nearer to eternity. As in a ship, whether men sleep or wake, stand or sit, whether they think of it, yea or nay, the voyage still goes onward. So, whatever we think, and whatever we do, we hasten towards death. In this sense even wicked men may be strangers and pilgrims in condition, though not in affection. All men in condition, will they nill they, must into the other world, as they yield to the decays of nature, and every day they are a step nearer to their long home. Heathens have had a sense of this notion. Saith one of them, Ex hac vita discedo tanquam ex hospitio, non tanquam ex domo--I go out of this life as out of an inn. Here we are but passengers, not inhabitants to dwell. But now to be strangers and pilgrims in affection, that is proper to the children of God; Heb. xi.

13-15, it is made the fruit of their faith; Because they were persuaded of the promises, therefore they confessed themselves pilgrims and strangers on earth.' The voice of nature saith, It is good to be here; let God do with heaven what he pleaseth. Natural men are contented with their present portion, and cannot endure to think of change; and therefore, though they are travelling to eternity, yet they are not pilgrims in affection. But now God's children are so in condition and in affection too; they count heaven their home, and the world to be a strange place. They are pilgrims in affection in a threefold regard:--

1. Because they are most sensible of their frailty. The frailty of the present life is a common lesson, but not easily believed. None have such a sense of it upon their hearts as they that are taught by God: Ps. xc. 12, So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom;' and, Teach me to know how frail I am,' saith David. Worldly men, though they are of this opinion, and can not deny it, yet they do not consider it; in seeing they see not; their minds are taken up with other things; they are not sensible.

2. The term is proper to the children of God, because they are un satisfied with their present estate; they would not abide here for ever if God would give them leave. Wicked men are pilgrims against their will; but saints are ever looking for, longing for, groaning for a better estate: Rom. viii. 23, We which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.' They desire and groan to be clothed upon,' 2 Cor. v. 2.

3. The notion is most proper to them, because they have an interest in a better inheritance. Wicked men are sure to go out of the world, but they are not sure to go to heaven. Now, the children of God they know there is an inheritance kept for them; here they have the right, but

there they shall have the possession, 1 John iii. 1. So that well might I form the point thus: That godly men are, and count themselves to be, strangers and pilgrims upon earth. Others are in a journey, but they are not sensible of it, and they have no home to go to, and no desire to part with the world.

Now take some instances of this. That this is proper to God's children to count the world a strange place, and heaven to be their home. Those that had the best right and the greatest possessions here, they will do so; those that had the greatest right: Heb. xi. 9, Abraham sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country.' What right could there be greater than that which was demised and made over to him by God? Yet in the land of promise he lived as in a strange place. So David here, and in other places, that had so ample a possession; he was king over, an opulent and flourishing kingdom; yet, Ps. xxxix. 12, I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.' Not only he that was a wandering partridge, and flitted up and down; but David that was settled in a throne, he that was so powerful and victorious a prince.

But you will say, Possibly David might speak thus when he was chased like a flea upon the mountains, when he was hunted to and fro like a partridge. No; but when he had peace, and was fully settled in the throne; when he could offer so many cart-loads of gold and silver, 2 Chron. xxix. 13; then he doth acknowledge, Lord, I am a stranger.' Jesus Christ, who was Lord paramount, he tells us, I am not of this world,' John xvii. 14. He was a stranger to his brethren, and an alien among his mother's children,' Ps. lxix. 8. He that was Lord of all had neither house nor home. He passed through the world to sanctify it for a place of service; but his heart and constant residence was not here, to fix it as in a place of rest. And so all that are Christ's have the spirit of Christ, and say, as David in the text, I am a stranger upon

earth.' We do not dwell upon earth, but only pass through it.

But why do the children of God count themselves to be strangers here?

1. They are born elsewhere. Everything tends to the place of their original, as men love their native soil; things bred in the water return thither; inanimate things tend to their centre; a stone will fall to the ground, though it be broken in pieces with the fall; wind that is imprisoned in the bowels of the earth raiseth terrible convulsions and earthquakes until it get up to its own place. All things seek to return thither from whence they came. And so grace, which came from heaven, it carrieth the soul thither again: Jerusalem from above is the mother of us all.' Heaven is our native country, and therefore thither is the tendency and aim of the gracious soul that is born from above. It is very notable that contempt of the world is usually made the fruit of our regeneration: 1 John v. 4, Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world;' and 2 Peter i. 4, Made partakers of the divine nature, that we might escape the corruptions of the world through lust.' There is somewhat of God in it then; and that which comes from God carries the soul thither where God is. In the new nature there is a strong inclination which disposeth us to look after another world; therefore it is said, Begotten to a lively hope,' 1 Peter i. 3.

As soon as we are made children, we begin to look after a child's portion. There is another aim when we are born again; then the heart is carried out to God.

2. There lies their inheritance: Eph. i. 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.' Why! he hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in earthly places. Why is it said only in heavenly places'? There was their beginning, and there is their accomplishment. The main thing Christ aimed at was that we might be translated to heavenly

places. Christ will set us high enough, and therefore he will not give us our portion in the world; that is an un quiet place. Here we are not out of gunshot and harm's way. He would not give it us in an earthly paradise; there Adam enjoyed God among beasts. He would give it us in the most glorious manner, that we might enjoy God among the angels. The world is not a fit place. Here God will show his bounty to all his children. It is a common inn, where sons and bastards are entertained; a place of trial, not of recompense; God's footstool, and not his throne, Isa. lxvi. 1. The world is Satan's walk, the devil's circuit: Whence comest thou? From compassing the earth,' Job i. A place defiled with sin, Isa. xxiv. 5; given to the children of men,' Ps. cxv. 16. Here God will show his bounty to all his creatures, to beasts, and to all kinds of men. It is sometimes the slaughter-house and shambles of the saints: they are slain upon earth,' Rev. xviii. 24; a receptacle for elect and repro bate. Therefore here they have not their blessing; our inheritance lies elsewhere.

3. There are all our kindred. Ubi pater, ibi patria--where our father is, there our country is. Now when we pray, we say to him, Our Father which art in heaven.' There are we strangers, where we are absent from God, Christ, and glorified saints; and while we are here upon earth we have not such enjoyment of God. There is our Father; it is his house. Heaven is called our Father's house; and there is our elder brother:' Col. iii. 1, Set your hearts upon things above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God;' and there is the best of our kindred and family: They shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,' Mat. viii. 11. Well, then, the children of God, they count themselves to be strangers here, because their kindred are elsewhere.

4. There they abide longest. That we account our home where we abide. An inn cannot be called our home, where we come but for a night, and

away; but now there we are for ever with the Lord.' Here we are in motion, there in rest. The world must be surely left. If we had a certain term of years fixed, yet it would be very short in comparison of eternity. All the time we spend here it is but a night, but a moment, in comparison of eternity. We live longest in the other world, and therefore there is our home: Micah ii. 10, Arise, depart hence; this is not your rest.' God speaks it of the land of Canaan, when they had polluted it with sin. It is true of all the world. Sin hath brought in death, and there must be a riddance. It is but a passage from danger. Israel dwelt first in a wandering camp, before they came to dwell in cities and walled towns; and the apostle alludes to that, Here we have no abiding city; we look for one to come.' As the Israelites did look for walled towns and cities of the Amorites to be possessed by them, so here we have but a wandering camp, we look for a city. And mark, as it was with them in their outward estate, so in the mysteries of their religion; they were first seated in a tabernacle, and then in a temple: in a tabernacle, which was a figure of the church; then in a temple, which was a figure of heaven; for you know, as in the temple there were three partitions--the outward court, the holy place, and the holy of holies--so there are three heavens. The third heaven Paul speaks of--the heaven of heavens'; and there is the starry heaven, and the airy heaven, the outward court. This life being so frail, so fickle, we can not call our abode here our home. What is your life?' saith the apostle; it is but as a vapour,' James iv. 14; a little warm breath turned in and out by the nostrils: Job vii. 1, Is there not an ap pointed time for man upon earth? His days are as the days of an hireling.' A hired servant you do not intend should live with you for ever; you hire him for a day or two, and when he hath ended his work, he receives his wages and is gone. So all our days are but a little

while; we do our service, and then we must be gone. Actors, when they have finished their parts, are seen no more. They go within the curtain. So when we have fulfilled our course, God furnisheth the world with a new scene of acts and actors.

5. The necessary exercise of their graces doth make them count their lives here but a pilgrimage, and themselves but strangers upon earth, viz., faith, love, hope.

[1.] Faith shows the truth and the worth of things to come. Faith will make them strangers: Heb. xi. 13, They saw these things and were persuaded of them, and they counted themselves pilgrims and strangers.' Oh! were we persuaded of things to come, we would be hasting towards them. We cry, Home, home! We talk of heaven and eternity, but we do not believe them. Sense and reason cannot out-see time, nor look above the clouds and mists of the lower world, afar off,' in the apostle's phrase, 2 Peter i. 9; but faith shows the truth of things to come. We that are here upon earth, when we look to heaven, the stars seem to us but so many spangles. Oh! but when we get into heaven and look downward, the world then will seem but as a molehill. That which now to sense seems such a glorious thing will be as nothing.

[2.] The love of Christ which is in the saints makes them to account themselves as strangers. A child of God cannot be satisfied with things here below, because his love is set upon God. Two things the heart looks after, as soon as it is awakened by grace, and love puts us upon them both, viz., a perfect enjoyment of God, and a perfect obedience to God. (1.) That they may be with God and Christ. The saints have heard much of Christ, read much of him, tasted and felt much of him; they would fain see him, and be with him, Phil. i. 23. If they had the choicest contentment the world could afford, this would not satisfy them so much as to be there where Christ is, and to be hold his glory.'

The apostle thinks this to be motive enough to a gracious heart to seek things above, for there Christ is at the right hand of God;' love will catch hold of that, Col. iii. 1. The place is lovely for Christ's sake. Love will not suffer them to count this to be their home. Though Christ is present with them now spiritually while they are here, yet the presence and nearness is but distance, but a kind of absence, compared with that which is to come; and therefore this very presence doth not quench their desires, but kindles them, and sets them a-longing for more. All the presence, the communion, the sight of Christ they get now, is but mediate, through the glass of the ordinance, 1 Cor. xiii. 12; and it is frequently interrupted, his face is many times hidden, Ps. xxx. 7; and it is not full, as it shall be there, Ps. xvi. 11. But now in heaven it will be immediate; God will be all in all;' and there it will be constant, they shall be ever with the Lord;' and there they shall be satisfied with his likeness,' Ps. xvii. 15; then they shall enjoy his presence indeed. So that love upon these considerations sets them a-longing and groaning. (2.) As love makes them desire the company of Christ, so entire subjection to God; they would have perfect grace and freedom from sin, therefore are ever groaning,--Oh! when shall we be rid of this body of death? Rom. vii. 23. There is a final perfect estate for which the new creature was made, and they are ever tending towards that happy state wherein they shall grieve God no more.

[3.] Hope was made for things to come, especially for our full and final happiness. God fits us with graces as well as happiness; not only grants us a glorious estate, but gives us grace to expect it. Hope would be of no use if it did not lift up the head, and look out for a better estate than the world yieldeth. Hope fastens upon God's title in the covenant, I am thy God.' Now God could not with honour take this title, and give us no better than present things: Heb. xi. 16,

Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city,' Mark the apostle's reason. Many expound these words so as if the meaning were but this, that they did only express God's condescension, that he would take his title, not from the potentates of the world, but from a few wandering patriarchs; that God was not ashamed to be called their God. Alas! the words have a quite other sense. Rather it expresseth an answerable bounty: unless the Lord would give them something answerable to their hopes, more than was visible in the lives of the patriarch, God would be ashamed to be called their God. Do but look upon the slenderness of their condition. If that he gave them in the world were all their reward, what is this to own that magnificent title, I am the God of Abraham,' &c. No; now he hath something better than all the honours and riches of the world; now he may fitly be called their God. Christ builds the doctrine of the resurrection upon the same argument, God is the God of Abraham,' &c.; therefore they shall have a blessed estate in soul and body, Mat. xxii. 32. To be a God to any, is to be a benefactor, and that according to the extent and largeness of an infinite and eternal power.

Use 1. Are you strangers and pilgrims? David, and such as he was, that were of his stamp, counted themselves strangers upon earth. If you be so--

1. You will always be drawing home, and would not desire to stay long from Christ. A traveller would pass over his journey as soon as he can, and be hastening homeward: Phil. i. 23, I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.' Is there any looking, longing, waiting for your blessed estate? It is no hard matter to get a Christian out of the world; his better part is gone already, his heart is there. Do your hearts draw homeward? Are your desires stronger and stronger every day after eternal life? Natural motion grows swifter and swifter still, as

it draws nearer and nearer its centre. So certainly a Christian, if he had the motions of the new nature, he would be drawing homeward more every day.

2. What provision do you make for another world if you are strangers? Many bestow all their labour and travail about earthly things, and neglect their precious and immortal souls. They are at home; all their care is that they may live well here. O Christians! what provision do you make for heaven? A traveller doth not buy such things as he cannot carry with him, as trees, houses, household stuff; but jewels, pearls, and such as are portable. Our wealth doth not follow us into the other world, but our works do. We are travelling to a country whose commodities will not be bought with gold and silver, and therefore are we storing ourselves for heaven, for such things as are current there. Men that make a voyage to the Indies will carry such wares as are acceptable there, else they do nothing. Do you make it your business every day to get clearer evidences for heaven, to treasure up a good foundation, 1 Tim. vi. 19; and do you labour every day to grow more meet for heaven, Col. i. 12. That is the great work of a Christian, to get evidences and a meetness for heaven. These are the months of our purification; we are now to cleanse ourselves for the embraces of the great God. When we grow more mortified, strict, holy, heavenly, then we ripen apace, and hasten home ward: Ps. lxxxiv. 7, They shall go on from strength to strength,' &c. Every degree of grace it is a step nearer; and therefore do you grow more meet for this blessed estate.

3. In the fulness of your worldly enjoyments do you mind your country? He that was going pilgrim to Jerusalem, cried out, Oh, this is not the holy city! So, whatever enjoyments you have, do your hearts call you off, and say, Soul, this is not thy rest; this is not that thou shouldst take comfort in; thou art bound for heaven? Do you miss your

country and your parents? The men of the world would have their portion here, here is their rest; but when you have most of the world at will, are you strangers? 1 Cor. vii. 31, Using this world as not abusing it;' that is, so making use of God's bounty as expecting a greater happiness. How do we use the world as not abusing it? When we use it as a type, as a motive, and as a help to heaven. As a kind of type, the enjoyment of temporal things should stir us up to a more serious consideration of heavenly; as the prodigal's husks put him in mind of bread in his father's house. The company of your relations puts you in mind of the company of God and Christ. The cities of the Amorites, their walled towns, put the patriarchs in mind of a city which had foundations, Heb. xi. 16. If an earthly city be so glorious, what is the heavenly city? These are the comforts of a strange place. You abuse them when you forget home, and therefore take heed; if the creature be sweet, heaven is better. And when you use them as a motive to serve God more cheerfully, the more you find him a good master: 1 Tim. vi. 17, Trust in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;' to make you more earnest in good works. 2 Sam. vii. 2, saith David there, I dwell in a house of cedar, and the ark of God within curtains.' When you have such kind of reasonings stirred up within you What do I for God, that hath enlarged my house here? And when you use them as a help, your worldly enjoyments as instruments of piety and. charity. Here is a man's trial, what he doth in a full condition, whether his heart be for home still, yea or nay; when he hath the world at will, if then he be treasuring up a good foundation, and encouraging himself to serve God faithfully.

4. What is your solace in your affliction, and the inconveniences that you meet with in your pilgrimage? Doth this comfort you--Home will pay for all? Heb. x. 34, Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods,

knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance.' Do you reckon upon a more enduring substance? Though the world frown upon you as a step-mother, yet you remember you have a better home. From whence do you fetch your supports in any cross? Doth this comfort you in the midst of the molestations of the world? They do not know your birth, your breeding, your hopes, nor your expectations. Strangers may be abused in a foreign place; when we come home, this will be forgotten. The saints walk up and down like a prince that travels abroad in disguise; though he be slighted, abused, he doth not appear what he shall be. You have a glorious inheritance reserved for you; this is your cordial and the reviving of your souls, and that which doth your heart good to think of; and so you can be contented to suffer loss and inconveniences upon these hopes. The discourse between Modestus, a governor under Valens, and Basil, in Nazianzen his twentieth Oration, is very notable. I shall only transcribe what is exactly to the purpose in hand. When he threatened him with banishment, I know no banishment, saith he, who know no abiding-place here in the world. I do not count this place mine, nor can I say the other is not mine; rather all is God's, whose stranger and pilgrim I am. This was that which supported him in the midst of those threatenings. Therefore from whence do you fetch your support.

5. If religion be kept up in height and majesty, the world will count you strangers, they will stand wondering at your conversation, 1 Peter iv. 4. Men gaze upon those that come hither in a foreign habit, that do not conform to the fashions of the country; and so a child of God is wondered at, that walks in a counter-motion to the studies and practices of other men, as one that is not conformed to the world, Rom. xii. 2. What do you discover of the spirit of your country, so as to convince others?

This much by way of inquiry, namely, whether we are strangers, yea or nay?

Use 2. Behave yourselves as strangers here upon earth.

1. Avoid fleshly lusts,' 1 Peter ii. 11; these cloud the eye, and besot the heart, and make us altogether for a present good; they weaken our desires of heaven. It is the apostle's argument, As strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts.' The flesh-pots of Egypt made Israel to despise Canaan; and so this is that which will take off our hearts from things to come, from the inheritance of the saints in light, and from that blessed estate God hath promised.

2. Grasp not at too much of the world; but what comes with a fair providence upon honest endeavours, accept with thanks: 1 Tim. vi. 9, They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare,' &c. The devil hath you upon the hip, when you make that your business and scope; not he that is, but will be rich, that fixes that as his scope. Then the heart is filled with sins, and the head with cares.

3. If an estate comes in slowly, remember, a little will serve our turns to heaven; more would be but a burden and snare. Those that have their portion here, most of worldly things, what do they get by it? A little belly-cheer, Ps. xvii. 14, and they leave the rest to their babes.' Dainty cheer is no great matter; and to leave our posterity great is but to leave them in a snare. Children are under a providence and a covenant as well as we, and it is blasphemous to think we can provide for them better than God.

4. If God give abundance, rest not in it with a carnal complacency: Ps. lxii. 10, If riches increase, set not your heart on them.' Suffer not thy heart to rejoice in them as your only portion, so as to grow proud of them, so as to count them your good things, Luke xvi. 25; you that are strangers have better things to mind.

5. Keep up a warm respect to your everlasting home. It is not enough to despise the world, but you must look after a better country. Many of a slight temper may despise worldly profits; their corruptions do not run out that way: Heb. xiii. 14, We have here no abiding city, but we seek one to come.' Desires, thoughts, and groans, these are the harbingers of the soul that we send into the land of promise. By this means we tell God that we would be at home.

6. Enjoy as much of heaven as you can in your pilgrimage, in ordinances, in the first-fruits of the Spirit, in communion with saints, Grace is but young glory, and joy in the Holy Ghost is the suburbs of heaven; and therefore you should get somewhat of your country before you come at it. As the winds do carry the odours and sweet smells of Arabia into the neighbouring provinces, so by the breathings of the Holy Ghost upon our hearts do we get a smell of the upper paradise; it is in some measure begun in us before we can get thither; and therefore enjoy as much of heaven as possibly you can in the time of your pilgrimage. We have our taste here; it is begun in union with Christ, and in the work of grace upon the heart. And in ordinances. Prayer brings us to the throne of grace; it gives us an entrance into God's presence: Heb. x. 19, the apostle calls it, a boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.' A Christian enters heaven while he is here in the world. In the word preached heaven is brought down to us. The gospel is called the kingdom of heaven. And by reading we do as it were converse with the saints departed, that writ what we read. Meditation brings us into the company of God; it puts our heads above the clouds, in the midst of blessed spirits there. As if we saw Jesus Christ upon the throne, and his saints triumphing about him. Communion of saints is heaven begun; therefore you that are strangers should much delight there. A man that

is abroad would be glad to meet with his own country men; we should be glad of company to go with us to heaven; these are to be our companions for evermore, therefore we should converse with them here.

Secondly, I proceed to the latter clause, Hide not thy commandments from me.' Here is his request. To make short work of it, I shall endeavour to make out the connection and sense of these words in these propositions.

1. Every man here upon earth, especially a godly man, is but a stranger and passenger. Every man is so in point of condition; he must go hence, and quit all his enjoyments in the world--wicked men whether they will or no; but a godly man is so in affection, and can not be satisfied with his present state. This I have insisted upon.

2. It concerns him that is a stranger to look after a better and more durable state. Every man should do so. He that lives here for a while is concerned; his greatest care should be for that place where he lives longest; therefore eternity should be his scope. A godly man will do so. Those whose hearts are not set upon earthly things, they must have heaven. The more their affections are estranged from the one, the more they are taken up about the other, Col. iii. 2. Heaven and earth are like two scales in a balance; that which is taken from the one is put into the other.

3. There is no sufficient direction how to attain this durable estate but in the word of God. Without this we are but like poor pilgrims and wayfaring men in a strange country, not able to discern the way home. A blessed state is only sufficiently revealed in the word: 2 Tim. i. 10, Life and immortality is brought to light in the gospel.' The heathens did but guess at it, and had some obscure sense of an estate after this life; but it is brought to light with most clearness in the word; so the way thither is only pointed out by the word. It is the word of God

makes us wise to salvation, and our line and rule to lead us to the heavenly Canaan; and therefore it concerns those that look after this durable state, to consult with the word.

4. There is no understanding God's word but by the light of the Spirit: Job xxxii. 8, There is a spirit in man; but the inspiration of the Almighty, that giveth understanding.' Though the word have light in it, yet the spirit of man cannot move till he enlightens us with that lively light that makes way for the dominion of the truth in our hearts, and conveyeth influence into our hearts. This is that light David begs when he saith, Hide not thy commandments from me.' David was not ignorant of the ten commandments, of their sound; but he begs their spiritual sense and use.

5. If we would have the Spirit, we must ask it of God in prayer; for God gives the Spirit to those that ask him,' Luke xi. 13; and therefore we must say, as David, Ps. xliii. 3, Oh, send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me to thy holy hill, to thy tabernacle.'

6. When we beg it of God, we must do it with submission to his sovereignty, and with subscription to his justice. Therefore doth David use this manner of speech, Hide not thy commandments from me.' God doth hide when he doth not open our eyes to see. Now the Lord may choose whether he will do this or no; for he is sovereign, and may in justice forbear to do so, because we have abused the light we have; it will be hid from us unless he reveal it. The mystery of grace is wholly at God's dispose; and whosoever begs it, he must refer himself to the holy and sovereign good pleasure of God, who may give out and withhold his efficacious grace according to his pleasure: Mat. xi. 25, 26, I thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so,

Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' Here is the Lord's sovereignty; he doth in these things as he pleaseth; therefore David submits to it. And then it implies, it may be just with God to leave us unto our natural blindness, and suffer Satan to blind us more. It is fully consistent with the honour of his justice; therefore it is said, John xii. 40, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts,' &c.; that is, judicially, suffering them to increase their own blindness by their sin; blindness, that is their sin; and the Lord may leave it as a judgment upon them.

Use. Here is direction to you that know you are but pilgrims. The great thing you should seek after is the straightest way to heaven. If you have a sense of eternity, and a sense of your present frailty, you should look how to get home to your country. To this end--

1. Study the word. Why? This is your antidote against infection, and a cordial to cheer us in the way. It is an antidote against infection: 2 Peter i. 4, By the promises we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.' The world is an infectious place; therefore you had need take the promises next your heart to keep your hopes alive. And here is your cordial to keep you from fainting, that which makes you to rejoice in the midst of present afflictions, Ps. cxix. 54. It is a cordial to cheer us up, to revive us in the way, till we come to our journey's end. This will make up losses, sweeten difficulties, allay your sorrows. Then it is your direction, the way to lead you home: Ps. cxix. 105, Thy word is a light to my feet and a lantern to my paths.' We shall soon pass over this life; all our care should be to pass it over well, there are so many by-paths in the world, and in a strange place we may soon miscarry.

2. Entreat the Lord of his abundant grace to pity poor strangers, who are ignorant; and desire him he would not hide his word from you, that

you may walk in the nearest, closest way wherein he would have you walk. He may hide it from you as an absolute supreme Lord, for he is bound to give his grace to none; and he may do it as a just judge; he may leave you to your own infatuations and prejudices. Say, Lord, pity a poor stranger and pilgrim.

The word may be hidden two ways, and take care of both:--

1. In point of external administration, when the powerful means are wanting. Oh! it is a great mark of God's displeasure, when men are given up by their own choice to blind guides, to those that have no skill or no will to edify, or no abilities rightly to divide the word of truth; only fill the ear with clamour and noise, but do not inform conscience, or move the heart by solid and powerful instruction from the word of God.

2. In point of internal influence, when the comforts and quickenings of the Spirit are withholden: Lord, withhold not thy Spirit from me.'

SERMON XXI.

My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy judgments at all times.--Ver. 20.

DAVID had begged divine illumination, ver. 18. The reason of his request was, because he was a stranger upon earth, and a stranger may easily be bewildered. Now here is a second reason why he would have God to open his eyes, because his heart was carried out with so strong an affection to the word. He that asketh a thing coldly doth but bespeak his own denial. But David was in good earnest when he prayeth for light; it was not a dead-hearted, perfunctory petition, but such as came from an ardent, strong affection, My soul breaketh,' &c.

In the words we have--

1. The object of David's affection, thy judgments.

2. The quality or kind of his affection:--

[1.] It was vehement, my soul breaketh with longing.

[2.] It was constant, at all times.

By misphalim, judgments, is meant the word, which is the infallible rule of God's proceeding with sinners.

For the affection, I shall open that, and there first speak of the vehemency, My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath.' It is a metaphorical expression, to set forth the earnestness of his affection. The Septuagint renders it thus: epepo'thesen e psuche' mou to` epithumesai ta` kri'mata' sou--My soul coveteth to desire thy judgments.' Desire is the stretching forth of the soul to the thing desired. Now as things that are stretched out do break and crack in stretching; so, saith David, My soul breaketh for the longing.' Here is no respect to brokenness of heart in this place, it is only strength of

desire that is expressed; and the expression is used the rather--

1. Because affections, when strong, are painful, and affect the body with impressions answerable thereunto.

2. Not only the denial, but the delay of satisfying the affection, increaseth the pain. When they have not what they do desire, they are even broken in heart; as Prov. xiii. 12, Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life;' like apples of paradise, comforting and reviving. Now the constancy and continuance of this desire is set forth in these words, at all times; not for a flash and pang, but it was the ordinary frame of his heart.

Doct. God's children have a strong, constant, and earnest bent of affection towards his word.

1. To open the nature of this affection.

2. The reasons of it.

First, The nature. There consider the object, the end, the properties, and the effects.

1. The object of this affection is the word of God written or preached. As it is written in the scriptures, so it is their constant exercise to read it, and consult with it often: Ps. i. 2, But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night'; and Josh. i. 8, This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night.' As it is preached and explained: they submit to God's ordinance in that also, who hath appointed pastors and teachers, as well as prophets and apostles: Eph. iv. 11--prophets and apostles to write scriptures; so pastors and teachers to open and apply scripture; therefore James i. 19, they are swift to hear;' that is, take all occasions for that end and purpose.

2. For the end of this affection; it is a sanctified subjection to God; and strength and growth in the spiritual life: 1 Peter ii. 2, As

new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby;' not merely that you may know, but that you may grow thereby; not to replenish the head with notions, but that you may increase in spiritual strength, and find more liberty of heart towards God.

3. For the properties of it. You have them here in the text:--

[l.] They must be earnest.

[2.] A constant bent of heart.

[1.] An earnest bent of heart. Common and ordinary affection or desire after the word will not serve the turn; not a faint and cold wish, but such as hath heat and warmth in it. It is good to see by what expressions the desires of the saints are set forth in scripture. By the desire of infants after the breast, 1, Peter ii. 2; they cannot live without it. It is set forth also by the panting of the hart after the water-brooks, Ps. xlii. 1. To meet with God in his word is as a brook of water to a chased hart; it refresheth and revives it. It is set forth by the desires of a longing woman, ver. 40 of this psalm, Behold I have longed after thy precepts.' The children of God are fond of nothing so much as of his word and ordinances. It is set forth by the appetite which a hungry man hath toward his meat after a long abstinence: Ps. lxxxiv. 2, My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord.' Or, as a weary traveller and thirsty man longeth after drink: Ps. lxiii. 1, My soul thirsteth for thee,' &c. Or. as cool air to the weary: Ps. cxix. 131, I opened my mouth and panted; for I longed for thy commandments;' a metaphor taken from a man tired with running, gaping for breath to take in some cool air and refreshing. What think you of all these expressions? are they strains and reaches of wit, or the real experiences of the children of God? The truth is, we have such languid motions this way, that we know not how to understand the force of such expressions, therefore we think them to be

conceits, we that are so cold and indifferent whether we meet with God in his word, yea or nay.

[2.] As it is not cold, so it is not fleeting, but constant. Many men have good affections for a while, but they abide not; as I shall give you some kinds.

(1.) Some out of error in judgment think the word of God is only fit for novices (as the Stancarists [7]), to enter us into the rudiments of religion, but too low a dispensation for our after growth. It is milk for babes, they think; but afterwards we must live immediately upon the Spirit. But we see that David's affection ever carried him to the word, not only at his first acquaintance with God, but at all times, as in the text.

(2.) Some prize the word in adversity, when they have no other comforts to live upon; then they can be content to study the word to comfort them in their distresses; but when they are well at ease they despise it. But David made use of it at all times; in prosperity, to humble him; in adversity, to comfort him; in the one, to keep him from pride; in the other, to keep him from despair: in affliction the word was his cordial; in worldly increase it was his antidote; and so at all times his heart was carried out to the word either for one necessity or another.

(3.) Some during a qualm of conscience have an affection for holy things; as we desire strong waters in a pang, not for a constant diet. While the terrors of God are upon them, nothing will satisfy them but the word: Oh, send for Moses and Aaron,' then when the plague was upon them; but as their trouble wears off, so doth their affection to the word of God. It is fear that drives them to the word, and not love.

(4.) Some out of a general sense of the excellency that is in the word; they go on smoothly for a while, as Herod, who heard gladly, Mark vi.

20. So do many till the word come to cross their lusts and touch their darling sin, then they run to earthly pleasures again, and out of a sense of difficulty and carnal despondency, they give over the pursuit.

(5.) Some are taken with the mere novelty: John v. 35, Ye were willing to rejoice in his light for a season;' while the doctrine is novel, and ministers have countenance from great men, as John had from Herod, and their gifts are in the flourish--none but John in their account; but when the conceit of novelty was gone, and John fell under the cross, then their affection was spent.

(6.) Some in case of dubious anxiety, or in doubtful debates, may desire to know the truth, and be much and earnest in the study of the word; but when they get above their scruples, and in plain truths, ordinary cases, they neglect it. Whereas David longed for the word of God at all times, to feel the power of God accompanying it, so as to find strength against his corruptions, and that he might be established in waiting upon God. This was the constant and stable desire of his soul.

Thus you see the word of God is the object, either read or preached. The end of it is, that they may grow in grace, and that their hearts may be more subjected to God, and may be strengthened in waiting upon him: and the manner of this desire is vehement and constant; not at times; but it is the usual frame and temper of their hearts.

4. The effects of this desire, what it worketh. I will mention but two:--

[1.] It draws off the heart from other things: Ps. cxix. 136, Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness;' implying, that when the heart is drawn out after God's testimonies, it is drawn off from carnal pursuits. Desires are the vigorous bent of the soul, and therefore, as the stream of a river, they can run but one way. Our

passionate desires of earthly things certainly will be abated if spiritual desires prevail in us; for being acquainted with a better object, they begin to disdain and loathe other things.

[2.] It maketh us diligent and painful in the use of means, that we may get knowledge and strength by the word. Where strong desires are, there will be great endeavours: Prov. viii. 34, Watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.' A man that hath a desire after grace and strength by the word of God will daily be redeeming occasions of waiting upon God. It is but a slight wish, not serious desire, that is not seconded with answerable endeavours.

Secondly, Having opened the nature of these desires, let me show the reasons of this vehement and constant bent of heart towards the word of God.

1. Of the vehemency.

2. Of the constancy.

First, The reasons of this vehemency; they are these natural instinct, experience, and necessity.

[1.] Natural instinct: 1 Peter ii. 2, As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word.' Children desire the dug, not by instruction, but by instinct, without a teacher. All creatures desire to preserve that life which they have; and therefore by a natural propension they run to that thing from whence they received life. Mere instinct carrieth the brute creatures to the teats of their dams; and every effect looks to the cause, to receive from thence its last perfection. Trees, that receive life from the earth and the sun, they send forth their branches to receive the sun, and stretch their roots into the earth which brought them forth. Fishes will not out of the water which breeds them. Chickens are no sooner out of the shell, but they shroud themselves under the feathers of the hen. The little lamb runs to the

dam's teat, though there be a thousand sheep of the same wool and colour; as if it said, here I received that I have, and here I'll seek that I want. By such a native inbred desire do the saints run to God, to seek a supply of strength and nourishment; and the desire is very strong and vehement: One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after,' &c. There were other things David might desire, but this one thing his heart was set upon, that he might enjoy constant communion with God in the use of public ordinances. What is the reason of this? I answer--The spiritual nature. You may as well ask what teacheth the young lambs to suck, as who taught the regenerate to long for the word. What teacheth the chicken to run under the wing of the hen? The cause of appetite is not persuasion and discourse, but inclination; not argument, but nature. Appetite is an effect of life.

By natural tendency the new creature is carried out to its support from the word of God, there to be comforted and nourished. It shows that all who have not such a kindly appetite to the word of God, that can relish nothing but meats, drinks, wealth, vanity, they were never acquainted with this new nature.

[2.] Experience is another cause of this desire. A child of God is not satisfied with a slight taste of the word, but he desires more; when he hath felt the comfort of it, he is still longing to receive more from God: James i. 18, He hath begotten us by the word of truth.' What follows? Wherefore be swift to hear.' A man that hath had experience of the power of the word taketh all occasions; he knows there is strength, grace, and liberty of heart to be found there. So 1 Peter ii. 3, As new-born babes, &c., if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' Certainly a man that hath had any taste of communion with God will desire a fuller measure, as by tasting of excellent meats we get an appetite to them. Carnal men do not know what it is to enjoy God

in ordinances, and therefore do not long for them; they do not taste the sweetness of the word: Ps. xix. 10, The statutes of the Lord are sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb.' The children of God find more true pleasure in the ordinances, in the statutes of God, than in all things in the world, though to carnal men they are but as dry sticks, burdensome exercises. The reason follows, ver. 11, Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward.' He commendeth the word from his own experience; he had felt the effects and good use of it in his own heart; he had been warned, and had a great deal of comfort and refreshing by it; therefore it is sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb. So Ps. lxiii. 1,2, O God, my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee.' What to do? To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.' He that hath had once a sight of God, would not be long out of his company. He compareth his desire of communion with God with hunger and thirst; his desire is greater than the hunger and thirst that men suffer in a dry wilderness where there is no water to give refreshment. He had seen God, and would now see him again; the remembrance of those former pleasures of the sanctuary revived his desires: so that besides nature, there is this experience.

[3.] The next cause is necessity. We should take delight in the word of God for its excellency, though we stood in no need of it. But our necessity is very great, and this awakens desire. The word is not only compared to things which make for conveniency of life, as to wine and honey, but is compared also to things that are of absolute necessity, bread and water. It is called bread of life,' and water of life.' Bread of life; we cannot live without it: Job xxiii. 12, I have esteemed the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food.' Food is that which keeps us in life, and enables us to action and work. And as water: Isa.

xii. 3, With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'
This is as water to a fainting traveller. Christian, the soul is better than the body, and eternal life is to be preferred before life natural; therefore the necessities of the soul are greater, and should be more urging than the necessities of the body. The famine of the word is threatened as a very great evil, Amos viii. 11. Now because the necessities of the saints are so great, therefore have they their hearts carried out with such longing after the statutes of God. And this necessity is not only at first, when they are weak, but it continueth with them as long as the imperfection continueth with them, and till they come to heaven. Every grace in a child of God needs increase and support; there is something that is lacking to their faith, to their love, to their knowledge: 1 Thes. iii. 10, the apostle saith, That I might perfect that which is lacking to your faith.' They that are above ordinances are not acquainted with their own hearts, they are not men of spiritual experience, they do not know the weaknesses and languishings a child of God is incident to; it is wholly inconsistent to the nature of grace. Wherever there is life there must be food, because of the constant depastion of the natural heat upon the natural moisture. Though the stomach be never so full at present, yet anon it will be hungry again. So because of the constant combat that is between the flesh and spirit, wherever there is spiritual life it will be sensible of the necessity of food. Well, then, it is hunger and necessity that sharpens appetite; being sensible of spiritual languishing, and need to repair strength daily, therefore are their hearts carried out. Thus you see the reasons of this vehement affection.
Secondly, The reasons of the constancy of this respect.
1. Because it is natural and kindly to the regenerate; therefore, as it

is vehement, so it is constant. For it is not a light motion, but such as is deeply rooted; not a good liking, but a thorough bent of heart; it is that which settleth into another nature. Now that which is as a nature to us is known by its uniformity and constancy.

2. They love the word for its own sake, as it is God's word; therefore they ever love it. Other men love it for foreign reasons, as out of novelty, which is an adulterous affection; or out of public countenance, as it is in fashion and repute, and therefore are soon weary of it. He that loves a woman for foreign reasons, as beauty and portion, when these cease, his love ceaseth.

Use 1. Is to reprove the coldness and cursed satiety and loathing of the word of God that is abroad. There is a plenty of means, even to a surfeit. Men are gospel-glutted, Christ-glutted, and sermon-glutted; and therefore are at a very great indifferency, and under a mighty coldness as to the word of God. Usually we are more sensible of the benefit of the word in the want of it than we are in the enjoyment of it: 1 Sam. iii. 1, The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.' When the public ministry of the prophets was rare and scarce, then it was precious and sweet. When the Papists denied the use of the scripture in the vulgar tongue, oh! what would we give then for a little scrap and fragment of the word of God in English!--a load of hay for a chapter in James. So in times of restraint, how savoury is a godly sermon! But now visions are open, men begin to surfeit of the word. In semet ipsam, saith Tertullian, semper abundantia contumeliosa est--plenty lesseneth the price of things. As in Solomon's time, gold and silver were as dirt in the streets, 1 Kings x. 32, so the word of God, though it be so precious and excellent, yet when we have plenty of it, line upon line, precept upon precept, by God's indulgence, then we begin to be glutted. People grow wanton when

they have abundance of means. This is the temper of English professors at this day; they are guilty of surfeiting of the word, and that is very dangerous, either of a people or person. Now, that there is such a fulness and satiety appears partly--

1. By seldom attendance upon the word. We do not redeem time to hear the word; when brought home to our doors, we seldom step out to hear it. They use to say, a surfeit of bread is most dangerous; surely a surfeit of the bread of life is so; when men are full, and begin to despise the word as if not worth the hearing. God usually sends a famine to correct that surfeit of the word: Amos viii. 11, 12, I will send a famine of hearing the word of the Lord, and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.' Usually that is the way that God taketh for a glutted people, that scorn and neglect the word, when they might gather it in like manna from heaven every day; that they may ride many miles before they hear a savoury sermon; and then those that were not for the word, or desirous to be rid of it, may long for a little comfort and reviving by it, and cannot enjoy it.

2. Men bewray this satiety and fulness of the word by fond affectation of luscious strains; wholesome doctrines will not down with them, unless it be cooked and sauced to their wanton appetites. O Christians! the spiritual appetite desires to logikon adolon gala, the sincere milk of the word,' 1 Peter ii. 2--unmixed milk; give them plain, simple milk, without human mixtures and compositions. The relish of the word is spoiled by the garish strains of a frothy eloquence. A plain solid truth is more suitable to a gracious heart. A man that hath a natural instinct to the word delights in the simplicity of it. An infant hath a distinguishing palate, and knows the mother's milk, and pukes and casts

when it sucks another. So certainly, if we had true spiritual life, we would be delighted in the word for the word's sake, the more plain it is, provided it be sound. I am not for a loose, careless delivering of God's message; but it is the sound, plain, and wholesome ministry which suits with a gracious appetite. It argues a distempered heart when we must have quails and dainties, and loathe manna. Consider; in heaven, where we have the most simple apprehension of things, we have the highest affection to them; no need of rhetoric in heaven. And certainly the more heavenly we are, the more perfect in grace, the more wisdom shall we see in plain scriptural truth, infinitely exceeding all the wisdom of the heathen. Many think the word of God too plain for their mouths to preach it; others too stale for their ears to hear it; and they must have the fancies of men: Jer. viii. 9, They have rejected my word; and what wisdom is in them?' It is strange to see how many will disguise religion to please the lusts of men. They mock Christ, as the soldiers did, that put a centurion's coat upon him for a robe, and then, Hail, King of the Jews.' So they wrap up Christ in the foolish garments of their own fancy, and so expose him to mockage rather than reverence.

3. This satiety bewrays itself by our affections to novel opinions, and erroneous conceits: 2 Tim. iv. 3, The time will come that they will not endure sound doctrine, having itching ears, and shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.' Observe it when you will, that soul is nigh to spiritual blasting that begins to have a loathing of a plain truth; and men must have new things and conceits in religion, and so grow weary of opinions, as they do of fashions; and then by God's just judgment they run from one fancy to another, till they quite run themselves out of breath, and have shaken off all religion and good conscience. Therefore take heed of being given up to

this vertiginous spirit, to be turned and 4 tossed up and down with every wind of doctrine,' Eph. iv. 14. Peripheromenoi, the apostle's word, signifies to be carried round in a circle; he alludes to a mariner's compass, [8] that is carried by every wind; this wind takes them, and then another; such light chaff are men when they begin to loathe the plain truths of God. But it is an argument of a gracious heart when we can receive old truth with new affections, and look for the power of God and new quickenings.

4. This levity and instability of spirit is because they look for all the virtue of religion from their notions and their opinions, and not from Christ; then they think this change of opinion shall make them, better; their hearts shall be changed. They try experiments so long, till the Lord hath given them up to a spirit of infatuation, and then all comes to nothing, but they as a brand are fit for the burning.

5. By our worldly projects. Men show a loathing of this word by their eagerness to the world; their hearts, with Martha, are cumbered with many things, while Mary sat at the feet of Jesus to hear his word, Luke x. We are very fervorous in worldly affairs; there we can experiment this kind of affection which David speaks of to the word. Beware of this coldness to the word; it is an ill symptom both to nations and persons.

Use 2. To press us to get this fervent and constant affection to the word. To this end consider--

1. Whose word it is. God's word; and your best affections are due to him: Isa. xxvi. 8, Our desires are to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name;' there you shall hear of God, there God hath displayed his name. Our desires are to thee; not only so, but to thy memorial,' to the remembrance of thy name;' that is, to his word, which is as the bellows to blow up the sparks, and to quicken our affections to him.

2. See what benefits we have by the word of God; how beneficial it is to enlighten and direct us, quicken and comfort us, supply and strengthen us.

[1.] To enlighten and direct us. Light is pleasant,' saith Solomon;' it is a good thing to behold the sun with our eyes,' Eccles. xi. 7. If light natural be pleasant, what is light spiritual? Therefore the Psalmist compares the word to the sun. The visible world can no more be without the one than the intellectual world can be without the other; and the one doth as much rejoice the heart as the other: Ps. xix. 8, The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the judgments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes.' Oh! it is a comfort to have light to see our way. When men begin to have a conscience about heavenly things, oh! then they judge so indeed. To others we speak in vain when we tell them what light they shall have by the word. They say those that live under the arctic pole, at the autumnal equinoctial the sun setteth to them, and doth not rise again till the vernal, and so are six whole months under a perpetual night, as if they were buried in a grave; but at the time of its return, with what clapping of hands and expressions of joy do they welcome the sun again into their parts! So when the word of God is made known to us, how should we welcome it! The city of Geneva gave this for a motto, Post tenebras lux--after darkness, light; implying that the return of the gospel was as light after a long darkness; as the coming of the sun again to those northern people. While Paul and his company were in that great storm at sea, when they saw neither sun nor stars for many days, and were afraid they should fall upon rocks and dangerous shelves, oh! with what longing did they expect to see day again! Acts xxvii. So a poor bewildered soul that had lost its way, or when a child of God doth see but by half a light, how desirable is sure direction! Now this cannot be had but from

the word of God, To the law and to the testimony.'

[2.] To comfort us in all straits. In the word of God there is a salve for every sore, and a promise for every condition. God hath plentifully opened his good-will to sinners. Therefore the children of God, when they labour under the guilt of sin, there they can hear of God's promises of pardon: Isa. lv. 7, Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' Against apostasy they have that promise: Jer. xxxii. 40, I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' When they are under weak performances, the word will tell them, The Lord will spare you, and pity you as a man spares his only son,' Mal. iii. 17; and when they lie under troubles, inconveniences, and deep crosses, there is a promise--the Lord will be with them in affliction; the word will show them Christ in the affliction, and heaven beyond the affliction; and then they are comforted, 1 Cor. x. 13. When they are troubled about worldly provisions, providing for themselves and families, it saith, Be contented, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' Heb. xiii. 5. When their children come to their minds and thoughts, what will become of them when we are dead and gone, the word will tell you of promises made to you and your children, and of God's taking care of them. In short, God is a sun and shield, and no good thing will he withhold,' &c. Ps. lxxxiv. 11. There is all manner of blessings adopted and taken into covenant. Look round about the covenant, look into the word of God; there is nothing wanting for the comfort of believers; in every condition there is a promise to support and bear them up. Now, because of this comfort they have in the word of God, therefore it quickens their desires.

[3.] To supply and strengthen us. It is our food. Alas! what a poor

languishing Christian will a man be that doth not often make use of the word! This strengthens him against corruptions, quickens him in duties, and gives success in conflicts. The sword of the Spirit is the choicest weapon. It is the power of God to salvation.' Rom. i. 16; and the word of his grace, which is able to build us up,' Acts xx. 32. If our heart be dead in prayer, here is the rod of Moses to strike upon the rock to make the waters gush out. Therefore, since we have such benefit by the word, we should long and desire to get such a strong affection.

3. Consider what benefit you will have by these desires after the word. It will keep up our diligence, and will make us exercise ourselves therein. Desire doth all that is done in the world; digging for knowledge is tedious, but the end sweetens it. They that have an affection to the word shall never be destitute of success therein;' God will fulfil the desire of the saints.' He that satisfieth the gaping of the young raven will these desires A strong affection to the word is the argument that moves God: Ps. cxlv. 19, He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will save them.' And if this desire be painful, yet it is salutary and healthful to the soul. In this sickness there is health; in this weakness there is strength; in this thirst, comfort; and in this hunger, satisfaction.

For means--

[1.] Get a high esteem of spiritual enjoyments. Valuation and esteem precede desire. Wicked men, that value themselves by carnal comforts, their souls run out with vehement longing that way. A child of God, that values himself by spiritual enjoyments, by know ledge, grace, subjection to God, that counts these his greatest benefits, his main desire is to be acquainted with the word of God. The word hath a subserviency to his end. Poor low-spirited creatures, that value themselves by the plenty of external accommodations, they will never

feel this longing after the word. Prov. viii. 10, Receive instruction rather than silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold.'

[2.] Let a man live in the awe of God, and make it his business to maintain communion with him, and then he will be longing after him. This will show the necessity of the word of God for his comfort and strength upon all occasions. A lively Christian, that is put to it in good earnest, he must have the word by him to direct, comfort, and strengthen him; as he that labours hard must have his meals, or else he will faint and be overcome by his labour. We content ourselves with a loose profession, and so do not see the need of food, have not this hungering longing desire after the bread of life. Painted fire needs no fuel; a dead formal profession is easily kept up; but a man that makes it his business to maintain communion with him, and much exercised to godliness, is hungering and thirsting that he might meet with God.

[7] Stancarus was professor of Hebrew at Königsberg, where he maintained a violent controversy with Osiander. He afterwards went into Poland, where he excited much commotion. There he died in 1574.--ED.

[8] Manton could scarcely suppose that the mariner's compass was known to the apostle. Neither would the description be at all applicable to it. I suspect he refers to some other instrument, of the nature of a weathercock, under that name.--ED.

SERMON XXII.

Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.--Ver. 21.

IN the 18th verse, the prophet had begged divine illumination, that his eyes might be opened to see more into the nature of the word. He backeth that petition with three arguments. The first is taken from his condition in the world, I am a stranger upon earth.' The second argument is taken from the vehemency of his affection to the word, My soul breaketh,' &c. A man that is regenerate, as David was, he hath not only some faint and languid motions towards holy things, but a great and strong affection of heart, My heart even breaketh for the longing,' &c. In this verse here is the third reason, Open mine eyes.' Why? Because erring from the commandment is dangerous, and bringeth us under God's curse, which will be executed by the rebukes of his providence. There have been ever some that op posed God, but yet they have ever been blasted by God; he hath always vindicated the contempt of his law by the severe executions of his justice upon the contemners of it, Thou hast rebuked the proud.' We should not let pass God's judgments without profit; but the more the law is owned from heaven, the more entirely should we apply ourselves to the obedience of it. Therefore this is one reason why David begs for light, direction, and strength, for thou hast rebuked the proud,' &c.; therefore, Lord, teach me, that I may not come under the rebukes of thine anger.

Some read the words in two distinct sentences, Thou hast rebuked the proud;' and then, Cursed are they which do err from thy commandments.' But it comes all to one with our reading; therefore I shall not stand to insist upon examining the ground of this difference.

In the words observe--

1. The term that is given to wicked men, the proud, so commonly called in scripture: Mal. iii. 15, They call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up.'

2. The instance and discovery of their pride, they err from thy commandments.

3. The evil state in which they are, they are cursed. Though the wicked are not presently punished, yet they are all cursed, and in time they shall be punished.

4. The begun execution of this curse, thou hast rebuked them, that is, punished or destroyed: Ps. vi. 1, Rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.'

The points are--

1. That the worst sort of proud creatures are those that do err from God's commandments; for so is the description here, The proud have erred,' &c.

2. These proud ones, they are cursed. Those that continue in obstinacy and impenitency in their sins and errors, they are under a curse.

3. They are not only cursed, but are also rebuked; that is, not only threatened, but this curse shall be surely executed. In this world it is begun many times, and in part executed, but in the next fully and sorely.

Doct. 1. That the worst sort of proud creatures are those that err from God's commandments.

Here we must distinguish of erring, then of pride.

First, Of erring from God's commandments. There is an erring out of frailty, and an erring out of obstinacy.

1. An erring out of frailty; and so David saith, Ps. cxix. 176, I have gone astray like a lost sheep;' and again, Ps. xix. 12, Who can

understand his errors?' This is not meant here of every failing and slip, every sin of ignorance and incogitancy; no, nor every act of rebellion and perverseness of affection which may be found in the children of God. Though there be a pride in all sins against knowledge and light, that kind of sinning is interpretatively a confronting of God, a despising of his commandments; as David is said to do, 2 Sam. xii. 9, pro hic et nunc, for the time; the will of the creature is set up against the creator; yet this is not the erring here spoken of.

2. There is an erring out of obstinacy, impenitency, and habitual contempt of the lawgiver. This is spoken of, Ps. xcv. 10, It is a people that do err in their hearts.' To err in mind is bad, to err out of ignorance; but it is a people that stubbornly refuse to walk in the ways God hath enjoined them. Some err out of simple nescience, ignorance, or mistake, or else through the cloud with which some present temptation overcasts the mind. These err in their minds, but others err in their hearts, that care not for, or do not desire to hear of, their duty to God. A man that erreth out of ignorance can say, Lord, I know not;' but those that err in their heart, they say, We desire not the knowledge of thy ways,' Job xxi. 14; they do not only fall into sin, but love to continue in it. The apostle speaks of ungodly deeds un godly committed,' Jude 15. The matter of sin is not so much to be regarded as the manner, with what heart it is done, ungodly committed, with contempt of God. Now, such contemners of God and his law are here described, as all obstinate and impenitent sinners are.

Secondly, We must distinguish of pride, which is either moral or spiritual.

1. Moral pride is an over-high conceit of ourselves, or our own excellencies, discovered by our disdain and contempt of others. So it is said of Nebuchadnezzar, his heart was lifted up.' This is that pride

that is spoken of 1 Peter v. 5, God resisteth the proud.' There should be a mutual condescension between men; for God resisteth the proud, that is, those that are lifted up above others.

2. Spiritual pride, that is, disobedience and impenitency, which is discovered by a neglect of God and contempt of his law; and that pride is often so taken appeareth by these scriptures: Mal. iv. 1, The day of the Lord shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble.' Mark, they that do wickedly, and the proud, are made synonymous expressions. So Neh. ix. 16, But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments.' Their obstinacy in sin, or unsubjection to God, is made to be pride. So Jeremiah, when he gives the people good counsel to prevent ensuing judgments, Hear ye, give ear, be not proud,' Jer. xiii. 15; that is, do not obstinately refuse to comply with God's will. And afterward, ver. 17, My soul shall weep sore for your pride.' So that unhumbled sinners are guilty of this spiritual pride, of contempt of God himself.

Having opened these things, that by erring is meant not out of frailty, but by obstinacy; that by pride is not meant that moral pride by which we contemn others, but that spiritual pride, when our hearts are unhumbled and unsubdued to God, my work is now to prove--

1. That obstinacy and impenitency is pride.

2. That it is the worst sort of pride.

First, That there is pride in impenitency and obstinacy in a course of sin. Why?

1. Because they neglect God. To slight a superior, and not to give him due respect, hath ever been accounted pride. Surely then this is pride with a witness, to neglect God, who is over all, blessed for ever:' Ps. x. 4, The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek

after God;' that is, of his heart, bewrayed by his countenance, he will not seek after God, and God is not in all his thoughts;' that is, scarce troubled with such a thought of what will please or displease God; he doth not think it necessary or worth the time to look after.

2. They oppose God, and set themselves as parties against him: James iv. 6, God resisteth the proud;' God standeth in a posture of war against the proud. The word implies that every proud man is in battle array or posture of war against God: so every impenitent person sets himself against God. The quarrel between God and him is, who shall stoop, whose will shall stand? whether God shall serve or they? Isa, xliii. 24, You have made me to serve with your sins, and wearied me with your iniquities.' Indeed, they do not only oppose him, but they would depose him, or put him out of the throne, while they would subject God's will to their own. He that would be at his own dispose, and do what pleaseth him, is a god to himself.

3. In all this opposition they slight God, and despise--(1.) His authority in making the law; (2.) His power and greatness in making good the sanction of the law.

[1.] They despise the authority of God in the law itself. When men will set up their own will in a contradiction to God, it is a mighty dishonour to God: 2 Sam. xii. 9, Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord?' Every sin that is committed slights the law that forbids it, as if it were not to be stood upon; it is no matter what God saith to the contrary. There is fearing the commandment, and despising the commandment. Fearing the commandment, that is the effect of a wise heart: Prov. xiii. 13, He that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.' If God interpose, it is more than if there were an angel in the way with a flaming sword. There is a commandment in the way; he fears it, his way is hedged up, he dares not go on. But now

impenitency, that slights the commandment. A sinner dares do that which an angel durst not do. It is said of Michael the archangel, Jude 9, that he durst not bring a railing accusation;' he had not the boldness. Thus they despise the authority of God in the law.

[2.] They despise the power of God in the sanction of the law, when they will run the hazard of those sad threatenings, as if they were a vain scarecrow, as if they could make good their cause against God: 1 Cor. x. 22, Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?' Sinning is an entering the lists with God, as if they could carry their cause against him; and therefore one great cure of hardness of heart and impenitency is seriously to meditate upon God's power: Deut. x. 16, 17, Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.' Why? For the Lord your God is a God of gods and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and terrible.' Do you know what God is? and will you contend with him? Certainly you will fail in the enterprise and undertaking.

Secondly, Let me prove there are none so proud as they that can brave it thus with God. I will take the rise of my argument thus--

1. Of all pride, that against superiors is most heinous.

2. Of all superiors, God is the highest, and deserveth our chiefest respect.

1. Of all pride, that against superiors is most heinous. Pride bewrayeth itself either by a disdain of inferiors, neglect of equals, or contempt of superiors. Now, of all the others, this is the most offensive, because there is more to check it; therefore it is threatened as a great disorder, Isa. iii. 4, 5, that the base should rise against the honourable, and the child should behave himself proudly against the ancient.' When men carry themselves insolently to those that are far their betters, that is counted a great arrogancy in

the world: to injure equals or contemn inferiors is not so much. There is the ground of the argument.

2. Of all superiors, God is the highest, and deserves our chiefest respect; therefore to deal proudly against him is worst of all.

Consider--

[1.] That God hath an absolute jurisdiction.

[2.] His supremacy is not precarious.

[3.] In the management of his supremacy he useth much condescension.

Now, to stand out against him, oh, what egregious pride is this!

[1.] He hath an absolute jurisdiction over us. Those that are our betters, we are to honour and respect them, though they have not power over us; but God is not only honourable, but chief and supreme, and hath a full right in us. In the civil law they distinguish of a twofold dominion; there is dominium jurisdictionis and dominium proprietatis--the dominion of jurisdiction and of propriety. The do minion of jurisdiction is proper to reasonable creatures, who only are capable of government. Propriety, that respects other things, as our goods and lands; and propriety argues a greater right and a greater dominion. A man may have a jurisdiction over others when he hath not an absolute dispose over them, as a prince over his subjects. Nay, a man that hath a jurisdiction and propriety too, his propriety is greater over his lands and estate than over his servants, though they be slaves; yet, because they partake of the same nature with himself, he hath not such a power to dispose of them as he hath to dispose of his goods and lands. Now God hath not only an. absolute jurisdiction over us, which were enough in the case, but he hath a propriety, a more absolute power over every man than the greatest monarch hath--what shall I say--over his subjects, over his slaves? nay, a greater propriety than he hath over his goods and lands. Why? For he made us

out of nothing; he is our potter, we his clay: he hath such a power over us, to dispose of us according to his will, as a potter over his clay to form what vessel he pleaseth. Now for a man to strive with his maker, it is as if the clay should lift up itself against the potter.

So much the prophet saith, Isa. xlv. 9, Woe unto him that striveth with his maker.' What! shall the pot lift up itself against the potter? That were monstrous, since it is his. Now the potter did not make the matter, only bestows form and art upon it, but God gives us form, matter, and all, and shall we rise up against him, and contemn him?

[2.] Consider that his supremacy is not precarious; it doth not stand to the courtesy of man, that is, whether man will yield God to be supreme, yea or nay; but it is backed with a mighty power: 1 Peter v. 6, Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.' God's hand is a mighty hand, and therefore we should humble ourselves. It is a madness to contend with the Lord of hosts. What are we to the Lord, who can stop our breath in a moment? Job iv. 9, By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed.' With a breath God can destroy us all, and resolve us into nothing; therefore, to rise up against God, this is the greater pride. Other superiors cannot always maintain their right; they may be foiled in the contention; but surely God will have the best of it; it is madness to contest with him.

[3.] God hath not only right, and that backed with an almighty power, but in the management of his supremacy over men he useth much condescension. To instance that in two things.

(1.) In making motions of peace to such proud and obstinate creatures as we are, that can be of no use or profit to him; ay! and though he be the wronged party. There is in us that which Austin calls infirmitas animositatis--the weakness of strength of stomach. We are striving who

shall yield first. Though it be for our interest and advantage to be reconciled, yet we are looking who shall submit first; but the Lord, though he can back his sovereignty with power, yet he comes down from the throne of sovereignty, and makes offers of grace, and prays you to be reconciled. When he might destroy, then he beseecheth, and speaketh supplications to the creature; he comes and entreats you with a great deal of affectionate earnestness. Oh! that God should stoop thus to a handful of unprofitable dust--creatures that can no way be of use and profit to him! What pride is this, to stand it out against such a God!

(2.) In seeking to reclaim us, and soften us by many mercies, and by his kind dealing with us. God would break the heart rather than the back of the sinner, and therefore he seeks to melt us with acts of kindness. Now for us to continue our pride and rebellion after all this, what a pride is this--of how horrible a nature? Rom. ii. 4, Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance, not considering that the goodness of God should lead us to repentance?' God withholds his hand, and is loath to strike; nay, not only so, but doth follow us with acts of grace and kindness, and maintain us with his own expenses, and yet the proud heart of man will not relent. Mark that word, they despise his goodness;' they do in effect say, God shall not have my heart for all this. Oh, how great is this pride! These are considerations that may give us a little light to judge of that pride that is in obstinacy and impenitency in sin. If you consider God's absolute right, he hath not only a dominion of jurisdiction over us, but a full propriety in us, to use us at his pleasure; and this right of his is backed with almighty power, and doth not stand with the creature's courtesy; and though it be so, yet it is managed with a great deal of condescension and love; he beseecheth poor creatures, and tendereth offers of peace, and they are fed and maintained at his

charge, and taste of his goodness and bounty.

Use 1. It informs us, how humble soever men appear otherwise, yet they are proud if they have never submitted to God with brokenness of heart, seeking his pardon and favour. There are many which are facile to men, and yet full of contumacy and stoutness of stomach against God; they can stoop to the poorest worm, and court their favour, but yet deal insolently with their maker. But if men were persuaded of the truth of God's being, they would sooner be convinced of the naughtiness of their hearts, by comparing their carriage to God and men. Many there are that are tender of wounding the reputation of men, yet dishonour God and are never troubled. Many that look upon it as an uncomely thing to despise their neighbour, to deal hotly with an underling, and vaunt it, yet never made conscience of submitting themselves to God, who is their undoubted superior. Men count it part of humility and good manners to yield to those that are over them, and to pay them all kind of respect and subjection; yet they never care to seek the favour of God, and humble themselves seriously for their offences against him. You take it ill in the world when the people of mean quality insult over you, when such times fall out as the base rise up against the honourable. What are you to God? Poor base worms! will you contend with your maker? Do you count it to be heavy disorder, and a strange inversion of all states and conditions, that men of mean and low fortunes should brave it over you, and sway things in the world? and how ill may God take it that you stout it out against him? There is a greater distance between him and you, than between you and your fellow-creatures; therefore, if it be grievous to you, what a heinous offence is it to stand out against God?

Use 2. It instructs us what is the way to reduce and bring home sinners to God, by breaking their pride, or, as the expression is, Job xxxiii.

17, by hiding pride from man;' by which is meant taking away pride; for that which is taken away is hidden or cannot be seen. As the hiding of sin is the taking away sin, so the hiding of pride is the cure of it.

1. By humble and broken-hearted addresses to God for his pardon and his grace. There is no way to cure the pride of unregeneracy but by brokenness of heart. Come and put your mouths in the dust, and acknowledge that you have too long stood it out against God. As the nobles of the king of Assyria came with ropes about their necks, and submitted themselves; so, Jer. xxxi. 9, They shall return with weeping and supplications.' This is the way to come out of your sins, to go and bemoan the stubbornness and pride of your hearts; as Ephraim be moaned himself, and smote upon his thigh, and complained of his obstinacy, Jer. xxxi. 18. Christians, first or last God will bring you to this; if you do not stoop voluntarily, you shall by force; if your hearts be not broken by the power of his grace, they shall be broken in pieces by the power of his providence: Rom. xiv. 11, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me.' God hath sworn, As I live;' now in every oath there is an implicit imprecation, that is, if this be not done, then let this befall me. So there is an implicit imprecation in that oath, Count me not a living God if I do not make the creature stoop. If you stand it out against the power of his word, can you stand it out against the power of Christ when he comes in glory? Ezek. xxii. 14, Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee?' Oh, how will your faces gather blackness and darkness in that day!

2. Yield up yourselves to be governed by his will and pleasure. It is not enough to come weary and heavy laden, not only to be sensible of the burden of sin, and beg for pardon, but we must take Christ's yoke, Mat. xi. 29. Nature sticks at this: a proud heart is loath to come

under the yoke. We would taste of the sweetness of mercy, but cannot endure the bonds and restraint of duty; as Ephraim would tread out the corn, but was loath to break the clods, Hosea x. 11. The prophet alludes to the manner among the Jews; their fashion was to tread or thresh out their corn by the feet of beasts, and the ox his mouth was not to be muzzled; it was easy work, and afforded abundance of food, Deut. xxv. 4. We would have comfort, but not duty.

3. We must constantly cherish a humble frame of spirit, if we would maintain communion with God, Micah vi. 8; not only walk with God, but humble thyself to walk with God. Why? He is a great sovereign, and he will be exactly observed and constantly depended upon; and if you slip, you must bewail your failings, and from first to last all must be ascribed to grace.

Doct. 2. These proud are cursed, or, those that obstinately and impenitently continue in their sins, they are under a curse.

1. I shall open the nature of this curse.

2. Show how impenitent sinners come under this curse.

First, The nature and quality of this curse; or what is that curse which lies upon all wicked men? That will best be understood by considering that scripture wherein the tenor of the law is described: Deut. xxxvii. 26, Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them;' and Gal. iii. 10, Cursed is every one which continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Where there is considerable, the duty which the law exacteth, and then the penalty which the law inflicteth.

1. The duty which the law exacteth; every one must continue in the words of this law to do it. An innocent holy nature, that is presupposed, for it is said the person must continue. It doth not consider man as lapsed or fallen, or as having already broken with God.

And then he must continue in all things; there is a universal, a perfect obedience, that is indispensably required, while we are in our natural condition. And then the perpetuity; he must hold out to the last; if he fail in one point he is gone. All this is indispensably exacted of all them that live under the tenor of this covenant: He that doth them shall live in them;' and the soul that sinneth shall die.' There is required perpetual, perfect, personal obedience. What will you do if this covenant lie upon you, as it doth upon all men in their natural condition? If God call you to a punctual account of the most inoffensive day that ever you past over, what will become of you? If thou, O Lord, shalt mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?' Ps. cxxx.

3. Better never have been born than be liable to that judgment. Oh! therefore, when the law shall take a sinner by the throat, and say, Pay me that which thou owest,' what shall a poor sinner do? This is the duty exacted.

2. The penalty that shall be inflicted, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in the words of this law to do it.' The law hath a mouth that speaketh terrible things. Cursed, it is but one word, but it may be spread abroad into very large considerations. In one place it is said. The Lord will not spare him. All the curses that are written in this book of this law shall light upon him,' Deut. xxix. 20. The book of the law is full of curses, and all together they show you what is the portion of an impenitent sinner. In another place it is said Every curse and every plague which is not written in the book of this law will the Lord bring upon thee,' Deut. xxviii. 61. Mark, though it be not specified in the law. God hath threatened sundry sorts of punishments, yet he hath many plagues in store which are not committed to record or writing; therefore, whatever is written or unwritten, revealed in the word or dispensed in providence by way of plague and

misery, it is but the interpretation of this one word, Cursed is he that continueth not,' &c. However, because particulars are most affective, I will name some parts of the curse.

[1.] This is one part of the cursed condition of a sinner that is under the law, that the knowledge of his duty doth but the more irritate corruption: Rom. vii. 9, The commandment came, and sin revived.' The more we understand of the necessity of our subjection to God, the more is the soul opposite to God. Sin takes occasion by the commandment, as oppositions do more exasperate and enrage a waspish, spirit.

[2.] This exaction of duty doth either terrify or stupify the conscience; he that escapeth the one suffereth the other. Either men are terrified: indeed all sinners are liable to it; the conscience of a sinner is a sore place, and the apostle saith they are liable to bondage all their days,' Heb. ii. 14; as Belshazzar trembled to see the hand writing upon the wall, and Felix trembled to hear of judgment to come; so a carnal man is afraid to think of his condition, and some are actually under horror, and wherever they go, as the devils do, they carry their own hell about them. Or if conscience be not terrified, then it is stupified; they grow senseless of their misery, and are past feeling,' Eph. iv. 19; and that is a very sad estate, and dangerous temper of soul, when men have outgrown all feelings of conscience, and worn out the prints of conviction. These are the two extremes that all Christless persons are incident unto.

[3.] There is a curse upon all that a man hath, as long as he continues in his rebellion and obstinacy against God; he is cursed in his basket and store, in his going out, and coming in,' &c., Deut. xxviii. 15-17. A man is cursed in his table; that becomes a snare; his afflictions are but beginnings of sorrows. It is a miserable thing to lie in such an estate. If the curse do not break out so visibly or sensibly, it is

because now it is the day of God's patience, and he waits for our return. But mark, God's spiritual providence is the more dreadful. When God rains snares' upon men, all the seeming comforts which they have do but harden them in an evil course, and hold them the faster in the bonds of iniquity.

[4.] There is a curse upon all he doth; his duties are lost, his prayers are turned into sin,' his hearing is the savour of death unto death,' whilst he remaineth in his impenitency. It is said: Prov. xxi. 27, The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination; how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?' Though he should come in the best manner he can with his flocks and herds, yet all will be to no purpose, it is an abomination to God.

[5.] Impenitency binds over a man, body and soul, to everlasting torment. In time it will come to that, Go ye cursed,' &c., Mat. xxv. 41. They are only continued until they have filled up their measure, and are ripened for hell, and then they lie eternally under the wrath of God. Look, as it is sweet to hear, Come ye blessed,' &c., so dreadful in that day to hear, Go ye cursed,' &c. Thus are the proud cursed, that is, obstinate, impenitent sinners, while they stand off from God. Secondly, Let me examine upon what score they are cursed.

1. Every man by nature is under the curse; for until they are in Christ they are under Adam's covenant, and Adam's covenant will yield no blessing to the fallen creature: Gal. in. 10, As many as are under the works of the law are under the curse,' &c. Mark, every man that remains under the law, that hath not gotten an interest in Christ, the curse of the first covenant remains upon him, and accordingly at the last day he shall have judgment without mercy; he shall be judged according to the terms of that covenant: for there are but two states, under the law, or under grace; therefore, while they are in a state of nature, they must

needs be under wrath. So John iii. 18, He that believeth not is condemned already;' that is, in the sentence of the law; there is a curse gone out against him; the man is gone, lost, condemned already.

2. This curse abideth upon us until we believe in Christ. The sentence of the law is not repealed: John iii. 36, He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him;' Gal. iii. 13, Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,' &c.

3. When Christ is tendered, and finally refused, then the sentence of the law is ratified in the gospel or the court of mercy. A court of chancery God hath set up in the gospel for penitent sinners. But then it follows, This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men choose darkness,' &c. When God shall tender men better conditions by Christ, and they turn their backs upon it, then is this curse confirmed.

Use 1. Consider how matters stand between God and us; examine how it is with you. Here let me lay down these propositions by way of trial:--

1. Every man by nature is in a cursed condition, Eph. ii. 3; every man is liable to Adam's forfeiture and breach; the elect children of God as well as others are liable to the curse.

2. There is no way to escape this curse but by flying to Christ for refuge, Heb. vi. 18. As a man would flee from the avenger of blood, so should we flee from the curse of the law that is at our heels. Wrath is abroad seeking out sinners; now, saith the apostle, Oh, that I might be found in him!'

3. A sense of this benefit we have by Christ will necessarily beget an unfeigned love to him; else we can have no evidence, but the curse doth still remain: and therefore it is said, 1 Cor. xvi. 22, If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha,' accursed till the Lord come, that is, for ever and ever. How can a man think he

shall be the better for Christ that doth not love Christ, nor delight in him, and have no value for him? And therefore, if you have not this love to Christ, it is a sign you have no benefit by him, you have not that faith that will give you a title.

4. This love must be expressed by a sincere obedience; for this is love, to keep his commandments,' 1 John v. 3; and Gal. v. 24, They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the lusts thereof.' They are not Christ's, are not to be reckoned to him, that merely make a profession of his name, and with whom his memory seems to be precious; but they are Christ's that testify love to Christ. Do you perform duties for Christ's sake?

Use 2. To press you to come out of the curse which cleaves to all impenitent sinners. Oh, what a dreadful condition are they in! And how soon God may take advantage of this curse, and cut us off from a possibility of grace, we cannot tell; and at the last day this curse will be ratified. Therefore be sensible of the burden; come out of it. This is God's end in shutting up a sinner under such a fatal necessity; either you must perish for ever or run to Christ. This should quicken us the more to fly to his mercy.

Thirdly, They are not only cursed, but rebuked, Thou hast rebuked the proud,' &c. Observe--

Doct. 3. The rebukes of God's providence upon impenitent sinners are of great use to the saints.

1. They are arguments of his displeasure against the proud and against the impenitent. God, that is so merciful to the humble and broken-hearted, that looketh to him that is poor and contrite and trembles at the word, Isa. lxvi. 3, he can be severe and just against those that deal proudly, that lift up the heel against him, Ps. lxviii. 21: it is twice repeated, Our God is a God of salvation, but he will

wound the head of his enemies,' &c. Mark, though mercy be God's delight--verily he is a God of salvation--yet we must not imagine a God all honey and all sweetness. If men be proud, obstinate, and impenitent, they shall be cursed; and not only cursed, but they shall be rebuked.

2. It is a proof and document given to the world how tender God is of his word, how willing to satisfy the world. This is the rule we must stand by, Thou hast rebuked them.' Why? Because they erred from thy commandment.' God hath authorised and ratified the law by the rebukes of his providence, and made it authentic and valid in the hearts and consciences of men: Rom. i. 18, The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,' &c. Mark, it is revealed from heaven. The events which fall out in the world we should not look upon as casual strokes, or a chance that happened to us in the way, but as discoveries from heaven. The word is the rule of life. Mark, against all ungodliness; this is the breach of the first table; and against all unrighteousness, which is the breach of the second table. God hath owned both tables: Heb. ii. 2, The word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.' He means the law, which was delivered by the ministry of angels. Now, every transgression, by that he means sins of commission; and every disobedience, by that he means sins of omission; and God hath met with every breach and every violation of the law. How punctually God hath exemplified every commandment in his judgment! And if we would make collections of providence, we might easily find this, how God hath rebuked pride, and that because they err from his commandment.

Again, it may be improved as a check against envy at the prosperity of the wicked. Do not call the proud happy; they are cursed already, and

in time shall be punished: Mark the end of the wicked,' Ps. xxxvi. 17. First or last, God will manifest from heaven his displeasure against their impenitency. By daily experience we may see that they thrive ill that set themselves against God.

And then it serves to confirm the truth of the threatening. Oh! when God inflicteth judgments, remember the curse of the law is not in vain. After the thundering of the threatening, there will break out the bolt of confusion and destruction upon the wicked, so that you must either do or die for it.

Use. Let this persuade men to break off their sins by repentance, that you may be sensible of the wretchedness of your condition. God's words are deeds. Men may curse, and yet God may bless for all that; but God's curse is sure to take place. Let us make that use which David doth of it, to excite our affections to the word of God by the vengeance which God taketh of the pride and scorn of others. The examples of others shipwrecking themselves by their rebellion against God are sanctified when they make us more careful and watchful that we err not from God's commandments.'

SERMON XXIII.

Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.--Ver. 22.

DAVID was derided for keeping close to God's word, possibly by those proud ones mentioned in the former verse. They contemned the word themselves, and would not suffer others to keep it; as the Pharisees would neither enter into the kingdom of God themselves, nor suffer others to enter. But David makes this an argument to beg the Lord's grace, to wit, light and strength, that he might give no occasion to their reproach; and if it lighted upon him, that it might not rest upon him. Or by the proud men may be meant Saul's courtiers, who traduced his innocency, and sought to overwhelm him with slander. Now, God knew his conscience and integrity, and therefore could best clear him.

In the words, as in most of the other verses, you have--

1. A request, remove from me reproach and contempt.

2. A reason and argument to enforce the request, for I have kept thy testimonies.

First, for the request, Remove from me reproach and contempt.' The word signifies, Roll from upon me, let it not come at me, or let it not stay with me.

And then the argument, for I have kept thy testimonies.' The reason may be either thus:--(1.) He pleads that he was innocent of what was charged upon him, and had not deserved those aspersions. (2.) He intimates that it was for his obedience, for this very cause that he had kept the word, therefore was reproach rolled upon him. (3.) It may be conceived thus, that his respect to God's word was not abated for this reproach. He still kept God's testimonies, how wicked soever he

did appear in the eyes of the world. It is either an assertion of his innocency, or he shows the ground why this reproach came upon him; or he pleads his respect to God, and his service was not lessened, whatever reproach he met with in the performance of it.

The points from hence are many.

1. It is no strange thing that they which keep God's testimonies should be slandered and reproached.

2. As it is the usual lot of God's people to be reproached, so it is very grievous to them, and heavy to bear.

3. It being grievous, we may lawfully seek the removal of it. So doth David, and so may we, with submission to God's will.

4. In removal of it, it is best to deal with God about it; for God is the great witness of our sincerity, as knowing all things, and so to be appealed to in the case. Again, God is the most powerful assertor of our innocency; he hath the hearts and tongues of men in his own hands, and can either prevent the slanderer from uttering reproach, or the hearer from entertainment of the reproach. He that hath such power over the consciences of men can clear up our innocency; therefore it is best to deal with God about it; and prayer many times proves a better vindication than an apology.

5. In seeking relief with God from this evil, it is a great comfort and ground of confidence when we are innocent of what is charged. In some cases we must humble ourselves, and then God will take care for our credit. We must plead guilty when by our own fault we have given too much occasion to the slanders of the wicked: so Ps. cxix. 39, Turn away my reproach which I fear, for thy judgments are good.' My reproach, for it was in part deserved by himself, and therefore he feared the sad consequences of it, and humbles himself before God. But at other times we may stand upon our integrity, as David saith here, Turn away my

reproach and contempt, for I have kept thy testimonies.'

These are the points which may be drawn from this verse; but I shall insist but upon one of them, which, in the prosecution of it, will comprise all the rest; and that is this--

Doct. That reproaches are a usual, but yet a great and grievous, affliction to the children of God. I will show--

1. They are a usual affliction.

2. They are a grievous affliction.

First, They are a usual affliction. Reproaches are either such as light upon religion itself, or upon our own persons.

1. Upon religion itself. Sometimes the truth is traduced, and the way of God is evil spoken of, disguised with the nicknames of sedition, heresy, schism, faction. Look, as astronomers miscall the glorious stars by the name of the dog-star, the bear, the dragon's tail, and the like--they put upon them names of a horrid sound--so do carnal men miscall the glorious things of God, his holy ways; they put an ill name upon them: Acts xxiv. 14, After the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers.' The Jews called Christianity a heresy, or an apostasy from the old religion; and so do Papists call the Reformation. Luther, when he was charged with apostasy from the faith, answered thus: I confess I am an apostate, but from the devil's cause; I have not kept touch with the devil. Cant. v. 7, we read that the spouse's veil was taken from her by the watchmen; so the comeliness of the church is taken away by the imputations of evil men. Thus there may reproaches light upon religion itself.

2. On our persons; and so either for religion's sake, or upon a private and personal respect.

[1.] For religion's sake; and thus God's children have been often calumniated. It is foretold by Christ as the lot of his people; and

therefore he provides against it: Mat. v. 11, Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.' Those who have no strength and power to inflict other injuries have these weapons of malice always in readiness. When other kinds of persecutions and violences are restrained, yet men take a liberty of censuring and speaking all manner of evil falsely of the children of God; and ever this hath been verified in the experience of the saints. Their lives are a real reproach to the wicked, they do upbraid them; and therefore, to be quits with them, the wicked reproach them by censures and calumniations. I shall give some instances. Moses had his portion of reproaches: Heb xi. 26, Esteeming the reproaches of Christ better riches than the treasures of Egypt.' Possibly the Holy Ghost means there when he was scoffed at for joining himself with so mean and afflicted a people; they thought Moses was mad to quit all his honours. Christ himself was accused of the two highest crimes of either table--blasphemy and sedition: of blasphemy, which is the highest crime against the first table; and of sedition, which is the highest crime against the second. And all that will be Christ's they must expect to bear his reproach: Heb. xiii. 13, Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.' The apostle alludes to the sacrifice of atonement, which was to be slain without the camp. So Jesus Christ was cast out of the city; and we must be contented thus to be cast off by the world, to be cast forth from among men as vile and accursed, bearing Christ's reproach.

[2.] For personal reproaches; this is very usual with God's children also, reproaches upon private and personal occasions. God may let loose a railing Shimei against David. Many times he complains of his reproaches, often in this psalm, more in other psalms: Ps. xxxi. 13,

For I have heard the slander of many; they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.' Sundry sorts of persons made him the butt upon which they let fly the arrows of censure and reproach: Ps. xxxv. 15, The abjects gathered themselves together against me; they did tear me, and ceased not;' meaning his name was torn and rent in pieces, and that by the abjects: such bold and saucy dust will be flying in the faces of God's people. So I may speak of Jeremiah, and Joseph, and other servants of God; yea, our Lord himself endured the contradiction of sinners. Jesus Christ, that was so just and innocent, which did so much good in every place, yet meets with odious aspersions. So Ps. lxiv. 3, 4, They bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words; that they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.' Perfection meets with envy, and envy will vent itself by detraction--a usual affliction for the people of God, and therefore we cannot say they are wicked because they are traduced, and we should not presently condemn all those of whom we hear evil. It was the fashion of the primitive times to clothe Christians with bear-skins, and bait them with the dogs. God's best children may be clad in an ill livery; and therefore we should not easily take up these slanders. Thus it is a usual affliction.

Secondly, It is a grievous affliction. Ver. 39, David saith he looked upon it as a great evil. In the account of scripture it is persecution. Ishmael is said to persecute Isaac: Gal. iv. 29. How? Because he mocked him. Compare it with Gen. xxi. 9: Sarah saw the son of the bondwoman mocking Isaac;' and in the reddition and interpretation, the Holy Ghost calls it a persecution. So they are called cruel mockings,' Heb. xi. 36. There is as much cruelty, and as deep a wound made by the tongue of reproach many times as by the fist of wickedness. Reproach must needs

be grievous to God's children, upon a natural and upon a spiritual account.

1. Upon a natural account, because a good name is a great blessing. See how it is against nature. It is more grievous than ordinary crosses. Many would lose their goods cheerfully, yet they grieve more for the loss of their name. Some constitutions are affected more with shame than with fear, and above all their possessions they prize their name and credit. To most proud spirits, disgraceful punishment is much more dreadful than painful: Ps. xxii. 7, All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head.' A good name is more precious than life to some: Eccles. vii. 1, A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.' The coupling of these two sentences shows men had rather die than lose their name. If a man die, he may leave his name and memory behind him that may live still; therefore it is more hateful to have our names and credit mangled than be pierced with a sharp sword.

2. Upon a spiritual account it is a grievous affliction. It is not barely for their own sake, because their innocency is taxed; but for God's sake, whose glory is concerned in the honour of his servants, and whose truth is struck at through their sides. This is grievous to grace. Why? Next to a good conscience there is no greater blessing than a good name; and certainly he that is prodigal of his credit will not be very tender of his conscience; and therefore the children of God, upon gracious reasons, stand upon their name, it is the next thing to conscience they have to keep. Grace values a good name, partly because it is God's gift; it is a blessing adopted and taken into the covenant, as well as other blessings. It is one of the promises of God: He will hide us as in a pavilion from the strife of tongues,' Ps. xxxi. 20. This is frequent in the Old Testament, where heaven is but sparingly

mentioned; a good name is often mentioned. Partly because it is a shadow of eternity. When a man dies, his name lives, which is a pledge of our living with God after death; as spices, when broken and dissolved, leave an excellent scent, so he leaves his name behind him. And partly because it is put above riches: Prov. xxii. 1, A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.' It is better, more pure and sublime than wealth, and more worthy our esteem. They are low and dreggy spirits whose hearts run after wealth; the greatest spirits run out upon fame and honour: so Eccles. vii. 1, A good name is better than precious ointment.' Aromatical ointments were things of great use and esteem among the Jews, and counted the chief part of their treasures; now a good name is better than precious ointment. And partly because of the great inconveniences which follow the loss of name. The glory of God is much interested in the credit of his servants. The credit of religion depends much upon the credit of the persons that profess it. When godly men are evil spoken of, the way of truth suffers; and when we are polluted, God is polluted: Ezek. xxxvi. 20, They profaned my holy name when they said to them, These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his land;' that is, by their scandals. The offences are charged upon us, but in effect they prove the disgrace of Christ. Christ, that will hereafter be admired of his saints, will now be glorified and honoured in them. The shame of those things charged upon us redounds to God and religion till we be clear. And as the honour of God is concerned in it, so again their safety lies in it. Observe it, Satan is first a liar, then a murderer. First, men are smitten with the tongue of slander, and afterwards with the fist of wickedness: the showers of slander are but presages and beginnings of grievous storms of persecution; wicked men take more liberty when the children of God are imprisoned as criminals; therefore it is the usual

practice of Satan first to blast the repute of religious persons, then to prosecute them as offenders. Possibly this may be the meaning of that, Ps. v. 9, Their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue;' that is, the slanders of the wicked are a preparation to death, as an open sepulchre is prepared to swallow and take in the dead carcase. I expound it thus, because we find the phrase used in this sense. The force and power of the Babylonian, Jer. v. 16, is called an open sepulchre;' they are all mighty men; that is, you can expect nothing but death from the force and puissance of their assaults. So here their reproach is not only a burying-place for our names, but our persons; for first men slander, then molest the children of God. When the Arian emperor raged against the orthodox Christians, and the bishops and pastors of the churches were suppressed everywhere, they durst not meddle with Polonus, out of a reverence of the unspottedness of his fame; and therefore a good report is a great security and protection against violence. And then they desire a good name to honour God with it. A blemished instrument is little worth. Who would take meat from a leprous hand? It is Satan's policy, when he cannot discourage instruments from the work of God, then to blemish and blast them. Therefore, those that have anything to do for God in the world should be tender of their credit, especially those that are called to public office, that they may carry on their work with more success. Therefore one of the qualifications of a minister is, He must have a good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil,' 1 Tim. iii. 7. I suppose it is taken there appellatively, lest he fall into the snare of the slanderer; I will not absolutely determine. Men set snares for you, and they watch for your halting. Thus grace presseth a good name, because of the consequences of it.

Use 1. Here is advice to persons reproached. Acknowledge God in the affliction, though it be great and grievous. God hath an aim in all things that befall you. The general aim of all afflictions is to try, purge, and make white: Dan. xi. 35; or as it is in Deut. viii. 13, To humble thee, prove thee, and do thee good at the latter end.' Your enemies may intend harm, but God means good; you should receive good by this, as by every affliction. Plutarch, in his excellent discourse, How a man should profit by his enemies, brings in a comparison of one Jason, that had an impostume, which was let out by the wounds an enemy gave him; so many times our impostumes, and the corrupt matter that is within us, is let out by the gashes and wounds which those that meant harm to us give to our name and credit.

First, God doth it to humble thee. Carnal men shoot at rovers, but many times we find the soul is pricked in the quick; when they shoot their arrows of detraction and slanders, it may revive guilt, and put us upon serious humiliation before God. There are many sins to which this affliction is very proper.

1. It seems to be a proper cure for the sin of pride; be it pride in the mind, which is self-conceit; or pride in the affections, which is called vainglory; all sorts of pride; there is no such effectual remedy as this. Possibly we have been too self-conceited, then God giveth us to such scandals that may show us what we are. Many times our very graces do us hurt, as well as our sins; and we may be puffed up with what we have received. So for vainglory, when we are apt too much to please ourselves in the opinions others have of us, which is an evil the people of God are liable to, this pride God will cure by reproach. Pride is one of the oldest enemies ever God had; it was born in heaven in the breast of the fallen angels, for which they are laid low; and when his children harbour it, God hath a quarrel against it. When Paul

was puffed up, when the bladder was swollen, God sent him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure, 2 Cor. xii. 7. Possibly it was some eminent affliction; but when he expresseth it afterwards, he mentioneth reproaches, ver. 10, Therefore I will rejoice in infirmities,' that is, sickness; nay, I will rejoice in reproaches.'

2. For carnal walking. When we are negligent, and do not take notice of the fleshliness and folly we are guilty of and allow in our hearts, that breaks out into our actions. God suffers others to reproach us and gather up our failings, that we may see what cause we have to take our ways to heart. Every man that would live strictly had need of faithful friends or watchful enemies; of faithful friends to admonish him, or watchful enemies to censure him. God makes use of watchful enemies to show us the spots in our garments that are to be washed off. Many times a friend is blinded with love, and grows as partial to us as ourselves; therefore God sets spies for us to watch for our halting: Jer. xx. 10, I heard the defaming of many: report, say they, and we will report it: all my familiars watched for my halting.' They lie in wait to take us tripping; and God sees it needful that we should have enemies as well as friends; how ignorant else should a man be of himself! Therefore God useth them as a rod to brush the dust from our clothes.

3. The sin God would humble us for is censuring. If we have not been so tender of the credit of others, God will make us taste the bitterness of affliction ourselves, and recompense the like measure into our bosoms: Mat. vii. 1, 2, Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' We shall find others to judge as hardly of us as we do of them. Good thoughts and speeches of others are the best preservative of our own name; and therefore, when reproach

falls upon you, it is not enough you should not slight it, though you know the report to be false; but a Christian is to examine himself: have we not drawn it upon ourselves by slandering others, or talking intemperately of others? and doth not God pay us home in our own coin? He that is much given to censuring seldom or never escapes severe censuring from others. It is said, Let his own words grieve him.' Your own words will fall upon you; therefore humble thyself before God for the reproaches thou hast cast upon others. Thus the Lord ordereth it with good advice to humble us, and that for pride, careless walking, and for censuring others.

Secondly, It is to try thee.

1. To try your faith in the great day of accounts. Can you comfort yourselves in the solemn vindication of the day of judgment, and in God's approbation then? 2 Cor. x. 18, He is approved whom the Lord commendeth.' Men cannot defend thee if God condemn thee, they cannot condemn thee if God acquit thee; and therefore canst thou stand to God's judgment? In a race it is not what the standers-by say, but what he that is the judge of the games will determine. We are all in a race, and it is not what men say of us, but what God saith, who is judge of all: 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4, It is a small thing that I should be judged of man's judgment; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.' In the original it is man's day,' and so in the margin. We shall never be resolute for God, until we come to this, to count it a very small thing to be judged of man's judgment. Now is man's day, but God hath his day hereafter. So to try our faith in particular promises: Ps. cxix. 42, So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me; for I trust in thy word.' A Christian, when he gives up himself to God, he gives up everything he hath to God; not only gives his soul to God to keep, but that God may take charge of his person, estate, and good name. Now God requires a

trust according to the extent of the covenant, a waiting and confidence in his power. He can turn the hearts of men, and give them favour in their eyes: Ps. xxxvii. 6, He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.'

2. As to try our faith, so our patience. We should prevent reproach as much as we can; but then we must bear it when we cannot avoid it. They reproach, but I pray, Ps. cix. 4; that was David's exercise and revenge; he took that advantage, to pray for them. God will try how we can bear the injuries of men. The grace of patience must be tried as well as other graces. We read that Shimei went railing upon David to the peril of his life; saith David, It may be God hath bid him curse.' A mad dog that bites another makes him as mad as himself; so usually the injuries and reproaches of others foster up our revenge, and then there is no difference between us and them: they sin, and we sin. Revenge and injury differ only in order; injury is first, and revenge is next. Saith Lactantius, If it be evil in another, for thee to imitate him, to be as mad as they, break out in passion and virulency, it is more evil in thyself, because thou sinnest twice, against a rule and against an example; therefore God tries whether we will be passionate or patient. The patience of his servants is mightily discovered by reproaches: 1 Cor. iv. 12, Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.' There must be a season to try every grace; and therefore now God trieth us, whether we can with a meek humble submission yield up ourselves; or whether we are exasperated and drawn into bitterness of passion, yea or nay.

3. God tries our uprightness. Many are turned out of the way by reproaches; the devil works much upon stomach and spleen. Tertullian being reproached by the priests of Rome, in revenge turns Montanist. Now God tries us to see whether we will hold on our course. The moon

shines and holds on its course though the dogs bark; so a child of God should hold on his way though men talk their fill. In the text, though proud men reproached and contemned David, yet all this did not unsettle him. Some men can be religious no longer than when they are counted to be religious; but when their secular interest is in danger, they fall off. Thus when men injure them, they do as it were take a revenge upon God himself. Those carnal men that fall off from God are like pettish servants that run away from their master when he strikes them; a good servant will take a buffet patiently, and go about his master's work; and if we were seasoned as we should be for God, we would pass through evil report and good report,' 2 Cor. vi. 8, and still keep our integrity.

Thirdly, God ordereth this grievous and sharp affliction to do you good or to better you. Reproach is like soap, which seems to defile clothes, but it cleanseth them. There is nothing so bad but we may make some good use of it, a Christian may gain some advantage by it. Dung seems to stain the grass, but it makes the ground fruitful, and to rise up at spring with a fresh verdure. Reproaches are a necessary help to a godly conversation, to make us walk with more care; and therefore there is another piece of holy revenge we should take upon them, to make us walk more strictly and more watchfully, the more they slander us and speak of us as evil-doers; the way is not to contend for esteem, so much as to stop their mouths by a good apology. Passionate returns will but increase sin, but a holy conversation will silence them.

Use 2. To them that either devise or receive reproaches; both are very sinful.

First, To you that devise them, that speak reproachfully of others. Consider--

1. You hazard the repute of your own sincerity: James i. 26, Whosoever

seemeth religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.' Hypocrites, and men that put themselves into a garb of religion, and are all for censuring, take a mighty freedom this way; these men bewray the rottenness of their hearts. Those that are so much abroad are seldom at home; they do not inquire and look into their own hearts. Alas! in our own sight we should be the worst of men. The children of God do ever thus speak of themselves as the least of saints,' the greatest of sinners,' more brutish than any men,' of sinners whereof I am chief.' Why? Because we can know others only by guess and imagination, but they can speak of themselves out of inward feeling; therefore we should have a deeper sense of our own condition. But now a man that is much in judging and reproving others is seldom within; for if he did but consider himself, if he had but an account of his own failings, he would not be so apt to blemish others. It is a cheap zeal to let fly at the miscarriages and sins of others, and to allow our own. Consider, thou hast enough to observe already in thyself.

2. You rob them of the most precious treasure. He that robs thee of thy name is the worst kind of thief: Prov. xxii. 1, A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.' A man that is taken pilfering another man's goods, he is ashamed when he is found; so should a censurer: you rob him of a more excellent treasure.

3. You offend God, and draw public hatred. It is the devil's work to be the accuser of the brethren,' Rev. xii. 10. The devil doth not commit adultery, doth not break the Sabbath, nor dishonour parents; these are not laws given to him. If the devil will bear false witness, he is an accuser of the brethren; it is the devil's proper sin, and therefore slanderer and devil have one name, Diabolus.

Object. But must we in no case speak evil of another? or may we not

speak of another's sin in no case?

Sol. 1. It is a very hard matter to speak any evil of another without sin; for if it be without cause, then it is downright slander, and is against truth; if it be for a light and small cause, then it is against charity; if it be for things indifferent, or for lesser failings, indiscretions, or weaknesses, still it is against charity: James iv. 11, Speak not evil one of another, brethren.' It is worse in brethren. Many take liberty to traduce God's choice servants that are in difference. For a soldier to speak evil of soldiers, or a scholar of scholars, is worse than for. those that hate these functions. So for you, Christians, to speak evil one of another, you gratify the triumphs of hell, and bring a reproach upon the ways of Christ. In things doubtful, judge the best; in things hidden and secret we can take no cognisance: when the fact is open, we do not know the aim nor the intent of the heart. It is the devil's work to judge thus: Doth Job serve God for nought?' when he could not traduce his action. If the practice be open and public, we do not know what alleviating circumstances it may bear, what grievous temptations they had, or whether they have repented, yea or nay. The devil is called a slanderer, because he doth accuse the saints. It is too true many times what he accuseth them of. Ay! but he accuseth them when they are pardoned; he rakes up the filth God hath covered; he accuseth the brethren after repentance, after they are acquitted by the Lord's grace; and so you may incur the like: and therefore it is a very hard matter to avoid sin; in one way or other we shall dash upon the command; better let it alone.

2. Speak not of him, but to him; and so change a sin into a duty. I say, when you turn admonition into censure, you exchange a duty for a sin. Admonish one another,' is a thing spoken of in scripture; but

speak not evil one of another.'

3. If you speak of the failings of others, it should be with tenderness and grief; as when they are incorrigible and likely to infect others, or when it is for the manifest glory of God: Phil. iii. 19, There are some of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping,' &c. He speaks of some seducers that, under the form of godliness, did under mine the purport of the Christian religion, merely took up the profession of it for their own ends. It should be done with a mighty deal of caution; not out of idleness for want of talk that is babble; not out of hatred and revenge--that is malice: though the matter is true, yet we must not speak of men's faults to please others--that is flattery.

Secondly, To them that receive the slander. He is a slanderer that wrongs his neighbours' credit by upholding an ill report against them. It is hard to say which is worse, railing or receiving. Ps. xv. 3, when an inhabitant of Sion is described, it is said, He that receiveth not a report, and takes it not up against his neighbour;' so Prov. xvii. 4, A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips, and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.' It is not only a point of wickedness to have a naughty tongue or false lips, but to give heed. He is a liar that receiveth a lie, and loves it when brought to him. God will plague all those that love lies. As in treason, all that are acquainted with the plot are responsible; so you are responsible for your ears, as they for their tongue. It is good to have a spiritual tongue, that will heal the wounds that others make in men's reputation: Prov. xii. 18, There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword; but the tongue of the wise is health.' Some carry a sword in their mouths, others balsam to heal the wounds that are made.

Use 3. If this be so usual and grievous an affliction, and that even to

the children of God, and that not only upon the account of nature, but of grace, then it puts us upon seeking comfort against reproaches.

1. The witness of a good conscience within. If you be innocent, it is not against thee they speak, but against another, whom the slanderer takes thee to be. The hair will grow again though it be shaven, as long as the roots remain. A good conscience is the root of a good credit; and though the razor of censure hath brought on baldness, yet it will grow again. God will either turn their hearts or support thee under it.

2. Reproaches cannot make thee vile in God's sight. The world's filth many times are God's jewels. Many that were praised in the world are now in hell, and many that were disgraced in the world are in great favour and esteem with God; many times their contempt doth increase their esteem with God, and therefore they cannot hurt thee. They may persecute thee; but if thou be patient, they cannot impose upon thee, and burden thy cause in his eyes.' God doth not ask the world's vote and suffrage whether such and such shall be justified or received into glory, yea or nay. If they be infirmities and defects, humble thyself, and God will cover them, Ps. xxxii. 1. God is wont to scatter reproaches cast upon his children, as the sun scatters the clouds, Ps. xxxvii., and heaven will make amends for all.

3. The profit thou gainest by them, the watchfulness, the diligence, all this will be sweet. I might have given comfort against reproaches for religion. These are honourable, they are the reproaches of Christ, Heb. xi. 26; Heb. xiii. 13. It is as honourable before God as ignominious before men. And we cannot expect better fare than our master: The disciple is not above his lord, nor the servant above his master: it is enough for the disciple to be as his lord, and the servant as his master,' Mat. x. 24, 25. We cannot expect to fare bet ter than Christ did, and it is an honour to suffer as he did.

Again, if cripples mock us for going upright, let us pity them. The judgment of wicked men is depraved, not to be stood upon; and this contempt one day will be cast upon themselves: Ps. xlix. 14, The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.'

SERMON XXIV.

Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.--Ver. 23.

THIS psalm expresseth David's affection to the word, as the result of all that experience which he had of the comfort and use of it. In the present verse two things:--

1. David's trouble.

2. His remedy.

1. His trouble, princes did sit and speak against me.

2. The remedy that he used, but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

First, The evil wherewith he was exercised. There are several circumstances produced by way of aggravation of his trouble:--

1. Who? Princes also;' his trial came not only from the contempt and reproach of base people, spoken of in the former verse, but from princes also, by whom are meant Saul's courtiers and counsellors.

2. How? Did sit;' not only when occasionally met together in private in their chambers or at their tables, but when they sat in council, or when they sat together on the seat of judgment, they consulted to ruin him; or upon the throne (where nothing but just and holy should be expected) passed a judicial sentence against him.

3. What? Did speak against me;' it was not reproach only that troubled him, but the powers of the world gave false sentence against him. To be spoken of as an evil-doer is a less temptation than to be condemned as a malefactor.

Secondly, His remedy; where observe--

1. The title he gives himself, but thy servant.' He speaketh modestly

of himself, in the third person; and fitly doth he say, thy servant.'

We owe duty to a higher master, when they decree anything contrary to God's word.

2. His practice and exercise, Did meditate on thy statutes.' This is spoken for two reasons:--

[1.] That he was not discouraged by their opposition, but held to his duty; he was maligned for God's word's sake, and yet kept up his respect to the word of God, and never left meditating therein.

[2J To show the way of his relief and cure under this trouble, by exercising himself in the word, which in the next verse he showeth. yielded him a double benefit--comfort and counsel.

(1.) It was of use to comfort him and strengthen faith.

(2.) To direct him that he might keep within the bounds of true obedience; there being in the word of God both sweet promises and a sure rule.

Observe from the evil wherewith he was exercised:--

Doct. It is many times the lot of God's people that princes do sit and speak against them in councils and upon the throne of judgment.

1. For consulting against them to their ruin. We have instances of a council gathered against Christ: John xi. 47, Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doth many miracles.' They meet together, and plot the ruin of Christ and his kingdom; and they were those that were of chief authority in the place. Another instance: Acts iv. 27, 28, For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.' There is their agreement to put Christ to death. In the Old Testament, Pharaoh and his nobles: Exod. i. 10, Come on,

katasophizo'metha, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.' And against Daniel the princes of the Persian empire consult how to entrap him in the matter of his God, Dan. vi. 4-6, &c.

2. For abusing the throne of judgment and civil courts of judicature, to the molestation of the saints. I shall cite but two places: Ps. xciv. 20, Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?' It is no strange, but yet no small temptation, that the oppression of God's people is marked with a pretence and colour of law and public authority, and the mischief should proceed from thence where it should be remedied, namely, from the seat of justice. So, Mat. x. 17, 18, Christ foretelleth they shall have enemies armed with power and public authority: Beware of men, for they will deliver you to the councils, and they shall scourge you in their synagogues, and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake.' Not only subordinate, but supreme governors may be drawn to condemn and oppress the godly. In so plain a case more instances need not.

Reasons of it, on God's part, and on the part of the persecutors.

First, On God's part, he permitteth it--

1. To show that he can carry on his work though authority be against him, and that his people do not subsist by outward force, but the goodness of his providence, and so hath the sole glory of their preservation. When the Christian religion came first abroad in the world, not many noble nor many mighty were called;' the powers of the world were against it, and yet it held up the head, and was dispersed far and near. Falsehoods need some outward interest to back them, and the supports of a secular arm; but God's interest doth many times stand

alone, though God doth now and then make kings nursing-fathers, and queens nursing-mothers,' according to his promise, Isa. xlix. 23. Oftentimes the church is destitute of all worldly props: Micah v. 7, And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.' Yea, the power of the world is against it, and yet it subsists. Thus it was in the primitive times; there were only a handful of contemptible people that professed the gospel; yet it got ground daily, not by force of arms or the power of the long sword, but by God's secret blessing. Ambrose giveth the reason why God suffered it to be so, Ne videretur auctoritate traxisse aliquos, et veritatis ratio non pompae gratiâ praevaleret--lest this new religion should seem to be planted with power rather than by its own evidence, and the authority of men should sway more with the world than the truth of God. There is a wonderful increase without any human concurrence, as the Lord saith, The remnant of his people shall be as a dew from the Lord, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men,' without man's consent or concurrence. So that God alone hath the glory of their preservation.

2. That the patience of his people may be put to the utmost probation. When they are exercised with all kinds of trials, not only the hatred of the vulgar, but the opposition of the magistrate, carried on under a form of legal procedure. In the primitive times, sometimes the Christians were exposed to the hatred and fury of the people, lapidibus nos invadit inimicum vulgus; at other times exposed to the injuries of laws, and persecutions carried on by authority against them. There was an uproar at Ephesus against the Christians, Acts xix., and there seemed to be a formal process at Jerusalem, Acts iv. This latter temptation seemeth to be the more sore and grievous, because God's

ordinance, which is magistracy, is wrested to give countenance to malicious designs, and because it cuts off all means of human help, and so patience hath e'rgon te'leion., its perfect work,' James i. 4. There is some glory in suffering the rage and evil word of the vulgar, for they are supposed not to make the wisest choice; but when men of wisdom and power, and such as are clothed with the majesty of God's ordinance, are set against us, then is patience put to the utmost proof, and whether we regard God or man most, and who is the object of our fear, those that have power of life and death temporal, or him that hath power of life and death eternal.

3. That his people may be weaned from fleshly dependencies, and doting upon civil powers, and so be driven to depend upon him alone. Ps. xciv. 20-22, Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which establish mischief by a law? They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. But the Lord is my defence, and my God is the rock of my refuge.' There would not be such use of faith and dependence upon God if our danger were not great. It is harder to trust in God with means than without means. We are beaten out when outward helps fail, otherwise we are apt to neglect God, and then a world of mischief ensueth. When the emperor of the Romans began to favour the Christians, poison was said to be poured into the church; and in the sunshine of worldly countenance, like green timber, they began to warp and cleave asunder; and what religion got in breadth it lost in strength and vigour. God's people never live up to the beauty and majesty of their principles so much as when they are forced immediately to live upon God, and depend upon him for their safety.

4. That their testimony and witness-bearing to God's truths may be the more public and authentic in the view of the world. This testimony is

either to them for their conviction and conversion: Mat. xxiv. 14, And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations;' or against them: Mat. x. 18, And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.' It is for a testimony, and that should comfort them in all their sufferings: Mark xiv. 9, Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.' The testimony is more valid as being confirmed by their courage in troubles; they are principles that they will suffer for; which, as it is a warning to the professors of religion that they should own no principles in a time of peace but what they would confirm by their avowed testimony in the extremity of trials; so also it should convince their enemies in case they be put upon this exercise. It is needful that every truth should have a sealed testimony; that is, we should not only vent opinions, but be willing to suffer for them if God should call us out so to do. God hath been ever tender of imposing upon the world without sufficient evidence, and therefore would not have his people stand upon their lives and temporal concernments, that thereby they may give greater satisfaction to the world concerning the weight of those truths which they do profess.

Secondly, On the persecutors' part, or the persons molesting; so the causes are--

1. Their ignorance and blind zeal: John xvi. 2, They shall put you out of their synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that they do God good service.' They think it to be an acceptable service to God to molest and trouble those that are indeed his people. Those princes that sat and spake against David were not pagans and men of another religion, but of Israel; and it is often the

lot of God's people to be persecuted, not only by pagans and openly profane men, but even by men that profess the true religion--pseudo-Christians, Rev. xiv. 13, those that pretend they are for God and his cause, and seem to be carried on with a great zeal, and do not oppose truth as truth, but their quarrel is coloured by specious pretences.

2. Their prejudices lightly taken up against the people of God. Satan is first a liar, and then a murderer: John viii. 44, Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him: when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it.' By lies he bringeth about his bloody design. Christ was first called a Samaritan, and one that had a devil; and then they did persecute him as such a one. And, as was observed before, as Christians of old were covered with the skins of wild beasts, that dogs and lions might tear them the more speedily, so by odious imputations God's people are brought into distaste with the world, and then molested and troubled, represented as a company of hypocrites and unjust dealers; and under that cloak, true religion is undermined. Now, in the persecutor, this is faulty, because they lightly take up every false suggestion; and so Christians are condemned dia` te`n phe'men, as Justin Martyr complained, because of the common reproach, without any distinct inquiry into their way and practice, nolunt audire quod auditum damnare non possunt.

3. Their erroneous principle in civil policy, that Christ's kingdom and the freedom of his worshippers is not consistent with civil interests. Whatever hath been the matter, worldly rulers have been jealous of Christ's interest and kingdom, as if it could not consist with public safety, and the civil interests of that state and nation where it is

admitted; and suggestions of this kind do easily prevail with them: Esther iii. 8, It is not for the king's profit to suffer them;' and John xi. 48, If we let him alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.' Reason of state is an ancient plea against the interest of religion. In the Roman empire, though the Christians were inconsiderable as to any public charge, yet they had a jealous eye upon them. Justin Martyr showeth the reason of it, o'ti basilei'an onoma'zomen, because they were often speaking of a kingdom; though they meant it of the kingdom of heaven, and were far enough from all rebellion.

Use 1. It informeth us that we should not measure the verity of religion by the greatness of those that are with it or against it. This was one of the Pharisees' arguments, Do any of the rulers believe in him? But this people, that know not the law, are accursed.' John vii. 48, 49. Alas! men of authority and great place may be often against God's interest: James ii. 1, Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, in respect of persons.' Mark that title that is given to Christ, the Lord of glory;' he is able to put glory enough upon his worshippers, though they have nothing of outward pomp and splendour; and not many mighty are called,' 1 Cor. i. 26. Many will say they have none of quality to join with them, none but ignorant people. If a man had judged so in the first times, when the gospel came first abroad in the world, would not Christianity itself have seemed a very contemptible thing? Therefore a simple, plain-hearted love to Christ and his truth, whether powers be averse or friendly, is that which is required of us.

2. It reproveth those who are soon discouraged with the reproach base people cast upon the ways of God. David stood both in the one temptation and in the other, the reproach and contempt of the vulgar,

and also when princes sat and spake against him. But to these we may say, as Jer. xii. 5, If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how wilt thou contend with horses?' If we be such tender milksops that we cannot suffer a disgraceful word from the basest of the people, what shall we do when we meet with other manner of conflicts and oppositions in the farther progress of our duty to God? If we are tired out with-the disgrace and affronts of these mean ones, and cannot put up with a scornful word at their hands without disorder, what shall we do when we are to contest for God's interest with those great and masterly ones that are armed with power and authority, and it may be the advantage of laws against us? Scommata nostra ferre non potes, said the Antiochians to Julian in another case, quomodo feres Persarum tela? God's servants do often receive discouragement from the people and from authority, but the goodness of their cause and the favour of God makes them joyfully persevere.

3. It teacheth us what to do when this is not our case. I have treated as this scripture hath led me of the oppositions of princes and worldly powers against the people of God; it may be you may judge it unseasonable; but how soon it may be seasonable you cannot tell, considering the spirit of enmity against the power of godliness. Blessed be God that it is not so seasonable now. But what use shall we now make of it?

[1.] To bless God when he giveth religious rulers, and such as are well affected to religion. It is a fulfilling of his promise: Isa. xlix. 23, And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and queens thy nursing-mothers.' God's interest in the world is usually weak, and his people, like little children, had need to be nursed up by the countenance and defence of worldly potentates. Now, when they discharge their duty, and do afford patronage and protection, it should be

acknowledged to God's glory, in whose hands their hearts are; and the rather by us, because of the iron yoke that was upon us, and those hard task masters under which we formerly groaned. We have our own discontents, as well as former ages; but because all things are not as we could wish them, shall we be thankful for none? The liberty of religion is such a blessing as we cannot enough acknowledge, and doth sufficiently countervail other inconveniences. Oh! therefore let us not sour our spirits into an unthankful frame, by dwelling too much upon our discontents and private dissatisfactions; it is a mercy that the sword of authority is not drawn against religion. When God meaneth good or evil to a nation, he usually dispenseth it by their magistrates. If good, then he puts wisdom and grace into the hearts of those that govern, or government into the hands of those that are wise and gracious. When he meaneth evil, he sendeth them evil magistrates: Isa. xix. 4, The Egyptians will I give over into the hands of a cruel lord, and a fierce king shall rule over them.' But when good governors, it is a mercy, and a presage of good.

[2.] To pity those whose case it is that princes sit and speak against them, as it is of many of the people of God now in the world. When we suffer not by immediate and direct passion, we should suffer by way of fellow-feeling and compassion. It is charged as a great crime that those that were at ease in Sion were not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph,' Amos vi. 6, compared with the 1st verse. It may be used proverbially; as the butler forgat Joseph when he was well at court; and his brethren did eat bread and little regarded the afflictions of his soul when cast into the pit. But I suppose them literally, because the half tribe of Manasseh was carried captive by Tiglath Pileser, that they did not sympathise with them, propter confractionem Joseph--for the breach made upon Joseph. God layeth affliction upon some of his

people, to try the sympathy of others; as on Protestants in Poland, the emperor's dominions, Savoy, some parts of France, and elsewhere.

[3.] To be the more strict and holy, and improve this good day of the church's peace. They that are not holy in a time of peace will not be holy and constant in a time of trouble: Acts ix. 31, When the churches had rest, they walked in the fear of God, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost.' When we are not called to passive obedience and suffering, our active obedience should be the more cheerfully performed. Now where is it so? Our fathers suffered more willingly for Christ than we speak of him. Our inward peace and comfort will cost us more in getting, and therefore we should be more in service. Oh! let us not abuse this rest we have, to the neglect of God, or to vain contentions, as green timber warpeth and breaketh in the sun shine. The contentions of the pastors, saith Eusebius, did usher in the truth, [9] which was Diocletian's persecution.

[4.] Here is caution, and a word of counsel to the princes of the nations, or the heads of the people, that now are met together and sit in council. Oh! do not sit and speak against such as are God's people; that is, do not decree anything against them. Some would have the magistrate to do nothing in religion; but that would leave things at a strange loose and disorder. Certainly you should at least provide for the liberties of God's people, that they should lead a quiet life in godliness and honesty,' 1 Tim. ii. 2; that they may be secured, and the peace kept, not only as to their civil interests, but whilst they worship God according to their conscience, which can never be as long as those swarms of libertines are publicly tolerated, which every day increase in number, power, and malice. And again, the great security of magistrates lieth in an oath of fealty, which only receiveth value from religion; therefore the magistrate is concerned in what religion is

professed in a nation, as well as in things civil. But now, whilst you interpose in religion, be sure you do not contradict or undermine God's interest; and be not courted by any prepossessions of your own, or the crafty insinuations of others, to oppress by your sentence and suffrage those that fear God in the land, and do make conscience of their ways. The magistrate's interposing in religion is to me an un questionable duty, and yet to be managed with great caution: Ps. ii. 10, Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings, and be instructed, ye judges of the earth.' What by natural prejudices against the strict and more severe ways of godliness, what by private whispers and subtle disguises, men may be tempted to oppose Christ's kingdom, cause, and people; therefore they should be wary, as they would be faithful in their places, and love their own souls, to go upon sure clear grounds. You are to promote Christ's service, otherwise you will be answer able for your neglect; and yet you are to take heed, lest, whilst you think you do God service, you subvert not his interest, and so you be answerable for your mistake. To deal more particularly would be a diversion. I only intend it as a warning, and to show you the necessity of consulting with those who are best able to judge in the case where your duty lieth.

Secondly, David's remedy: But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.'

Doct. The best way to ease the heart from trouble that doth arise from the opposition of men of power and place, is by serious consulting with God's word.

Because the time will not bear a large prosecution, I shall open the force of this clause in three propositions.

1. A holy divertisement is the best way to ease the trouble of our thoughts. Certainly it is not good altogether to pore upon our sorrows;

a diversion is a prudent course. David did not merely sit down and bemoan the calamity of his condition, and so sink under the burden, but runneth to the word. As husbandmen, when their ground is overflowed by waters, make ditches and water-furrows to carry it away; so when our minds and thoughts are overwhelmed with trouble, it is good to divert them to some other matter. But every diversion will not become saints; it must be a holy diversion: Ps. xciv. 19, In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.' The case was the same with that of the text, when the throne of iniquity frameth mischief by a law; as you shall see here, when he had many perplexed thoughts about the abuse of power against himself. But now where lay his ease in diversion? Would every diversion suit his purpose? No; Thy comforts,' of God's allowance, of God's providing, comforts proper to saints. Wicked men in trouble run to their pot and pipe, and games and sports, and merry company, and so defeat the providence rather than improve it; but David, who was God's servant, must have God's comforts. So else where, when his thoughts were troubled about the power of the wicked, I went into the sanctuary, there I understood their end:' Ps. lxxiii. 17. He goeth to divert his mind by the use of God's ordinances, and so came to be settled against the temptation.

2. Among all sorts of holy divertisements none is of such use as God's word. There is matter enough to take up our thoughts and allay our cares and fears, and to swallow up our sorrows and griefs, to direct us in all straits. In brief, there is comfort there and counsel there.

[1.] Comfort, whilst the word teacheth us to look off from men to God, from providence to the covenant, from things temporal to things eternal, from men to God, as Moses feared not the wrath of the king when he saw him that is invisible,' Heb. xi. 27; and Eccles. v. 8, If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perversion of

judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter; for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they.' There is a higher judge that sitteth in heaven; and if he pass sentence for us when they pass sentence against us, we need to be the less troubled. If he give us the pardon of sins and the testimony of a good conscience, it is no matter what men say against us: Ps. xl. 4, Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.' Is not God able to bear you out in his work? From providence to the covenant: providence is a very riddle; we shall not know what to make of it till we gather principles of faith from the covenant: Heb. xiii. 5, He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' God overrules all for good: Rom. viii. 28, We know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to those that are the called according to his purpose.' From things temporal to eternal: 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18, For our light affliction, that is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal;' Rom. viii. 18, For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.' A feather or a straw against a talent, a man would be ashamed to compare them together.

[2.] For counsel. A Christian should not be troubled so much about what he should suffer, as what he should do, that he may do nothing unseemly to his calling and hopes, but be kept blameless to the heavenly kingdom. Now, the word of God will teach him how to carry himself in dangers, to pray for persecutors (fire is not quenched with fire, nor evil overcome with evil); how to keep ourselves from unlawful shifts

and means, how to avoid revenge, lying, flattering, yielding against conscience, or waxing weary of well-doing, that we may not fight against Satan or his instruments by their own weapons, for so we shall be easily overcome. The wicked shall not be so wise to contrive the mischief, as a saint instructed by the word is how to carry himself under it: Ps. cxix. 98, Through thy commandments thou hast made me wiser than my enemies.' Malice and policy shall not teach them to persecute, as God's word to carry yourselves in the trouble.

3. The word must not be slightly read, but our hearts must be exercised in the meditation of it. A cursory reading doth not work upon us so much as serious thoughts. In all studies, meditation is both the mother and nurse of knowledge, and so it is of godliness, without which we do but know truths by rote and hearsay, and talk one after another like parrots; but when a truth is chased into the heart by deep inculcative thoughts, then it worketh with us, and we feel the power of it. Musing maketh the fire burn, ponderous thoughts are the bellows that blow it up. Eggs come to be quickened by sitting abrood upon them. In a sanctified heart the seeds of comfort by meditation come to maturity; by constant meditation our affections are quickened, this turneth the promises into marrow: Ps. lxiii. 5, 6, My soul shall be filled as with marrow and fatness, when I meditate on thee in the night watches.' It giveth more than a vanishing taste, which hypocrites have.

Use 1. In all your troubles learn this method, to cure them by gracious means, prayer or meditation. By meditation on the word of God, that will tell you that we are born to trouble, and therefore we should no more think it strange to see God's children molested here than to see a shower of rain fall after a sunshine, or that the night should succeed the day: 1 Peter iv. 12, Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, as though some strange thing happened unto you.' It were

strange if otherwise; as if a man were told that his journey lay through a rough stony country, and should pass over a smooth carpet-way. Our waymark is many tribulations: Acts xiv. 22, Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of heaven.' God had one Son without sin, none without the cross.

2. That afflictions, though in themselves they are legal punishments, fruits of sin, yet by the grace of God they are medicinal to his people: 1 Cor. xi. 32, When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.'

3. We never advance more in Christianity than under the cross: Heb. xii. 10, They verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness;' Ps. cxix. 71, It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.'

4. Rather undergo the greatest calamities than commit the smallest sin: Heb. xi. 25, Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.'

5. That all crosses are nothing to desertions of God and terrors of conscience: Prov. xviii. 14, The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities; but a wounded spirit who can bear?'

6. That a meek suffering conduceth much to God's glory: 1 Peter iv. 14, If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified;' whilst you do nothing unworthy of his presence in you and the truth you profess.

SERMON XXV.

Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.--Ver. 24.

DAVID in the former verse had mentioned the greatness of his trial, that not only the basest sort, but princes also were set against him. Then he mentions his remedy; he had recourse to God's word, But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.'

Now he shows the double benefit which he had by the word of God, not only wisdom how to carry himself during that trouble, but also comfort; comfort in trouble, and counsel in duty; it seasoned his affliction and guided his business and affairs. What would a man have more in such a perplexed case than be directed and comforted? David had both these, Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors.'

First, Thy testimonies are my delight; or, as it is in the Hebrew, delights.

Secondly, They are my counsellors. In the Hebrew it is, the men of my counsel, which is fitly mentioned, for he had spoken of princes sitting in council against him. Princes do nothing without the advice of their privy council; a child of God hath also his privy council, God's testimonies. On the one side there was Saul and his nobles and councillors; on the other side there was David and God's testimonies. Now who were better furnished, think you, they to persecute and trouble him, or David how to carry himself under this trouble? Alphonsus, king of Arragon, being asked who were the best counsellors, answered, the dead; meaning books, which cannot flatter, but do without partiality declare the truth. Now of all such dead counsellors, God's testimonies have the pre-eminence. A poor godly man, even then when he is deserted of all, and hath nobody to plead for him, he hath his senate and his

council of state about him, the prophets and apostles, and other holy men of God, that spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' A man so furnished is never less alone than when alone; for he hath counsellors about him that tell him what is to be believed or done; and they are such counsellors as cannot err, as will not flatter him, nor applaud him in any sin, nor discourage nor dissuade him from that which is good, whatever hazards it expose him to. And truly, if we be wise, we should choose such counsellors as these, Thy testimonies are the men of my counsel.'

First, Let me speak of the first benefit, Thy testimonies are my delight.'

Doct. That a child of God, though under deep affliction, finds a great deal of delight and comfort in the word of God.

This was David's case, princes sat and spake against him, decrees were made against him, yet thy testimonies are my delight.' Let us see--

1. What manner of delight this is that we find in the word.

2. What the word ministereth or contributeth towards it.

First, What kind of delight it is? A delight better than carnal rejoicing. Wicked men, that flow in ease and plenty, have not so much comfort as a godly man hath in the enjoyment of God, according to the tenor of his word: Ps. iv. 7, Thou hast put more gladness into my heart, than when their corn, wine, and oil increased.' We have no reason to change conditions with worldly men, as merry as they seem to be, and as much as they possess in the world.

But more particularly, wherein is the difference?

1. This delight is a real joy: 2 Cor. vi. 10, As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.' Their sorrow is but seeming, but their joy is real; it is joy in good earnest: Heb. xii. 11, No affliction seemeth joyous but grievous.' As to seeming, they are in a sad condition, but it doth but

so seem. A wicked man is as it were glad and merry, but indeed he is dejected and sorrowful; the godly man is as it were sorrowful, but indeed comforted.

2. It is a cordial joy: Ps. iv. 7, Thou hast put more gladness into my heart.' That is a delight indeed which puts a gladness into the heart, which not only tickles the outward senses, but affects the soul and comforts the conscience. Carnal joy makes a loud noise, and therefore it is compared to the crackling of thorns under a pot;' but this is that which goes to the heart, that fills it with serenity and peace. Carnal joy is like the morning dew, which wets the surface; but godly joy is like a soaking shower that goes to the root, and makes the plant flourish. They that indulge false comfort rather laugh than are merry. But now he that is exercised in the word of God, and fetcheth his comfort out of the promises, he is glad at the very heart.

3. It is a great joy: 1 Peter, i. 8, In whom believing, ye rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' It doth ravish the heart, so that it is better felt than uttered, it is unspeakable and glorious. The higher the life, always the greater the feeling. The good and evil of no life can be so great as the good and evil of the spiritual life, because it is the highest life of all, and therefore hath the highest sense joined with it. Man is more capable of being afflicted than beasts, and beasts than plants, and a godly man more than other men; he hath a higher life, therefore the good and evil is greater. A wounded spirit is the greatest misery any creature can feel on this side hell. So answerably are its joys: as the groans and sorrows of the spiritual life are unutterable, so are the joys of it unspeakable.

4. It is a more pure joy than worldlings can have. The more intellectual any comfort is, the more excellent in the kind. Though beasts may have pain and pleasure poured in upon them by the senses,

yet properly they have not sorrow and delight. The joy of carnal men is pleasure rather than delight; it is not fed by the promises and ordinances, but by such dreggy and outward contentments as the world affords, and so of the same nature with the contentment of the beasts. But now the more intellectual and chaste our delights are, the more suitable to the human nature. Well, then, none hath a delight so separate from the lees as a Christian that rejoiceth in the promises of God. He that delights in natural knowledge, hath, questionless, a purer object and greater contentment of soul than the sensualist can possibly have, that delights only in meats, and drinks, and sports, in pleasures that are in common with the beasts. Further yet, he that delights in bare contemplation of the word, as it is an excellent doctrine suited to man's necessities, as the stony ground received the word with joy,' Mat. xiii. 20, certainly he hath yet a purer gladness than merely that man that is versed in natural studies. Oh! but when a man can reflect upon the promises, as having an interest in them, that delight which flows from faith, and is accompanied with such a certainty, surely that is a more pure delight than the other, and doth more ravish the heart; they have more intimate and spiritual joy than others have.

5. It is a joy that ends well. Carnal rejoicing makes way for sorrow: The end of that mirth is heaviness,' Prov. xiv. 13. It is a poor forced thing, saith Cooper. A man in a burning fever is eased no longer by drinking strong drink than while he is drinking of it, for then it seems to cool him, but presently it increaseth his heat; so when men seek ease and comfort in troubles from outward external things, though they seem to mitigate their heaviness for the present, yet they increase it the more afterward.

6. It is not a joy that perverts the heart. Carnal comforts, the more we use them, the more we are ensnared by them: Eccles. ii. 2, I have

said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doth it?' For what serious and sober use doth carnal rejoicing serve? There is no profit by it, but much hurt and danger; therefore Solomon preferreth sorrow before it: Eccles. vii. 3, Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.' But now, the more of this delight we have, the more we delight ourselves in the word of God, the more we love God, the better the heart is.

7. It is a delight that overcomes the sense of our affliction, and all the evils that do befall us; and therefore it is said of the heirs of promise that they have strong consolation,' Heb. vi. 18. The strength is seen by the effects; therefore it is strong, because it supports and revives, notwithstanding troubles. It establisheth the heart, notwithstanding all the floods and storms of temptations that light upon it: 1 Thes. i. 6, it is said of them, that they received the word with much, affliction and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

Secondly, How do we find it in the word? His testimonies are my delight.' The word requires this joy in troubles, and the word ministers it to the soul.

It requires this joy: James i. 2, Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' We are not only with patience to submit to God's will, but also to rejoice in it: so Mat. v. 12, When men persecute and revile you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad.' Many times when other ways of persecution cease, yet there is reviling. Those that have no strength and power to do other injuries, yet have such weapons of malice always in readiness. Some, being not good Christians themselves, will defame those that are so; that so, when they cannot reach them in practice, they may depress them by censure; when they cannot go so high as they, they may bring them as low as themselves by detraction. Now, though

this be a great evil, we should bear it not heavily but cheerfully; rejoice and be exceeding glad in hope of the promises: Rom. v. 3, We glory in tribulation.' A true believer, that hath received the word of God as the rule of his life and guide of his hopes, he can not only be patient, but cheerful, glory in his tribulation. A carnal man is not so comfortable in his best estate as he at his worst.

Again, it gives us matter and ground of joy. God speaks a great deal of comfort to an afflicted spirit. It was one end why the scriptures were penned: Rom. xv. 4, That we through patience and comfort of the scripture might have hope;' and Heb. xii. 5, Have you forgotten the consolation, that speaks to you as children?' The great drift of the word is to provide matter of comfort, and that in our worst estate.

But now, what are the usual comforts that may occasion this delight and joy in the Holy Ghost in the midst of deep affliction?

1. The scripture gives us ground of comfort from the author of our afflictions, who is our Father, and never manifests the comfort of adoption so much as then when we are under chastening: Heb. xii. 5, The consolation that speaks to you as children;' and John xviii. 11, The cup which my Father hath put into my hands, shall I not drink it?' It is a bitter cup, but it is from a father, not from a judge or an enemy. Nothing but good can come from him who is love and goodness itself; nothing but what is useful from a father, whose affection is not to be measured by the bitterness of the dispensation, but by his aims, what he intends. If God should let us alone to follow our own ways, it were an argument we were none of his children.

2. The necessity of affliction: 1 Peter i. 6, Ye are for a season in trouble, if need be.' Before the corn be ripened, it needs all kind of weathers, and therefore the husbandman is as glad of showers as sun shine, because they both conduce to fruitfulness. We need all kind of

dispensations, and cannot well be without the many troubles that do befall us.

3. The nature and use of affliction. It is a medicine, not a poison; it works out the remainders of sin: Isa. xxvii. 9, By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin.' Afflictions are useful, and help to mortification. It is a file to get off our rust; a flail, wherewith we are threshed, that our husk may fly off; a fire to purge and eat out our dross: He verily for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness,' Heb. xii.

10. If God take away any outward comforts from us, and give us graces instead of them, it is a blessed exchange, if he strip us of our garments, and clothe us with his own royal robe, as holiness is. God himself is glorious in holiness. Now, that we may be partakers of his holiness, surely that is for our profit.

4. For the manner of God's afflicting, it is in measure: Isa. xxvii. 8, In measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it. He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.' So Jer. xlvi. 28, Fear thou not, Jacob, my servant, saith the Lord,' &c. So 1 Cor. x. 13, God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above measure.' His conduct is very gentle: as Jacob drove on as the little ones were able to bear, Gen. xxxiii., so doth God with a great deal of moderation measure out sufferings in a due proportion, not to our offences only, but our strength; as a father, in correcting his children, regards their weakness as well as their wantonness, laying less upon the more infirm, though alike faulty.

5. Another comfort which the scripture propounds is the help we shall have in affliction to bear it, partly from the comforts of his Spirit, and partly from the supports of his grace.

[1.] By way of consolation: The love of God is shed abroad in our

hearts by the Holy Ghost' at such a time, Rom. v. 3. Cordials are for those that are fainting. In time of trouble we have most sensible experience of God's love. God deals with his children many times as Joseph did with his brethren; he calls them spies, and puts them in prison, but at length he could hold no longer, but tells them, I am your brother Joseph.' So God seems to deal roughly with his people, and take away their dearest comforts from them. Ay! but before the trouble be over, he can hold no longer, but saith, I am your God, your father, and exceeding great reward. His bowels yearn towards us, and he opens his heart to us, and sheds abroad his love in our conscience.

[2.] Partly by the supports and influences of his grace: Ps. cxxxviii. 3, In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.' When David was in trouble, this was his comfort, though he could not get deliverance yet he got support. God is many times gone to appearance, but he will never forsake us as to inward support and strength: Heb. xiii. 5, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'

6. From the fruit and final issue of all: 2 Cor. iv. 17, This light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' He that can find Christ in his afflictions, and can see heaven beyond it, needs not to be troubled. All the notions of heaven are diversified. Why? That they may be suited to those divers trials and many evils we have in the world. Sometimes it is expressed by glory and honour, to counterbalance the disgrace which God's children meet with here; that the reproach of men may not make us more sad than the eternal glory may make us comfortable. Sometimes it is expressed by substance, because some times God's children are poor, and suffer loss of goods, Heb. x. 34. Sometimes it is called our redemption, our country, to comfort us in exile and

banishment for the name of Christ, Heb. xi. 14, 15. Some times it is called life eternal, because we may be called to suffer even to blood. Thus the word offereth this comfort against all the evils that befall us, that we may counterbalance every particular trouble with what the promises hold forth concerning our blessed hopes.

Use 1. Well, then, let us exercise ourselves in the word of God, and let all his promises be as so many cordials to us. To this end get an interest in these promises, for the heirs of promise have strong consolation,' Heb. vi. 18. There is strong, great, real, and pure comfort, but it is to the heirs of promise. So Rom. v. 4, Not only so, but we rejoice in tribulation.' Who are those? Those that are justified by faith in Christ, ver. 1. To others, afflictions are the punishments of sin, and an occasion of despair, not of rejoicing. Ay! but when we are interested in reconciliation with God, then we take this comfort out of the word of God.

2. It informs us of the excellency of God's testimonies above all outward enjoyments. When we have them to the full, they cannot give us any solid true peace of conscience, nor cure one sad thought. Now beg of God that he will comfort you when all things else fail: When the labour of the olive shall fail, I will comfort myself in the Lord my God,' Hab. iii. 18. I say, when we are under any burden, nay, when we are under any sorrow for sin, when afflictions revive stings of conscience, or else the word hath awakened them, yet there is comfort to be had by running to the word of God.

3. It shows us what is the property of believers, to delight in the testimonies of God, when all things go cross to them. Temporaries, when things run smoothly, they have a comfort in the word. Oh! but when the afflictions of the gospel fall upon them, they fall a murmuring presently. But a true believer can hold up his head; and though he hath

much affliction, yet he can have much joy in the Holy Ghost, and a great deal of comfort from the word of God.

There follows another benefit, Thy testimonies are my counsellors,' or men of my counsel.' From thence observe--

Doct. 2. That one great benefit we have from the word of God is counsel, how to direct our affairs according to his will.

For the clearing of this, let me lay down these propositions--

1. That our great interest is to keep in with God, or approve ourselves to him.

2. Whoever would keep in with God needs counsel and direction in all his ways.

3. The only good counsel we can have is from God in his word.

4. The counsel God hath given us in his word is sufficient and full out for all our necessities.

Prop. 1. That our great interest is to keep in with God, and approve ourselves to him in all our actions; for God is the scope and end of our lives and actions, as the thing pressed, That we may walk worthy of God in all well-pleasing,' Col. i. 10. God, being our chiefest good, must be our last end; therefore in every action there must be a habitual purpose, and in all actions of weight and moment there must be an actual purpose, to please God. Every ordinary affair must be carried forth in the strength of the habitual purpose, but in all actions we would make a business of there must be an actual purpose. And because his authority alone can sway the conscience, which is under his dominion, therefore it concerns us in all things to exercise ourselves that we may have a good conscience, void of offence both towards God and man,' Acts xxiv. 16. And again, we are to approve our ways to God, and to keep in with him, because to him we are to give an account, 2 Cor. v. 9, 10. There will a time come when every action of ours shall

be taken into consideration, and weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, with all our principles and ends; therefore we strive, we are ambitious (so the word signifies); our great ambition should be, living or dying, to be accepted with God. Again, surely it should be our business to approve ourselves to God in every action, because all the success of our actions depends upon his concurrence and blessing. Now we shall find this is often asserted in scripture. When a man's ways are full of hazards, likely to be exposed to great opposition, your great work is to keep in with God, approve your hearts to him: Prov. xvi. 7, When a man's ways please the Lord, he will make even his enemies to be at peace with him.' God hath a mighty power over the spirits of men; therefore this is to go to the fountain-head, to stop all opposition there; and, on the other side, without this care of pleasing God, all goes to loss. Counsels, though never so wisely laid, yet are blasted if we do not make this our business, to approve our hearts to God in those actions. Remember, in one place it is said, The counsel of the froward is carried headlong,' Job v. 13; and in another place, Isa. xliv. 25, The counsel of wise men he turneth back ward.' When men do not study to please God, and approve their hearts to him, God leaves them to precipitate counsels; sometimes they are carried forward, at other times they are carried backward; the event is cross to their design. Sometimes God lets them fall into precipitant counsels that they may undo themselves, at other times disappoints their counsels, and that which they have designed.

Prop. 2. Whosoever would keep in with God, he needs good counsel and direction in all his ways. Both in regard of the darkness of his understanding, his corrupt affections, and inordinate self-love, man is not able to rule and govern himself, but needs counsel: Prov. xii. 15, The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he that hearkeneth unto

counsel is wise.' When a man engageth in any action, such is the darkness and perverseness of man's heart that he should not be over-confident of his own apprehensions, or of his own inclinations, but should hearken after counsel; and Prov. xxviii. 26, He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.' Both these proverbs are to be understood not so much of wise managing of civil affairs as of spiritual direction. Surely it is ill trusting ourselves and counsels and inclinations of our own hearts. Blind affections usually govern a man's life; and all sinners have an evil counsellor in their bosom, some lust or other, and therefore need to be directed. The counsel of the flesh is, Favour thyself. Every evil affection gives ill counsel. Covetousness saith, Preserve thy worldly interest. Voluptuousness saith, You need not be so strict and nice, and abridge yourselves of the comforts of the world. Paul saith, Gal. i. 16, I conferred not with flesh and blood.' Flesh and blood are evil counsellors, and under pretence of safety will suggest what is for our ruin. What will the flesh say when it is to be denied, and the blood say when it is to be spilt and shed for God's sake? These will persuade us rather to please ourselves than please God. They will persuade us to desert our duty. Prop. 3. The only good counsel that we can have is from God in his word: Ps. lxxiii. 24, Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me unto glory.' We have it from God, and we have it from his word; for there is a guide and a rule. Man is so weak and so perverse that he needs both a guide and a rule. The guide is the Spirit of God, and the rule is the word of God: thou shalt guide me, but by thy counsel. By these two alone can we be led in the way to true happiness. The Spirit he is a sure guide; and the word, that is a clear rule. We are dark, but the scriptures are not dark. I observed out of the 18th verse, when the saints called upon God, they do not say, Lord,

make a plainer law, but, Lord, give me better eyes. We are dark, and need the illumination of the Spirit; the scriptures are light: Prov. vi. 23, The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light.' In all matters of practical obedience it is clear and open.

Prop. 4. The counsel that God hath given us in his word is sufficient and full out to all our necessities. Let me instance this in particulars.

1. The word gives us counsel for our general choice; it is the rule of all faith and obedience. The scriptures are the counsel of God, sent to remedy the miseries of the fall; therefore it is said, Acts xx. 27, I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.' It is God's counsel how man should be reconciled, how he should be converted, and come to the enjoyment of himself. David, when he had chosen God for his portion, he saith, Ps. xvi. 7, Blessed be God who hath given me counsel.' In the word he gives us counsel how to come to him for our happiness, and by grace he sets it on upon the heart: this is the counsel of God concerning our salvation.

2. Not only in our general choice, but in all our particular actions, so far as they have a tendency unto that end: Ps. cxix. 105, Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.' It is a lamp and a light. We are full of darkness and error; but as we follow the direction of God, it is a lamp not only to our path, but to our steps, to our feet; not only to our path, to our general course, but it directeth us in every particular action.

3. In dark and doubtful passages, when a man multiplieth consultations and perplexed thoughts, and changeth conclusions as a sick man doth his bed, and knows not what course to take, whether this or that; then the word will direct him what to do, so as that a man may find quiet in his soul. Indeed here is the question, How far the word of God is a

counsellor to us in such perplexed and doubtful cases?

[1.] The word of God will help him to understand how far he is concerned in such an action in point of duty and conscience; for other wise it were not able to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works,' 2 Tim. iii. 17. Now it is a great relief to the soul when a man understands how far he is concerned in point of duty. The conflict many times lies not only between light and lust, or light and interest--then a gracious man knows what part to take; but when it lies between duty and duty, then it is tedious and troublesome to him. Now the word clearly will tell you what is your duty in any action, whatever it be.

[2.] As to the prudent management of the action in order to success, the word will teach you to go to God for wisdom, James i. 6, and to observe his answer.

[3.] So in all actions, the word will teach you to ask God's leave and God's blessing. Christians, it is not enough to ask God's counsel, but ask his leave in any particular action, in disposing our dwellings, or our concernments of children, and the like: Judges i., Who shall go up and fight against the Canaanites?' They would fain have the Lord decide it. And again, Shall I go up to Ramoth-Gilead?' In all actions our business is to ask God's leave. David always runs to the oracle and ephod, Shall I go up to Hebron?' And Jacob in his journeys would neither go to Laban nor come from him without a warrant and leave from God. So we ask God's leave in prayer, and observe the bent of our hearts after prayer.

[4.] The word of God teacheth a man, when he understandeth his duty, and hath God's leave, to submit the event to God, and that easeth the heart, because he may be sure of success, comfort, and sup port: Ps. xxxvii. 5, Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he

shall bring it to pass;' and Prov. xvi. 3, Commit thy work unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.' It easeth us of a great deal of trouble and care; so that when a man hath brought his affections to submit to whatever God should determine in point of success, when he hath moderated and calmed his spirit, that he is resolved to bear the event whatever it be, this easeth the soul of a deal of trouble. Thus you see how we may make the statutes of God to be the men of our counsel.

Use 1. What a singular mercy is it that God hath given us the scripture, where we have counsel upon all occasions, how to manage our affairs prudently, bear afflictions comfortably, and with composed hearts to get through all events and dangers that we meet with in our passage to heaven! We should have groped up and down, as the Sodomites for Lot's door, if we had not this rule of faith and obedience. It is a rule that teacheth us how to think well, for it reacheth to the thoughts; to speak well, for it giveth a law to all our words; to do well in all our civil actions and trading: how to keep a good conscience, and approve ourselves to God; how in natural actions, eating, drinking, to season them with God's fear; and religious actions, how we may pray and worship; how to govern ourselves, our own hearts and affections; to converse with others in all relations, as fathers, children, masters, servants, magistrates, ministers, people; and how to hold communion with God: all which are demonstrations of the sufficiency of the scripture for our direction, and what reason there is that we should take the testimonies of God to be the men of our counsel.

Use 2. For reproof to those that turn the back upon God's counsels. Who are those?

1. Such as neglect the general duties of Christianity, as faith, and

repentance. God hath given us counsel what to do in order to eternal life, and we regard it not. The great quarrel between God and sinners is about the neglect of this counsel, which he hath given them for their soul's good: Prov. i. 25, They set at nought all my counsel;' and ver. 30, They would none of my counsel.' Oh! when your friends have advised you, and you despise it, and take another course, it troubleth them. You know how heinously Achitophel took it when his counsel was despised. Equals, when their counsel is despised, take it very ill; much more superiors when they give counsel. The en treaty and advice of a superior carrieth the force of a command. So it is here with God; it is called counsel, not as if it were an arbitrary thing whether we did regard it or no; but because of God's mild condescension. When men are in danger of perishing for ever, the Lord gives us counsel. You are in a miserable estate; he is pleased to tell you how to come out of your misery. The word of God, therefore, is called the counsel of God. It is sad when we shall reject the counsel of God: Luke vii. 30, They rejected the counsel of God against themselves.' There is two sentences, they rejected the counsel of God, and it was against themselves; it was to their own loss and destruction. God loseth nothing when we despise his counsel; but you lose all--your eternal happiness. This is so great an evil that God punisheth it with itself. When men will not take God's counsel, then it is the most dreadful judgment he can lay upon us to give us up to our own counsel, Ps. lxxxi. 11. Oh, what a heavy judgment was it to be given up to the counsels of their own heart!

2. It reproves such as do not consult with God's word about their affairs, but merely live as they are acted by their own lusts, or walk at all adventures;' so the expression in the marginal reading is, Lev. xxvi. 21. It is as the action falls; they do not care whether it please

God, or be the rule of their duty, yea or nay. These are far from the temper of God's children. It is sad in persons, much more in nations, when men run headlong upon all manner of disorders, against right and honesty; it tends to ruin: Deut. xxxii. 28, They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them.'

3. Such as go flatly against the counsel of God, and, to gratify their own interest, pervert all that is just and honest: Ps. cvii. 11, They rebelled against the word of the Lord, and contemned the counsel of the Most High.' These do but expose themselves to speedy ruin. Job xviii. 7, Bildad said of the wicked, His own counsel shall cast him down.' They need no other means to ruin them than their own brutish course. When men dare break the commandment of God without any reluctancy, to gratify a worldly interest, though for the present no evil comes of it, yet afterwards they shall smart: Prov. xix. 20, Hear counsel and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise for thy latter end.' Consider what it will come to afterwards, when thou comest to die; then you will wish, Oh that I had taken God's counsel, that I had not gone with such a daring spirit against the plain counsel of God's word!

4. Such as pretend to ask counsel from the word, but it is according to the idol of their own hearts; that come with their own conclusions and preconceptions and prejudices, against God's counsel: Ezek. xiv. 3, 4, Son of man, these have set up their idols in their heart,' &c. Men will come and pretend to ask God's counsel and leave upon their undertakings, when they are resolved upon a wicked enterprise before; then God must be called upon and sought to, and so they make God's ordinance a lacquey, merely to be a covert to their evil practices; as those in Jer. xlii., that came to the prophet, and they were prepossessed, and had their resolutions aforehand.

Use 3. To press us to this consulting with the word of God, to make the

testimonies of the Lord the men of our counsel. There are many qualifications and tempers of heart necessary.

1. Fear of God: Ps. xxv. 12, What man is he that feareth the Lord? him will he teach the way that he shall choose;' he that is in doubt and perplexed, and would have counsel from God's word. Who is the man that is like to have it? He that feareth the Lord, There is a great suitableness between the qualification and the promise. Partly he that fears God hath a greater awe of the word than others have, and is loath to do anything contrary to God's will; he would fain know what is God's mind in every particular case: Ps. cxix. 161, My heart standeth in awe of thy word.' To offend God, and to baulk the direction of God's word, that is the greatest terror to him, greater than all other dangers. Now such a man is less apt to miscarry by the rashness and impetuous bent of carnal affections. And he that fears God, he aims at God's glory rather than his own interest, and so is rather swayed by reasons of conscience and religion than of carnal concernments. Many times the doubtfulness that is upon the spirit is because of conflicts between lust and knowledge; our light is weakened by an inordinate affection to our own interest, otherwise we would soon come to the deciding our case by the word of God. Now he that would fain know God's mind in everything, this is the man whom God will direct.

2. The second qualification is the meek:' Ps. xxv. 9, The meek he will guide in judgment, and the meek he will teach his way.' By the meek is meant a man humble, that will submit himself to God, whatever condition he shall appoint. This man God in his word will teach and direct.

3. The third qualification mentioned in order to this is a constant dependence upon God: Prov. v. 6, Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding: in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' Oh! when a man is

brought off from this spiritual idolatry, of making his bosom to be his oracle, and his own heart to be his counsellor, when he doth in the poverty of his spirit humbly and entirely cast himself upon the help of God, and acknowledge him in all his ways, then he shall see a clear direction what God would have him to do. You have another place to this purpose, Ps. cxliii. 8, Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.' Oh! when a man goes every morning to God, and desires the direction of his Spirit, and professeth to God in the poverty of his own spirit that he knows not how to guide his way for that day, then God will teach him the way he shall walk. So Ps. xxv. 4, 5, Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths.' What is his argument? On thee do I wait all the day.' When you live in a constant dependence upon God, then will the Lord undertake to direct and guide you.

4. Obedience or Christian practice, that is one of the qualifications that make you capable for direction from the word of God: John vii. 17, If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' A man does not know whether this opinion or that be according to God's mind, when there are plausible pretences on every side. He that maketh conscience of known truth, and walketh up to his light, he that doth not search to satisfy curiosity, but out of a thorough resolution to obey and submit his neck to the yoke of Christ, whatever he shall find to be the way of Christ, that man shall know what is the way in times of controversy and doubtful uncertainty. He that will say, as a famous German divine, If we had six hundred necks, let us submit them all to the yoke of Christ; he that is resolved to submit to the mind of Christ, how contrary soever to his interest, to the prejudices and prepossessions of his own heart, he shall know the doctrine that is of God.

SERMON XXVI.

My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.--Ver. 25.

THE man of God in this psalm had spoken before of the common and universal benefits of the word, as it agreeth to all times and conditions of believers; for it belongeth to all, in what state soever they are, to look upon it as a direction in the way to get true happiness, and to stir up suitable affections in their hearts. Now he showeth what use the word hath in each special condition, especially in the time of great afflictions. David did often change states, but his affection to the word never changeth.

Here is--(1.) A representation of David's case; (2.) His supplication or petition thereupon; wherein--(1st.) The request itself; (2d.) Hie argument to enforce it.

First, The representation of David's case, My soul cleaveth unto the lust.' The speech is metaphorical, expressing the depth of his misery, or the greatness of his sorrow and humiliation. (1.) The depth of his misery, with allusion to the case of a man overcome in battle, or mortally wounded, and tumbling in the dust, or to a man dead and laid in the earth; as Ps. xxii. 15, Thou hast brought me to the dust of death.' Sure we are the expression importeth the extremity of distress and danger, either as a man dead, or near death. (2.) The greatness of his sorrow and humiliation; and so the allusion is taken from a man prostrate and grovelling on the ground, which was their posture of humbling themselves before the Lord, or when any great calamity befell them. As when Herod Agrippa died, they put on sackcloth, and lay upon the earth weeping (Joseph., lib. xix. cap. 7). The same allusion is Ps.

xliv. 25, Our soul is bowed down unto the dust, our belly cleaveth to the earth.' Suitably to which allusion, the Septuagint renders it ekollethe to? eda'phei e psuche' mou--to the pavement.

And we read in Theodoret, that Theodosius the Emperor, when reproved by Ambrose for the slaughter at Thessalonica, he lay upon the ground, and humbly begged pardon, using these words, Adhaesit pavimento anima mea. The meaning is, that in his dejected condition he would lie prostrate at God's feet as a poor supplicant, and die there. The first point is--

That God's children may have such great afflictions brought upon them that their souls may even cleave to the dust.

These afflictions may respect their inward or outward condition.

1. Their inward condition; and so through grief and terrors of conscience they are ready to drop into the grave. That trouble of mind is a usual exercise of God's people, see Heman's complaint, Ps. lxxxviii., from ver. 3 to the end of ver. 7: My soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength. Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deep. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah.' It was in his soul, and it was in his soul by reason of the wrath of God, and that in such a degree of vehemency that, in his own judgment and the judgment of others, he could not expect to be long a man of this world, little differing from the dead, yea, the damned. So David, Ps. lxxvii. 1, &c., I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my sore ran in the night and ceased not; my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled. I complained, and my spirit was

overwhelmed. Selah. Thou boldest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak: I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient time,' &c. By the sense of God's wrath he was even wounded to death, and the sore running upon him would admit of no plaister; yea, the remembrance of God was a trouble to him: I remembered God, and was troubled.' What a heavy word was that! Soul troubles are the most pressing troubles; a child of God is as a lost man in such a condition.

2. In respect of the heavy weight of outward pressures. Thus David fasted, and lay all night upon the earth in his child's sickness: 2 Sam. xii. 16, 17, David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him to raise him up from the earth; but he would not: neither did he eat bread with them.' And when he was driven from his palace by Absalom, and was in danger of his life every moment (which some interpreters think to be the case intended in the text), when he went up the Mount of Olives barefoot, going and weeping: 2 Sam. xv. 30, And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered; and he went barefoot, and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went.'

Now the reasons of this are these--

1. To correct them for past sins. This was the cause of David's trouble, and this puts a sting into all miseries. God's children smart under their sins here in the world as well as others: Prov. xi. 31, Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner.' Recompensed in the earth, that is, punished for his sins. Compare with it 1 Peter iv. 18, And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?' God punisheth here that he may spare for ever. He giveth some remembrance of the

evil, and corrects his people, not to complete their justification, or to make more satisfaction for God's justice than Christ hath made, yet to promote their sanctification; that is, to make sin bitter to them, and to vindicate the glory of God, that he is not partial. For these reasons they are even brought to the dust by their own folly.

2. To humble them, and bring them low in the midst of their great enjoyments; therefore he casts them down even to the dust. Because we cannot keep our hearts low, therefore God maketh our condition low. This was Paul's case: 2 Cor. i. 7-9, And our hope of you is stead fast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation; for we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life; but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead'--that is, not to build too securely on their own sufficiencies.

3. To try their graces, which are never tried to the life till we be near the point of death. The sincerity of our estate and the strength of faith is not discovered upon the throne so much as in the dust, if we can depend upon God in the hardest condition.

4. To awaken the spirit of prayer: Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord,' Ps. cxxx. 1. Affliction puts an edge upon our desires. They that are flat and careless at other times are oftenest then with God.

5. To show the more of his glory, and the riches of his goodness in their recovery: Ps. lxxi. 20, 21, Thou which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.' By the greater humiliation, God prepareth us for the

greater blessings. As there are multitudes of troubles to humble and try the saints, so his mercies do not come alone, but with great plenty.

Use 1. Let us bless God that we are not put to such great trials. How gentle is our exercise compared with David's case! We are weak, and God will not overburden us. There is a great deal of the wisdom and love of God seen in the measure of the cross, and in the nature and kind of it. We have no cause to say our belly cleaveth to the dust, or that we are pressed above measure. God giveth us only a gentle remembrance. If brought upon our knees, we are not brought upon our faces.

2. If this should be our case, do not count it strange. It is a usual exercise of God's people; let us therefore not be offended, but ap prove God's holy and wise dispensation. If there be great troubles, there have been great sins, or there will be great comforts, or for the present there are great graces. As such a dispensation is a correction, there is reason to approve it. If you be laid in the dust, have you not laid God's honour in the dust, and trampled his laws under foot? As it is a trial, you have cause to approve it; for it is but meet that when God hath planted grace in the heart, he should prove the strength of it. Therefore, if you be kept so long in your heavy condition that you seem dead, yet if you have faith to keep you alive, and patience be exercised, it is for your greater good: Rom. v. 3, And not only so, but we glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience;' and as affliction is an exercise for your benefit and spiritual improvement. The husbandman, when he teareth and rendeth the ground up with the plough, it is to make it more fruitful. The longer the metal is in the fire the more pure it cometh forth. Nay, sometimes you have your outward comforts with advantage after trouble: as Job xlii. 10-12, And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his

friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before; and the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.' Oh! when we are fitted to enjoy comforts we shall have them plenty enough.

Second point, That in such great and heavy troubles we should deal with God for help.

In the dust David calleth to God for quickening. The reasons of this, why in great troubles we should go to God for help, are--

1. From the inconvenience of any other course.

[1.] If the godly should smother their grief, and not go to God with it, their sorrow were able to choke them. It is no small ease that we have a God to go to, to whom we may freely open our minds. Prayer hath a pacative virtue; as Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 18, prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore;' and mark the event, The woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad,' &c. An oven stopped up is the hotter within, but vent and utterance giveth ease to the heart, if it be merely by way of complaint to a friend, without expectation of relief; much more to go to God, and lay open our case before him.

[2.] To seek our comfort elsewhere, from earthly things, it is a vain and evil course. (1.) It is vain; for God is the party with whom we have to do. In many troubles the creatures may be instruments of our woe; but the principal party is God. Strike in with him, and you stop the mischief at the head: Prov. xvi. 7, When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.' In other troubles God hath a more immediate hand, as sickness and terrors of conscience; our business then lieth not with the creatures; in sickness, not with physicians first, but with God. In troubles of spirit we are not to quench our thirst at the next ditch, but to run to the fountain of living water; not to take up with ordinary comforts; that is an attempt to break prison, and to get out of the troubles be

fore God letteth us out. He is our party then, whoever be the instrument. (2.) It is evil that we refuse to come to God when he whippeth us into his presence, and beateth us to the throne of grace: Dan. ix. 13, All this evil is come upon us, yet made we not our prayer be fore the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.' When men are ready to die, and will not so much as confer with the physician, they are either stupid or desperate. Afflictions summon us into his presence. God sendeth a tempest after us, as after Jonah. Now that trouble which chaseth us to God is so far a sanctified trouble.

2. The hope of relief from God, who alone can and will help us. He put his mouth in the dust; peradventure there is hope,' Lam. iii. 29. Now this hope is from God's power and will.

[1.] His power. God can quicken us when we are as good as dead, because he is the well-spring of life and comfort. Other things give us life, but as water scaldeth when it is the instrument of heat; but God alone can help us. God is the great quickener: That I might trust in him that raiseth the dead;' and I am the resurrection and the life.'

[2.] His will. When we are humble and tractable in our afflictions--

(1.) It is some hope if we have nothing to bring before God but our grief and misery, for he is pitiful. A beggar will uncover his sore to move your bowels. So many times all the reason that a poor pitiful afflicted person can bring for himself is lamenting his case to God, how discouraged he is, and apt to faint, as David represents his case, My soul cleaveth to the dust;' and elsewhere, Ps. lxix. 29, But I am poor and sorrowful; let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high,' Justice seeketh a fit object, but mercy a fit occasion.

(2.) It is a greater ground of hope when we are humbled under God's hand, and have a due sense of our condition; that is, are convinced of

our emptiness, weakness, nothingness, or emptied of self-conceit and carnal confidence: Deut. xxxii. 36, For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.' God's judgments are to break our carnal dependencies.

(3.) Still the hope increaseth when we acknowledge his justice and wisdom in all our troubles: Lev. xxvi. 41, If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity,' kiss the rod wherewith they are corrected, be glad it is no worse, and see that all this cometh from a just and wise God.

(4.) There is further hope when we can cast ourselves upon his faithfulness and omnipotency, in the face of all discouragements. Christ's question to the man long possessed was, Mark ix. 23, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' God's power is exercised when glorified by faith and dependence.

(5.) When we submit to what may be most for his glory. Carnal prayers, though never so earnest, fail when we are too earnest upon our private end, and the means which we fancy: Ps. cxv. 1, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake.'

Use. In deep calamities run to God, lay forth your case feelingly and with submission to the justice of his providence, trusting to his power, and submitting to his wisdom, without obtruding your model upon God, but leaving him to his own course; and this is the way to speed.

Take heed--

1. Of a stupid carelessness under the rod. It is a time of seeking after God, a summons to the creature to come before him. Now, if we think to sport away our trouble without looking after God's comforts, it is a desperate security: Jer. v. 12, They have belied the Lord, and

said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine.'

2. Take heed of despondency. The throne of grace is set up on purpose for such a time: Heb. iv. 16, Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;' Ps. 1. 15, Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' Open your case before the Lord.

3. Take heed of pitching too much upon outward things, either as to the time or way of deliverance. Lust is vehement; but the more you seek, the more comfortable will be the issue: Ps. li. 18, Do good in thy good pleasure unto Sion; build thou the walls of thy Jerusalem.'

Secondly, We come now to David's supplication or petition there upon; where observe--

1. The request itself, quicken thou me.

2. The argument, according to thy word.

First, The request itself, Quicken thou me;' which noteth either the renewing of comfort or the actuation of graces, the restoring or putting life into his affairs.

1. The renewing of comfort; quicken me, revive me, or restore life to me again; and this either by outward deliverance--so quickening is used Ps. lxxi. 20, Thou which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth,' where deep trouble is compared to the grave, and deliverance a kind of resurrection or recovery from the dead or by the letting in of inward comfort and spiritual reviving from the sense of God's love; so Ps. lxxx. 18, 19, Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.' The shining of God's face, or the sense of God's love, is the

reviving of afflicted spirits.

2. The actuation of grace; there may be life where there is no vigour. Now when we are stirred up to be lively in God's service, we are said to be quickened, as in the 19th verse of the psalm before quoted; and often it is thus used in this psalm, as ver. 37, Quicken thou me in thy way.' The point is this--

That God's children need often to go to God for quickening, because they often lie under deadness of heart, and therefore should desire God, who is the fountain of grace, to emit and send forth his influence.

They need this quickening--(1.) By reason of their constant weakness; (2.) Their frequent indispositions and distempers of soul.

1. Their constant weakness in this world.

[1.] By reason of their inclination to sin.

[2.] The imperfection of their motions towards that which is good.

[1.] By reason of their inclination to sin. Carnal concupiscence draweth us aside from God to sensual objects: James i. 14, A man is drawn away by his own lust.' There is a strong bias of corruption drawing us from Christ to present things: Heb. xii. 1, Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.' There is a carnal affection or corrupt inclination which carrieth us out inordinately to things lawful, or too often to things unlawful; this hangeth as a weight, retarding us in all our heavenly flights and motions. The love and care of the world, which is apt to press down the soul, and doth twine about us, and insinuate with us; the apostle calleth it a law in his members.' Rom. vii. 23, a warning to us how, when the flesh draweth us off so strongly one way, to implore the divine grace to draw us more strongly to the other.

[2.] Because of the imperfection of their motions to that which is

good, though there be a purpose, bent of heart, and inclination that way. Our gyves are still about us; we feel the old maim. Grace is like a spark in wet wood, that needs continual blowing.

2. Their frequent indispositions and distempers of soul. Some times they feel a loathness in their souls and a shyness of God's presence; their hearts hang off; the spirit indeed is willing, but some fleshly thought or carnal excuse checketh the motion. It is God alone that can make the soul willing; he giveth both will and deed. God bendeth the unwilling will, as well as helpeth the fainting affections. Again, sometimes they find a great deadness; there is no vigour or liveliness in their affections, and they cannot follow after God with such zeal and earnestness: though there be not a formal deadness, such as usually is in the duties of hypocrites, yet there is not always the same strength and agility of grace in the children of God; their souls do not so earnestly reach after Christ. Now, what can help but divine quickening? Therefore go to God for it. We should rouse and stir up ourselves. God giveth out influences according to his will or pleasure, but we must still stir up ourselves.

But to answer a case of conscience, whether we are to do duty in case of deadness and indisposition, &c.?

1. The influence of grace is not the warrant of duty, but the help; it is the efficient assisting cause, not the ground or rule. We are to do all acts of obedience on account of God's command: Luke v. 5, Simon answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.' God is sovereign, and we are bound to obey, whether disposed or indisposed. Should the husbandman never plough but when disposed to plough?

2. Our sinful indisposition cannot excuse us. In sins of commission, our weakness to resist temptation is no excuse. So also in sins of

omission, we cannot be allowed to say, It was the Lord suffered me to sin. No more will this plea be allowed, The Lord did not quicken me to duty. Grace is as necessary to prevent sin as to perform duty. God's suspension was no excuse to Hezekiah: 2 Chron. xxxii. 31; Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.' This complaint of weakness hath an ill aspect; complaining without labouring is rather a taxing of God. But--

3. Natural men are bound to pray and perform duties, therefore renewed men. That natural men are bound, see Acts viii. 22, Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee;' and Ps. xiv. 2, The Lord looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand and seek God.' It is charged as a crime that they did not, but much more the renewed; for to whom more is given, of them more is required. It is another talent wherewith they are intrusted. Grace is not only donum, but talentum; grace is not given as a piece of money to a child to play withal, but as we give money to factors to trade withal for us. Now a renewed man should do more, being capable of more.

4. The outward act of a duty is commanded as well as the inward; though they come not up to the nature of a perfect duty, there is some what of the ordinance of Christ in them: Hosea xiv. 2, Take with you words, and turn unto the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips.' Though I cannot do all, I must do as much as I can.

5. We are to wait humbly in the use of means for the power of his grace. When the door is shut, knocking is the only way to get it open. I will go and offer myself to God, and see what he will do for me;

which is God's usual way, and to be used with the more caution and diligence, because God doth all: Phil. ii. 12, 13, Wherefore, my be loved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' Seamen by tacking about get wind: so far as you use the means, you comply with God's end. A sad threatening there is to those that neglect the use of means, that shut the door upon themselves, or if God withdraws, are willing he should keep away.

6. Acting in spiritual duties fits us for them. Iter ad pietatem est intra pietatem--praying fits for praying, meditating for meditating. Frequent turning the key maketh the lock go more easy. Good dispositions make way for good dispositions, Ps. xxvii. 14; Ps. xxxi. 24, Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart.' Pluck up your spirits, strive to take courage, and then God will give you courage. To shake us out of laziness, God maketh the precept go before the promise. God biddeth us pray, though prayer be his own gift. Act as you would expect.

7. There is a supply cometh in ere we are aware: Cant. vi. 12, Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib,' in the very work, A strange difference of temper is to be ob served in David before the psalm be over: 1 Chron. xxii. 16, Arise, therefore, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee.' God will not help that man that hath legs to go, and will not.

8. We are to rouse up ourselves: Isa., lxiv. 7, And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' When we are willing to get the work over, and wrestle not for life and power in praying, we do not all we are able. The cock by clapping the wings addeth strength to the crowing. We should rouse up ourselves. We

use not the bellows to a dead coal, &c.

Secondly, The next circumstance is the argument, According to thy word.' What word doth David mean? Either the general promises in the books of Moses or Job, which intimate deliverance to the faithful observers of God's law, or help to the miserable and distressed, or some particular promise given to him by Nathan or others. Chrysostom saith, Quicken me to live according to thy word: but it is not a word of command, but a word of promise. Mark here--

1. He doth not say, Secundum meritum meum, but secundum verbum tuum; the hope, or that help which we expect from God, is founded upon his word; there is our security, in his promises, not in our deservings--Promittendo se fecit debitorem, &c.

2. When there was so little scripture written, yet David could find out a word for his support. Alas! in our troubles and afflictions no promise occurreth to mind. As in outward things, many that have less live better than those that have abundance; so here. Now scripture is so large, we are less diligent, and therefore, though we have so many promises, we are apt to faint, we have not a word to bear us up.

3. This word did not help him till he had lain long under this heavy condition, so that he seemed dead. Many when they have a promise, think presently to enjoy the comfort of it. No; there is waiting and striving first necessary. We never relish the comfort of the promises till the creatures have spent their allowance, and we have been exercised. God will keep his word, and yet we must expect to be tried.

4. In this his dead condition, faith in God's word kept him alive. When we have lost feeling, and there is nothing left us, the word will support us: Rom. iv. 19, 20, And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the

promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.'

5. One good way to get comfort is to plead the promise to God in prayer. Chirographa tua injiciebat tibi, Domine. Show him his handwriting; God is tender of his word. These arguings in prayer are not to work upon God, but ourselves.

Use. Well, then, let us thus deal with God, looking to him in the sense of our own weakness, praying often to God for quickening, as David doth in the text. God keepeth grace in his own hands, and dispenseth it at his pleasure, that he may often hear from us, and that we may renew our dependence upon him. It is pleasing to him when we desire him to renew his work, and bring forth the actings of grace in their vigour and lustre. And let us acknowledge divine grace if there be strong actings of faith and love towards God. He is to be owned in his work.

SERMON XXVII.

I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me; teach me thy statutes.--Ver. 26.

IN this verse you have three things:--

1. David's open and free dealing with God, I have declared my ways.

2. God's gracious dealing with David, and thou heardest me.

3. A petition for continuance of the like favour teach me thy statutes.

First, For the first, I have declared my ways;' that is, distinctly and without hypocrisy laid open the state of my heart and course of my affairs to thee, note--

Doct. They that would speed with God should learn this point of Christian ingenuity, unfeignedly to lay open their whole case to him; that is, to declare what they are about, the nature of their affairs, the^ state of their hearts, what of good or evil they find in themselves, their conflicts, supplies, distresses, hopes; that is declaring our ways; the good and evil we are conscious to. As a sick patient will tell the physician how it is with him, so should we deal with God if we would find mercy. This declaring his ways may be looked upon--

1. As an act of faith and dependence.

2. As an act of holy friendship.

3. As an act of spiritual contrition and brokenness of heart; for this declaring must be explained according to the sense of the object of what David means by this expression, My ways.'

First, His businesses or undertakings; I have still made them known to thee, committing them to the direction of thy providence; and so it is an act of faith and dependence, consulting with God, and acquainting

him with all our desires. This is necessary--

1. That we may acknowledge the sovereignty of his providence and dominion over all events: Prov. xvi. 9, A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.' Man proposeth, but God disposeth, and carrieth on the event either further than we intended, or else contrary to what we intended.

2. We must declare our ways to God that we may take God along with us in all our actions, that we may ask his leave, counsel, blessing: Prov. iii. 6, In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' There is a twofold direction, one of God's providence, the other of his counsel. The direction of his providence, that is understood: Prov. xvi. 9, A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.' But then there is the direction of his counsel, and the latter is promised here; if we acknowledge God and declare our ways to him, God will counsel us. And David did thus declare his way upon all occasions: 2 Sam. ii. 1, David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?' It is a piece of religious manners to begin every business with God; to go to God, Lord, shall I do so, or shall I not? to desire him that is Lord of all to give us leave; who is the fountain of wisdom, to give us counsel; and the disposer of all events, to give us a blessing.

3. The declaring of our ways is necessary, that we may be sensible of God's eye that is upon us, and so act the more sincerely. Certainly it is a great advantage to make God conscious to every business we have in hand, when we dare undertake nothing but what we would acquaint him withal. There are some to whom the prophet pronounceth a woe: Isa. xxix. 15, Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?' For the opening of this place, surely none can

seriously be so vain, and grow up to such sottish atheism, as to think to hide a thing from God; but they are loath solemnly to draw it forth in the view of conscience, to revive a sense of God's omnisciency upon themselves. We are said to deny that which many times we forget and will not think of. So that those which hide their counsels from God are those that will not take God along with them. In short, this declaration is not necessary for God, who knows our thoughts afar off,' Ps. cxxxix. 2; not only our words and works, but purposes, before we begin to lift up a thought that way. But this declaration is necessary for us, to increase the awe of God upon our heart, and that we may undertake nothing but what we will solemnly acquaint the Lord with.

Well, then, this declaring our ways is an act of dependence.

Secondly, By his ways may be meant all his straits, sorrows, and dangers; and so this declaring it is an act of holy friendship, when a man comes as one friend to another, and acquaints God with his whole state, lays his condition before the Lord, in hope of pity and relief.

We have liberty to do so, to tell God all our mind: Heb. x. 19, Let us come with boldness, by the blood of Jesus;' and Heb. iv. 16. The word signifies, with liberty of speech, speaking all to God, your whole state and condition; if you have any sins to be pardoned, any miseries to be redressed; that where you are doubtful, you may be helped by God's counsel, where you are weak, you may be confirmed by his strength, where you are sinful, you may be pitied by his mercy, where you are miserable, you may be delivered by his power. This is holy friendship, to acquaint God with our doubts, wants, griefs, and fears; and we may do it with more confidence, because we go to him in Christ's name: John xvi. 23, Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, it shall be granted unto you.' It is no fiction or strain, but a real truth. Will Christ deceive us when he saith, Verily? And then

whatsoever you ask? You have liberty to go to God for the removal of any fear, the granting any regular desire, or for satisfying any doubt: Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name.' Our prayers by this means are Christ's request as well as ours. For instance, if you send a child or servant to a friend for anything in your name, the request is yours, and he that denies a child or servant denies you; so saith Christ, Go to the Father in my name. God cannot deny a request in Christ's name, no more than he can deny Christ himself; therefore you may use a holy boldness.

Thirdly, By ways is meant temptations and sins; and so this declaring is an act of spiritual contrition or brokenness of heart. Sins, they are properly our ways; as Ezek. xviii. 25, the Lord makes a distinction between my ways and your ways. God hath his ways, and we ours. Our ways are properly our sins. Now these, saith David, I will declare, that is, distinctly lay them open before God. This is a part of our duty, with brokenness of heart to declare our ways, to acquaint God fully how it is with us, without dissembling anything. It is a duty very unpleasing to flesh and blood; natural pride and self-love will not let us take shame upon ourselves; and out of carnal ease and laziness we are loath to submit to such a troublesome course, and thus openly to declare our ways. Guilt is shy of God's presence, and sin works a strangeness. Adam hid himself when God came into the garden; and when he could shift no longer, he will not declare it, but transfers the fault upon Eve, and obliquely upon God himself; and ever since there are many tergiversations in man's heart; and therefore it is said, Job xxxi. 33, If I have covered my sin as did Adam.' Junius renders it more hominum--after the manner of men; but Adam's name is used because we show ourselves to be right Adam's race, apt to cover our sins. The same expression we have Hosea vi. 7, But they like men have transgressed the

covenant.' In the Hebrew it is, like Adam; so, if I covered my sin as did Adam, this is the fashion of men. Now, David brought his heart to this resolution with much struggling: Ps. xxxii. 5, I said, I will confess my sins;' he forced himself, and thrust his backward heart forward by a strong resolution; for we are loath to deal thus openly, plainly, and truly with God, being shy of his presence, and would fain keep the devil's counsel, and come with our iniquity in our bosom. But though this is a troublesome displeasing exercise to flesh and blood, yet it is profitable and necessary for us thus to declare our ways.

1. Because it is made to be one of the conditions of pardon, and the act of repentance that is necessary to the pardon of sin: Prov. xxviii. 13, He that hideth his sins shall not prosper; but he that confesseth and forsakes them, shall find mercy;' so it runs. And 1 John i. 9, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' God's justice is satisfied by Christ, but it must be glorified and owned by us. So Jer. iii. 13, I am merciful, saith the Lord: only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God.' God hath mercy enough to pardon all, only he will have it sued out his own way, he will have his mercy asked upon our knees; and have the creature stoop and submit. And David, Ps. li. 3, I acknowledge my transgression.'

2. It is the only means to have our peace settled. If you would not have your trouble and anxious thoughts continued upon you, go open yourselves to God, declare your ways: Ps. xxxii. 5, I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' As soon as David did but take up a resolution, presently he felt the comfort of it. If David had confessed sooner, he had come to his ease sooner. Distress of conscience is continued upon us until this be done; and especially is this found by experience, when

great trouble comes upon us by reason of sin. There is some sin at the bottom God will bring out; and until they come to clearness and openness with God, the Lord still continues the trouble; they are kept roaring, and do not come to their peace, Job xxxiii. 26, 27. When a man is under trouble, and the sense of sin doth not fasten on the heart, he is not prepared for deliverance; but when it comes to this, I have sinned, and it profits me not,' then God sends an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness.'

3. It prevents Satan's accusations and God's judgments. It is no profit to cover our sins, for either Satan will declare them, or God find us out, and enter into judgment with us. It prevents Satan as an accuser and God as a judge.

[1.] It prevents Satan as an accuser. Let us not tarry till our adversary accuse. There is one that will accuse you if you do not accuse yourselves. He that is a tempter is also an accuser of the brethren. Now confession puts Satan out of office. When we have sued out our pardon, Satan is not an accuser so much as a slanderer: Rom. viii. 33, Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?' The informer comes too late when the guilty person hath accused himself, and sued out his pardon. And--

[2.] It prevents God as a judge. It is all known to God: Ps. lxix. 5, O God! thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee.' It is a folly to conceal that which cannot be hid. God knows them. How? God may be said to know things two ways--either simply with respect to the perfection of his nature, and so he knows all things; or by virtue of his office, and so God knows things judicially as judge of the world; he takes knowledge of it so as to punish it, unless you confess it. But in this kind of knowledge he loves to be prevented; he will not know it as a judge if we confess it, when there is process against sin

in our own consciences: 1 Cor. xi. 31, If we judge ourselves we shall not be judged.' When we accuse and judge ourselves, then God's work is prevented. God is contented if we will accuse, arraign, judge, and condemn ourselves; then he will not take knowledge of our sins as a judge. The end of God's judging is execution and punishment, but the end of our judging is that we may obtain pardon. Now, consider whether you will stand at the bar of Christ, not as a Saviour, but as a judge; or will judge yourselves in your own heart? Better sit as judge upon your own heart than God should sit as judge upon you; therefore deal plainly and openly with him.

Thus I have explained what it is to declare our ways; it is an act of dependence to take God's leave, blessing, counsel along with us; an act of friendship, as to lay open our case to God; and an act of brokenness of heart, as declaring our sins and temptations.

For the reasons why, if we would speed with God, we should unfeignedly lay open our case before him.

1. It argueth sincerity. A hypocrite will pray, but will not thus sincerely open his heart to God: Ps. xxxii. 1 Blessed is he in whose spirit there is no guile.' No guile; it hath a limited sense with respect to the matter of confession, that doth not deal deceitfully with God, but plainly and openly declares his case. Many ways men may be guilty of guile of spirit in confession of sin; either when they content themselves with general or slight acknowledgments; as thus, We are all sinners; but they do not declare their ways. Generals are but notions; and as particular persons are lost in a crowd, so sins lie hid in common acknowledgments. Or else men take up the empty forms of others. You shall see in Numbers xix. the waters of purification wherewith a man had been cleansed, if another touched them, he became unclean. Confessions are like those waters whereby one hath cleansed

himself. Now to take up others' confessions, and the forms of others, without the same affection, feeling, and brokenness of heart, doth but defile us the more, when the heart doth not prescribe to the tongue but the tongue to the heart. Or else men make some acknowledgments to God, but do not uncover their privy sore; they are loath to draw forth the state of their hearts into the notice and view of conscience. This guile of spirit may be sometimes in God's children. Moses had a privy sore which he was loath to disclose; and therefore when God would have sent him into Egypt, he pleads other things, insufficiency, want of elocution, that he was a stammerer, that he had not utterance. Ay! but his carnal fear was the main; therefore see how God touches his privy sore: Exod. iv. 19, Arise, Moses; go into Egypt: the men that sought thy life are dead.' Why, Moses never pleaded that; he mentions other things that were true, that he was a man of slow speech, and his brother Aaron was fitter; but he never pleads carnal fear: but the Lord knew what was at the bottom. So it is with Christians; many times we will confess this and that which is a truth, and we may humble ourselves for it. Ay! but there is a privy sore yet kept secret. Therefore this open dealing with God is very necessary to lay open before God whatever we know of our state and way, for then God will be nigh to us. Out of self-love men spare themselves, and will not judge and condemn themselves; therefore they deny, excuse, extenuate, or hypocritically confess, Oh, I am a sinner! and the like, but do not come openly.

2. It argueth somewhat of the spirit of adoption to put in the bill of our complaint to our heavenly father, to draw up an indictment against ourselves. To judge, that is irksome; but to put in a bill of complaint to a friend, or father, that savours of more ingenuity. To tell God all our mind notes freedom and familiarity; not such as is bold, rude, nor

a dress of words; but such as is grave, serious, proceeding from an inward sense of God, and hope of his mercy: 1 John iii. 21, If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God;' then we can deal with him as one friend with another, and acquaint him with all our griefs and wants. A man had need walk exactly that would maintain his freedom with God. There is a freedom, as men may call it, such as is bold, rude, and reckless, in words only; but that which proceeds from confidence in God and his mercy, that is a fruit of close walking; we cannot have it in our hearts without it.

3. It is the way to make us serious and affected with our condition. When we open our whole heart to God, then we shall be more earnest for a remedy; we content ourselves with some transient glances, and imperfect knowledge of our estate, and so are not affected as we should; a particular view of things most works with us. Look, as Christ, the more particularly he is set forth, the more taking is the object; when the lump of sweetness is dissolved, then it is tasted. The more particularly we pry into our estate, the more we are affected, and the more we shall see of the deceitfulness of our own hearts: When every one shall know his own sore and grief,' 2 Chron. vi. 29.

4. It will be of great advantage in the spiritual life to declare often our whole estate to God; for the more men know themselves the more they mind God and their heavenly calling. Those men that make conscience of declaring themselves to God will ever find lusts to be mortified, doubts to be resolved, graces to be strengthened. A man that doth not look after his estate, it runs into decay insensibly before he is aware; so when men grow negligent of their hearts, and never think of giving an account to God, all runs to waste in the soul. Searching and self-examining Christians will be the most serious Christians; for as they have a more distinct affective sense of their condition, so they

always find more work to do in the spiritual life. They come to know what are their sins, and assaults, and conflicts, and what further strength they may have in the way of holiness; and by this account they are engaged to walk more exactly, that they may not provide matter against themselves: 1 Peter iii. 7, That their prayers be not hindered;' that they may look God in the face with more confidence.

Use 1. Let us clearly and openly declare our condition to the Lord, our griefs and sorrows, and so our sins.

1. Our griefs and sorrows. Two things will quicken you to this:--The inconvenience of any other way. What will you do? If you swallow your griefs, that will oppress the heart. The more we unbosom ourselves to a friend, the more we find ease; vent and utterance doth lessen our passion. An oven stopped up is hotter within. So the more close we are, the more we keep our own counsel, the greater is our burden. Look, as wind when it is imprisoned in the caverns of the earth causeth violent convulsions and earthquakes, but if it find vent all is quiet, so it is with the heart; when troubles are kept close, then they become the greater burden, they make the heart stormy, full of discontent; but when we open ourselves, as Hannah did her case to God, 1 Sam. i. 8, we are no more sad; or if we go to anything on this side God, our troubles increase. When a man hath sorrow upon his heart, it is not the next ditch will yield him refreshing and comfort, but he must go to the fountain of living water. If we be afraid of an enemy without, our business is to strike in with God: Prov. xvi. 7, When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.' God hath the command of all things; he is first to be treated with, then there is hope and relief in God. When we are humble and tractable in our affliction, when we come and represent our case to him, the very thing gives us some hope; for the Lord doth all out of mercy. Therefore

the very representing our misery, as David: Ps. lxix. 29, But I am poor and sorrowful;' that we are in a miserable forlorn condition; if you have nothing else to plead, this is that which moves God, and works upon his bowels. Look, as beggars to move pity will uncover their sore, that as it were by a silent oratory they may extort and draw forth relief from you; so go to the Lord and acquaint him with your condition; some hope will arise hence. Lord, I am weak and poor, deliver me; that is all the argument.

2. As to sins, let me tell you, go to God with clearness and openness; reveal your whole state, tell him what are your temptations and conflicts, and how your heart works. Though he knows it already by his own omnisciency, yet let him know it by your own acknowledgments. Let him not know it as a judge, take notice of it so as to punish you; but go deal plainly, and confess your sins. To this end--

[1.] There will be need of light, that you may be able to judge of things: Heb. v. 14, They have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.' When a man hath not only a speculative knowledge, but hath his senses exercised, able to judge of the workings of his own heart, he can discern what is of flesh and what is of spirit, and so can give an account to God. When we have not only some naked theory, we shall be able to see what is a temptation, where our help, and where our weakness lies.

[2.] There needs observation of the workings of our own hearts. A man that would give an account to God need to observe himself narrowly, and keep his heart above all keepings. David, that saith here, I declared my ways, saith elsewhere, I considered my ways. It is but a formal account we can give without serious consideration; we must therefore keep our hearts with all diligence,' Prov. iv. 23.

[3.] There needs in many cases a serious search. For instance, in. deep

desertion, when God withdraws the light of his countenance, and men have not those wonted influences of grace, those glimpses of favour, and quickenings of spirit, and enlargings of heart: Ps. lxxvii. 6, I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.' When under any despair of soul, trace it to its original cause: Wherein have I grieved the Spirit of God? So Lam. iii. 40, Let us search and try our ways.' There needs a very distinct and serious inquiry into the state of our souls, that we may deal ingenuously with God, and lay open ourselves before him.

Secondly, The second clause, and the Lord heard me.

Doct. After an ingenuous and open declaration of ourselves to God, we find audience with him.

So did David, and so do all the saints. He was never yet wanting to his people that deals sincerely with him in prayer. How doth God manifest his audience? Either inwardly by the Spirit, or outwardly by providence.

First, Inwardly by his Spirit, when he begets a persuasion of their acceptance with God, leaves an impression of confidence upon their hearts, and a quietness in looking for the thing they had asked. Before they have an answer of providence, they have a persuasion of heart that their prayer hath been accepted. There is a great deal of difference between accepting a prayer and granting a prayer. God's acceptance is as soon as we pray, but the thing we beg for is another thing and distinct: 1 John v. 14, 15, This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.' God's hearing of us, his audience, is a distinct thing from the answer of his providence; and therefore when he begets a confidence that we are heard, and the soul begins to

be quieted in God and look up for mercy, it is a sign of his accepting our prayer, though the benefit be not actually bestowed. David found a change in his heart many times, as if one had come and told him the posture of his affairs was altered. It is otherwise with you than it was when you began to pray; therefore you have him in the beginning of a psalm come in with bitter complaints and groaning; his eyes were ready to drop out with grief, and presently he breaks out with thanksgiving, as Ps. vi. 8, 9, Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.' Presently, Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.' So Hannah, she had commended her request to God, and was no more sad, 1 Sam. i. 16. That is one way of answer; when we have declared ourselves to the Lord, the heart looks out to see what will come of its prayers; it begins to rest, and is quiet in God, and looks for some answer of the mercy.

The second consideration, that the outward mercy in his providence is either in kind or in value. God doth not always answer us in kind, by giving us the thing asked; but doth give us something that is as good or better, which contents the heart, by denying the thing desired, and giving something equivalent. Many times we ask temporal mercies, defence, victory, deliverance, and God gives spiritual; we ask deliverance and God gives patience, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. Paul asked thrice that the thorn in the flesh might depart from him; but God gives him sufficient grace. God doth not answer us always according to our will, but certainly according to our weal and profit. Many times he will give the blessing in kind, but at other times he gives the value of it, which is better. God may give temporal comfort in kind, in anger; but the value, the blessing, he never gives in anger, but always in love. When they asked meat for their lusts, God gave it in kind, in anger,

Ps. lxxviii.: And I gave them a king in my wrath,' Hosea xiii. 11. When we are passionate and eager upon a temporal request, God doth answer in wrath; the mercy is more when he gives us that which is better.

Thirdly, God delays many times when he doth not deny, for our exercise.

1. To exercise our faith, to see if we can believe in him when we see nothing, have no sensible proof of his good-will to us. The woman of Canaan she comes to Christ, and first gets not a word from him--Christ answered her nothing;' afterwards Christ breaks off his silence, and begins to speak, and his speech was more discouraging than his silence. She meets with a rough answer: It is not meet to give the children's bread unto dogs.' Then the woman turns this rebuke into an encouragement, Lord, the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table.' Then Christ could hold no longer: O woman! great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt,' Mat. xv. So many times we come to God and meet with a silent oracle, cannot get an answer; but if we get an answer, it may be we begin to think God puts us off, as none of the sheep he is to look after. Oh! but when we wrestle through all these discouragements and temptations, then great is thy faith.' In short, we pray for a blessing; and sometimes, though God love the suppliant, yet he doth not seem to take notice of his desires, that he may humble him to the dust, and may have a sense of his unworthiness, and pick an answer out of God's silence, and grant out of his denial, and faith out of these discouragements.

2. To exercise our patience: Heb. vi. 12, Be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' Our times are always present with us, but God's time is not yet come. A hungry stomach would have meat before it is roasted or sod. Impatient longings must have green fruit, and will not stay till it be matured and ripened. Now God will work us out of this impatience. The troubles of the world are

necessary for patience as well as faith.

3. To try our love. Though we be not feasted with felt comforts and present benefits, yet God will try the deportment of his children, if indeed he be the delight of their hearts: Isa. xxvi. 8, Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee.' When we love God, not only when our affections are bribed by some sensible experience or comfort, but when we can love God in the way of his judgments. A child of God is a strange creature; he can love God for his judgments, and fear him for his mercies. When our heart is like lime, the more water you sprinkle upon it, the more it burns; our desires glow the more, the more disappointments we seem to meet with. We love his benefits more than we love God, when we delight in him only when he doth us good. But when we can delight in him even when our desires are delayed, and nothing appears but tokens of God's displeasure, this is delight indeed.

4. To enlarge our desires, that we may have a greater income of his mercy, as a sack that is stretched out holds the more. God will have the soul more stretched out when he means to fill it up with grace. Delays increase importunities: Ask, seek, knock,' Mat. vii. If God will not come at the first asking, we must seek; if seeking will not bring him, we must knock, be importunate, have no Nay: Luke xi. 8, For his importunity sake he will arise.' The man is impudent; he stands knocking, and will not be gone.

Fourthly, God may seem sometimes to deny a request, yet the end of the request is accomplished. For instance, God's children they have an end in their requests; we pray for the means with respect to an end. Now many times God gives the end when he will deny the means. Paul had grace sufficient, though the thorn in his flesh were not removed, 2 Cor. xii. 9. A Christian prays for the light of God's countenance, for

sensible feeling of God's love. Why? To strengthen him in his way. Now God denies him comfort, because he will do it by the word of promise, it shall not be by sensible comfort. We pray for victory over such a lust, the mortification of such a sin. Why? That we may serve God more cheerfully. God denies such a degree of grace, because he will mortify a greater sin, which is pride in the heart. And thus we miss the particular that we desire, yet still we have the end of the request. We pray for giving success to such an enterprise. Why? That we may serve God safely. God will bring it about another way.

Fifthly, If God do not give us the blessings themselves we ask, yet he gives us many experiences by the by in the manner of asking; one way or other something comes into the soul by praying to God; as those in Ps. lxxxiv., their end was to go to Jerusalem, but in passing through the valley of Baca, they met with a well by the way. So we meet with something by the way, some light, or some sweet refreshing, some new consideration to set us a-work in the spiritual life. By praying to God, unawares, unthought of by you, there are many principles of faith drawn forth in the view of conscience not noted before, some truth or other presented to the heart, or some spiritual benefit that comes in with fresh light and power, that was never aimed at by us.

Use 1. If God be so ready to hear his people, let us not throw away our prayers as children shoot away their arrows; but let us observe God's answer, what comes in upon every prayer. In every address you make to God, put the soul in a posture of expectation: Ps. v. 3, I will pray and look up;' and Ps. lxxxv. 8, I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people.' See what God speaks when you have been praying and calling upon him. It argues a slight formal spirit when you do not observe what comes in upon your addresses. To quicken you to this, know--

1. If you observe not his answer, God loseth a great deal of honour and praise; for it is said, Ps. l. 15, Call upon me in time of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' Every answer of prayer makes for the glory of God; and Col. iv. 2, Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.' You are not only to see how your hearts are carried out in prayer, but watch for God's answer, that you may gather matter of praise. We should not be so barren in gratulation as usually we are, if we were as ready to observe our experiences as to lay forth our necessities.

2. You lose many an argument of trust and confidence. Answers of prayer are an argument against atheism, which is so natural to us, and inbred in our hearts; it persuades us that there is a gracious being: Ps. lxv. 2, thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.' We have called upon him, and found that there is a God, and against the natural unbelief which doubts of his truth in his promises: Ps. xviii. 30, The word of the Lord is a tried word; he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.' Well, saith the soul, I will build upon it another time; there is more than letters and syllables in it; there is something that speaks God's heart. So Ps. cxvi. 2, The Lord hath heard my voice and my supplications: because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.' Promises shall not lie by as a dead stock; I will be pleading them.

3. It increaseth our love to God. When we see how mindful he is of us, and kind to us in our necessities, it is a very taking thing. Visits maintain friendship; so when God is mindful of us, it maintains an intercourse between God and us: Ps. cxvi. 1, I love the Lord, because he hath heard my supplications.' Therefore observe what comes in upon your prayers, especially when your hearts are earnestly carried out by the impulses of his grace.

Use 2. To admire the goodness of God to poor creatures, that he should be at leisure to attend our requests: I declared my ways, and he heard me.' When a poor soul, that is of no regard among men, shall come with conflicts and temptations, and the Lord presently hear him, it renders his grace truly admirable: Ps. xxxiv. 6, This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.' He doth not say, this eminent prophet or this great king, but this poor man. Oh, that such contemptible persons as we should have such audience! For great ones here in the world to let a poor man tell his tale at large, that would be counted great patience, much more if he finds relief in the case. But beyond all this, observe the goodness of God. The more we declare our ways, the sooner doth he hear us; he doth not turn away from us when we tell him plainly we cannot believe in him, or trust in him. Come to a man and tell him, You have made me great promises, but I cannot believe you speak truth--this will provoke him; but when you come to the Lord and say, Lord, thou hast made a great many promises; though we cannot trust as we should, yet we have declared our sins, conflicts, temptations, yet, Lord, pity our weakness.

Thirdly, Here is his petition, Teach me thy statutes.'

First, I observe, David having been once heard of God expects to be heard in the like manner again. Here, Thou hast heard me;' and then comes with a new request, Teach me thy statutes.'

Doct. 1. Those that have sped with God in one address, they will be dealing with God for more mercy; for so doth David. The reason is--

1. Because God is where he was at first; he is not weary by giving, nor doth waste by giving; but what he hath done that he can do, and will do still. I AM is God's name; not I was, or will be; for ever remaining in the same constant tenor of goodness and power. His providence is still new and fresh every morning. God is but one, always like himself. He

hath not so spent himself but he can work again. Creatures have soon spent their allowance, but God cannot be exhausted. There is no decay of love or power in him, no wrinkle in the brow of eternity. There was, is, and will be a God.

2. Experience breeds confidence. The apostle teacheth us so, Rom. v. 4. When we have had former experience of God's readiness to hear us, it is an argument that breeds confidence of the like audience for the future. He that delivered me out of the mouth of the lion,' &c. God, that hath been gracious, surely will be gracious still, for then promises are sensibly confirmed, and then former mercies are pledges of future. By giving, God becomes a debtor: Mat. vi. 25, Is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment?' Our Saviour's argument was this, If God give life, he will give food; if a body, he will give raiment. If he hath given grace, the earnest of the Spirit, tie will give glory. If he hath given us Christ, he will give us other things together with him. If he hath begun with us, he will end with us, Phil. i. 6. One mercy is the pledge of another.

3. We are endeared to God not only by acts of duty, but by every act of mercy. What is the argument he urgeth for Sion: Zech. iii. 2, Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? The Lord rebuke thee, Satan.' Have not I delivered Sion, and shall I suffer that to be destroyed which I have delivered? The Lord urgeth his own mercy and his former kindness.

Use. To quicken us not to grow weary of dealing with God. Let us go often to God. Men think it an uncivil importunity to be required to do more when they have done already; Solomon gives us that advice, Prov. xxv. 17, Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house, lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.' Men waste by giving, but God doth not; when you have been with him, and he hath done liberally for you, yet he

upbraids you not. God, that hath vouchsafed grace, you may desire the continuance of his grace, and to crown his own grace.

Secondly, Observe, the mercy which he asks is God's help in a course of holiness, namely, to walk worthy of the mercy.

Doct. 2. They that upon declaring their ways have found mercy with God, their care should be to walk worthy of the mercy.

The Lord hath heard me. What then? Teach me thy statutes.' So Ps. lxxxv. 8, The Lord will speak peace to his people, but let them no more return unto folly.' Mark, when God hath spoken peace, when they have an answer of peace, after you have prayed to God, take heed of turning to folly; do not lose the favour you have got; walk more holily and more worthy of such a mercy: Mat. vi. 12, Forgive us our sins.' What then? Lead us not into temptation.' Upon supposition the Lord hath forgiven us our sins, oh! let us not sin again. Many would invite God to favour their ways when they have no respect to his ways, which is in effect to make God a servant to our lust; but if you would have mercy from the Lord, beg that you might walk worthy of the mercy. The children of God should do so upon a double ground--in point of prudence and thankfulness. la point of prudence, as they have smarted under their former folly; and in point of thankfulness, as they have tasted the Lord's grace in his answer.

1. When you have declared your way with brokenness and bitterness of heart, you have experience of the evil of sin; and when you know how bitter it is by sound remorse, it is folly to return to it again: Josh. xxii. 17, mark the reason, Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed unto this day?' Our former sense of the evil of sin when declaring it should be a restraint to us, else your cure is in vain. A man that is recovered out of a deep disease is willing to escape the like again; or, as Christ said to the man that

had an infirmity thirty-eight years, Go thy way, sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee.' When a man hath had the bitter sense of the fruit of sin, this will make him more cautious for the future. They are foolish children that remember beating no longer than it smarts, when they are scarce yet whole of the old wound. Though God hath taken out the sting of the sin, and granted us comfort, yet remember your former smart, that you may not fall into it again.

2. Out of thankfulness for God's gracious answer. Every answer of grace leaves an obligation upon the sinner that he may not offend God again. See what a holy argument is used, Ezra ix. 13, Should we after such a deliverance as this break thy commandment?' Will you again relapse? So Luke vii. 47, For her sins are forgiven her, therefore she loved much.' Grace melts the heart. When a man hath received much mercy from God, his heart is wrought out into thankfulness; and the more they have been in sin, the more will they be in godliness when once they have tasted the sweetness of pardon, and had an answer of grace from God.

Thirdly, Note, they that would steer their course according to God's holy will had need of the conduct and assistance of his Holy Spirit; for he goes to God, O Lord, teach me thy statutes,' Ps. xxv. 4; 1 Show me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths;' and Ps. xxvii. 11, Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies;' and Ps. lxxxvi. 11, Teach me thy way, O Lord, I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.' These places show that he addressed himself to God that he might not follow any sinful course in the time of trouble and temptation, that he might not dishonour God.

SERMON XXVIII.

Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.--Ver. 27.

IN the former verses the man of God layeth forth his calamitous condition, and beggeth comfort and audience, not merely to prosper his affairs, but to better his heart. Many will invite God to favour their ways when they have no respect to his ways, which in effect is to make him a servant to their lusts. But David's chiefest care was about duty rather than success; therefore he desireth God to direct him how to walk in the way of his precepts; his heart was much upon that.

In the close of the former verse he had said, Teach me thy statutes;' and here again, Make me to understand the way of thy precepts,' &c.

In the words there is--(1.) A request; (2.) An argument. Where in is intimated--(1st.) The fruit of divine illumination; he should thereby see his wondrous works. (2d.) His duty thereupon; then will I talk of them. The word signifieth also to meditate. Sept.--I will exercise myself. It should be his delight to think and speak of the admirable goodness of God, and the divine excellencies of his word, and the pleasures that result from the practice of it. (3d.) He intimateth the sincerity of his desire, propounding this as his end, That I may talk; that I may be useful and edifying in my converse with others.

The first thing that I shall observe is, that David doth so often beg again and again for understanding.

Doct. That a sound and saving knowledge of the truths of the gospel is such a blessing as the children and people of God think they can never enough ask of him.

We have abundant proof of it in so much of this psalm as we have

already gone over.

First, What is a sound saving knowledge?

1. Such as doth establish the heart against all delusions, and keepeth us on truth's side. Many have some scraps of knowledge, loose and uncertain motions, [10] but they are not settled and grounded in the truth, and therefore the unlearned and unstable are joined together: 2 Peter iii. 16, Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction.' Unskilful and unsettled Christians lie open to every fancy; they have not such a stock of truth as may keep them savoury and sound in the faith. To be able to prattle a little in religion is not sound knowledge, but we must be grounded and settled in the faith,' Col. i. 23; that is, have not only some floating opinion, but well-grounded persuasion of the truth, so as we know we are upon firm ground, and dare venture our souls upon it, and may build surely and safely upon such principles. He calleth it elsewhere, Col. ii. 2, The riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.' When men rest contented with obvious truths, or a slight knowledge of the common and easy principles of Christianity, there is not such an awe upon their practice, nor any establishment of their judgments, but, like light chaff, they are soon carried with the blasts of temptation, and the winds of error. And therefore we need to ask again and again, Give me an understanding of the way of thy precepts.'

2. A sound saving knowledge is such as causeth the soul to lie under the dominion, life, and power of the truth, and aweth and commandeth the heart into obedience: John viii. 32, Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free;' when our knowledge freeth us from the slavery of sin. In others, that content themselves with a naked

knowledge, truth is held captive, and cannot break out with any sovereignty in their conversations: Rom. i. 18, Holding the truth in unrighteousness.' Lust beareth sway, but truth lieth under fetters and restraint; it may talk its fill, like a man in bonds, but it can do nothing.

3. When it giveth us prudence how to practise. This is that which David beggeth of God, to understand the way of his precepts; that is, to be taught how to walk in each duty and point of conversation, after what sort he may live and direct his life. It is not sufficient to know the meaning of the word in general, to have a notional understanding of it; but to reduce it to practice, where, and when, and how we ought to perform each action. Some have a naked model of truth, are wise in generals, but fail in the application of the rule, and are to seek in the ordering of their steps, and all particular cases: 1 Peter iii. 7, Husbands, dwell with your wives as men of knowledge.' Then is a man a man of knowledge when he knoweth how to order the passages of his life in every relation according to the will of God. The narrow way of obedience is hardly found, hardly kept, and easily mistaken, especially where prejudices, lusts, and interests, are apt to pervert us. Therefore prudence to apply the rule is necessary: Ps. cxix. 33, Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, that I may keep it to the end;' not only in the general points of faith and godliness, but that it may season all our actions, that we may be made partakers of the sweet refreshments that flow from it; such a knowledge as endeth in a taste: 1 Peter iii. 2, 3, As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted,' &c. So Ps. xix. 8, The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;' when we do so approve and follow the Lord's directions that we experience the sweetness, and are acquainted with the peace and joy in the Holy

Ghost; such an understanding as begets judgment and feeling, or maketh us to find power and comfort in the word.

Secondly, The children of God think this can never be enough asked of God. Why?

1. Because of the excellency of knowledge: Light is comfortable, and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun,' much more the light of the gospel shining in upon our minds. Oh, what a pleasant thing is that, when all clouds vanish, and the truths of God are fully cleared up to the soul! None knoweth the sweetness of it but he that hath experienced it: Prov. xxiv. 13, 14, My son, eat thou honey because it is good, and the honeycomb which is sweet to thy taste; so shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul, when thou hast found it.' The more perfect the operation of any faculty of the soul is, the greater the contentment. The conscience in the feeling of God's love, the heart when it findeth liberty in the ways of God, and the understanding upon the sight of the truth, cause all doubts and scruples to vanish. Therefore certainly they that know anything of God will be pressing to know more of his nature and will; one degree draweth on another. Moses desireth God, Tell me thy name,' Exod. iii. 13, 14. Then Show me thy glory,' Exod. xxxiii. 18. And he said, I beseech thee show me thy glory.' And Hosea vi. 3, Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.' They are not cloyed, but desire more. The more men know the things of God, the more they admire them; the more they admire them, the more they love them; and the more they love them, the more they desire to know of them. And therefore do they insist so much upon this request, Make me to understand the way of thy precepts.'

2. Because of the vastness and latitude of it. Knowledge is a growing thing; religion cannot be taken up all at once. We receive a little now, and a little anon; as narrow-mouthed vessels take in things drop

by drop. We read of Jesus Christ, that he grew in knowledge: we do not read that he grew in grace: Luke ii. 52, He increased in wisdom and stature;' as his body increased in stature, so his soul in wisdom. And still Christians are growing in knowledge, and understand more of the mysteries of the gospel. Though speculative know ledge may be at a stand, and a man may see round about the compass of revealed truths, yet practical knowledge is never at a stand. Directive, affective, operative knowledge is never at a stand, but increaseth, daily. And therefore the apostle saith, He that thinketh he knoweth anything, knoweth nothing as he ought to know,' 1 Cor. viii. 2. Many think they know as much as can be taught them; surely they have no experience.

3. Natural blindness is an obstinate disease, and hardly cured; therefore again and again we had need to pray, Open mine eyes, teach me thy statutes, make me to understand the way of thy precepts. Our ignorance is great when it is cured in part. The clouds of temptation and carnal affection cause it to return upon us, so that we know not what we know. Therefore open my eyes, cause me to understand.' Yea, the more we know, the more is our ignorance discovered to us: Prov. xxx. 2, 3, Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man: I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy;' Job xlii. 5, I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.' Alas! a poor little hearsay knowledge availeth not. They abhor themselves when they have more intimate acquaintance; none so confident as a young professor that knoweth a few truths, but in a weak and imperfect manner. The more we know indeed, the more sensible we are of our ignorance, how liable to this mistake and that, that we dare not trust ourselves for an hour.

4. Because of the profit that cometh by knowledge. All grace from first to last cometh in by the understanding. God in the work of grace

followeth the order which he hath established in nature. Reason and judgment are to go before the will; and therefore, when the work of grace is first begun in us, it beginneth in the understanding: Renewed in knowledge,' Col. iii. 10. So the increase of grace: 2 Peter i. 12, Grace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord.' As the beginning is by light, so is all the gradual progress of the spiritual life; strength to bear afflictions, strength in conflicts, is by powerful reasons; yea, the perfect change that is made in us in glory is by the vision of God: We shall see him as he is, and shall be like him.' If we had more knowledge of God and his ways, we should trust him more, fear him more, love him more. Trust him, Ps. ix. 10, And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.' If God were more known he would be better trusted: 2 Tim. i. 12, I know whom I have believed;' I dare trust him with my soul. More feared: 3 John 11, Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doth good is of God, he that doth evil hath not seen God.' Eight thoughts of God would not let us sin so freely; one truth or other would fall upon us, and give check to the temptation: as feared, so loved more. The more explicit thoughts we have of his excellency, the more are our hearts drawn out to him: John iv. 10, If thou knewest the gift,' &c. Christ would not lie by as a neglected thing if he were more known in all his worth and excellency.

Use. The first use is to press you to get knowledge, and look upon it as a singular grace if the Lord will give you to understand and apply the comfort and direction of his holy word: John xv. 15, Hence forth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.' To be taught the mind of God is a

greater act of friendship than if God should give a man all the treasures of the world; to make himself known so as you may love him, fear him, trust him. When we can apply this for our comfort, oh! then, cry for knowledge, lift up thy voice for understanding; seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures,' Prov. ii. 3, 4. Go to God, and be earnest with him, Lord, make me to understand the way of thy precepts.' We can walk in the ways of sin without a teacher, but we cannot walk in the ways of God. And cry, lift up thy voice. We are earnest for quickening and enlargement; but be earnest also for understanding. Now a large prayer without endeavours is nothing worth. Dig in the mines of knowledge, search into the scripture, do not gather up a few scattered notions, but look into the bowels. Silver doth not lie on the surface of the earth, but deep in the bottom of it, and will cost much labour and digging to come at. If we would have any good stock of knowledge, which will prevent vain thoughts, carnal discourse, abundance of heart-perplexing scruples and doubts, and much darkness and uncomfortableness of spirit, it will cost us some labour and pains. The more knowledge we have, the more are we established against error: 2 Peter iii. 17, Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.' The more you have of this divine saving knowledge, the greater check upon sin: Ps. cxix. 11, I have hid thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.' One truth or another will rise up in defiance of the temptation. The greater the impulsion to duty, the more of the law of God, the more it urgeth the conscience, Prov. vi. 22. It maketh us more useful in all our relations:--Husbands, 1 Peter iii. 7, Dwell with them according to knowledge,' &c. Parents, Eph. vi. 4, Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.'

Friends, Rom. xv. 14, And I myself also am persuaded of you my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.' Magistrates, that they may discern Christ's interest, Ps. ii. 10, Be wise now, therefore, kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth.' When Solomon asked wisdom, the thing pleased the Lord. And lastly, more comfortable in ourselves; that they may comfort and build up one another whenever they meet together. Use 2. To press you to grow in knowledge. None have such confidence and rejoicing in God as those that have a clear sight and understanding of his will revealed in his word. Let your knowledge--(1.) Be more comprehensive. At first our thoughts run in a narrow channel. There are certain general truths absolutely necessary to salvation, as concerning our misery by sin, and the sufficiency of Christ to help us; but if we might rest in these, why hath God given us so copious a rule? The general sort of Christians content themselves to see with others' eyes, get the knowledge of a few truths, and look no further. Why, then, hath God given so large a rule? Fundamentals are few; believe them, live well, and you shall be saved. This is the religion of most. This is as if a man in building should only be careful to lay a good foundation, no matter for roof, windows, walls. If a man should untile your house, and tell you the foundation standeth, the main buttresses are safe, you would not like of it. A man is bound, according to his capacity and opportunity, to know all scripture, the consequences of every truth. God may and doth accept of our imperfect knowledge, but not when men are negligent and do not use the means. To be willingly ignorant of the lesser ways of God is a sin. We should labour to know all that God hath revealed. (2.) More distinct. Why? Truths are best known in their frame and dependence; as God's works of creation, when viewed singly and apart, every day's work was good, but when viewed altogether in their

correspondence and mutual proportion to each other, were very good, Gen. i. 31. So all truths of God, take them singly, are good; but when you have them in their frame, and see how one suits with the other, and what a sweet harmony there is between all the parts of religion, then they are very good. (3.) More experimental, that you may taste the sweetness and power of the truths that you know: Phil. iii. 10, That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.' When we feel what we know, that is a mighty confirmation. The senses give the best demonstration. It is a disparagement to know Christ and be never the better for him; to have a knowledge of all the excellency of Christ, and how suitable he is to the soul; yet to feel nothing of comfort and quickening in our consciences. (4.) More practical: 1 John ii. 3, 4, And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments: he that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' Otherwise it is but a talking by rote, a man savingly knoweth no more than he practiseth. He that doth but speak after others, it is a rehearsal rather than a knowledge. What is practical light? It is directive and persuasive. (1st.) It is directive. A man grows more prudent, and more able to guide his course according to the rules of religion; faith is op posed not only to ignorance but to folly: ye fools, and slow of heart to believe.' A man may be a knowing man, yet a very fool in spirituals, if he hath not a knowledge how to guide him to trust in God, fear God, love God, and serve God, Hosea xiv. 7. (2d.) That is practical knowledge when it is persuasive, when it hath a lively force and efficacy upon the heart. Second point, Those whom God maketh to understand the way of his precepts see wondrous things therein.

Ps. cxix. 18. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things

out of thy law.' Wonders are such things as do transcend our capacity; so all things about God are above the sphere of men, as the things of men are above the capacity of beasts. Now, the more understanding and insight we have in these things the more we wonder. Wonder usually is the fruit of ignorance; how then can knowledge breed wonder? The word discovers the o'ti, that it is so; but the manner how it is, and the wisdom of the contrivance, is that which begets reverence and admiration in a gracious soul; as Nazianzen saith of the eternal generation of Christ, Let the eternal generation of God be adored in silence. It is a marvellous thing to know that there are three in one, the Son from eternity, begotten before all the world, &c. So when we look into these things, our knowledge doth only show that they are; but what they are, and how great they are, that exceeds our capacity, and therefore we wonder.

1. The doctrines of the scripture are wonderful concerning God and his works. The nature of God is a depth which we cannot fathom, no more than a nutshell can empty the ocean: Ps. cxxxix. 6, Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it.' It is above our capacity; for a finite thing cannot comprehend an infinite.

The creation of all things out of nothing, we believe it upon the testimony of the word, but it is too wonderful for us to search it to the bottom; yea, the framing of the body in the womb, so many different things out of the same seed, as flesh, and bones, and muscles, and in such an order and proportion: Ps. cxxxix. 14, I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.' If the commonness did not abate our observation, we would wonder at it. So his providence in governing every creature to their proper ends, especially his care over us, and conduct of us. Many, O Lord, are thy wondrous works which thou hast

done, and thy thoughts which are to usward. They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered,' Ps. xl. 5. But especially the redemption of mankind is wonderful: 1 Tim. iii. 16, And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.' The mysteries of the gospel, every time we think of them, should strike admiration into our hearts. It could not sink into the head of any creature how to satisfy justice, and to make up the breach between God and us. That a virgin should conceive; the word be made flesh; that justice and mercy should so sweetly be brought together, and conspire in the salvation of a lost sinner, all these are wonders; and when we come to believe them indeed, to draw forth comfort from them, these are wonderful to us!

The law of God is wonderful. Look to the precept or the sanction. Look to the precept. A wonderful purity there: I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy law is exceeding broad,' ver. 96 of this psalm. When a child of God sees how the law reacheth every thought, every motion, every operation of his soul, what wonderful purity is here! So a marvellous equity: The law is holy, just, and good;' and the commandment is good.' Rom. vii. 4. God hath given us such a law, if a man were free, yet, to ennoble his nature and live happily, he would choose such a rule. Then to see such wise precepts so ordered that in ten words God should comprise the whole duty of man: Deut. iv. 6, Keep, therefore, and do them; for this is your wisdom, and your understanding in the sight of the nations.' First, God hath provided in his law respects to himself. First the law provides for God, then for the creature. In the first commandment, Thou shalt have no other gods before me;' there is the object of worship. In the second, Thou shalt

not make to thyself a graven image,' &c., the means of worship. Then the manner of worship in the third, Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain.' Then the time of worship in the fourth, Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.' See how the Lord hath built up his law. Then as to men, see first God provides for those viceroys that do represent the great God, as our parents natural and civil, Honour thy father and thy mother,' &c.; then our ordinary neighbour; and there first for his life, and then for his relations, Thou shalt not kill, shalt not commit adultery;' then for his goods, Thou shalt not steal;' then for his good name. When a man sees the law of God in all its explications, when he considers the harmony and correspondence that is between all the parts of the law, then he will cry out, O wonderful! Come to the sanction by which the law is established and confirmed, by promises and rewards, such a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;' that a clod of earth should shine above the stars, and God provide such a happiness for us that we should be like the angels! Then threatenings, that God hath appointed such a punishment to hold the world in awe, as a worm that never dies, and the fire that never goes out;' the worm of conscience that shall vex us with the remembrance of our past folly, and the wrath of God that shall punish us for disobedience, and torment us for evermore. Still, O wonderful! So for the gospel, every article of faith is a mystery to be wondered at--Quot articuli, tot miracula. The disciples wondered when they saw the structure of the temple. Oh, how may we wonder when we see the spiritual temple, that is Jesus Christ in the fulness of his godhead! God dwelt symbolically by outward representations in the temple, but here he dwells bodily. When David had provided such a mass of money, 1 Chron. xxix. 7-9, they fell a wondering. Oh, but when the soul comes to view the unsearchable riches of grace in Christ Jesus, then it may cry out, wonderful! When we see

some rare plot, all things suit harmoniously, we cry out, wonderful! This great mystery of godliness, the more we look into it, the more will we wonder at the wisdom of God discovered in and through Christ Jesus. For external providences, to see how God answers prayers, how he brings about our mercies according to our wants in a way we know not: Ps. xvii. 7, Show thy marvellous loving-kindness, thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee.' In the very common favours that God vouchsafeth to us, there is something may be observed that may make us wonder, either for the time, manner, or measure. Also, in the internal effects of his grace upon the heart, when a man is convinced, and his own heart is ripped up to him by the power of the word, 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. iv. 12; and John iv. 29. As when Christ had convinced the woman of Samaria, and ripped up her life, she says, Come, see a man that hath told me all that ever 1 did.' When God comes in with such convictive evidence, and rips up our privy thoughts, wonderful. But especially in changing and renewing the heart; when a lion shall be turned into a lamb, a dunghill become a bed of spices, a swine become a saint, a persecutor an apostle, we, that had such bolts and restraints of sin upon us, when we get out; when we that were so wedded to sensual delights and worldly vanities are brought to delight in God, this is truly admirable! 2 Peter i. 9, He hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.' And then the comfort we have by the word of God, and the marvellous sweetness the practice of it diffuseth through the soul, it is unspeakable and glorious, 1 Peter i. 8. So Phil. iv. 7, The peace of God that passes understanding shall guard your hearts,' &c. When a man hath settling and composure of spirit in the midst of tempests and storms, the heart is guarded against all fears and sorrows. When we consider what God hath done for our souls, every grace is a wonder: to depend upon what we see not; to

be safe in the midst of a storm; to die, yet live; to be poor, yet make many rich; to have nothing, yet possess all things; these operations of grace are all wonders.

Use 1. It informeth us that a man must be carried above his own sense, reason, and light, to understand such wonderful things. It is the apostle's argument: 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.' All things are seen by a suitable light, spiritual things are spiritually discerned, divine things by a divine light--Non loquendum de Deo sine lumine. If beasts would judge of human affairs, they must have the reason of men; if men of divine things, they must have divine illumination. There is a cognation between the faculty and the object.

2. It informeth us what reason we have to respect the word of God. Many curious wits despise it as a mean knowledge in comparison of Aristotle, Plato, &c. All the doctrines of it are a continued mystery; there is nothing vulgar and of small moment there. If there be some rudiments, something common with other writings, there are greater things than these, even the deep things of God. Never was there such a revelation made to the world as this. You despise that which angels wonder at: Eph. iii. 10, And to make all men see what is the fellow ship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things in Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' And 1 Peter i. 12, Which things the angels desire to look into.' David saith, Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my soul keep them.' Oh, let this book of God be more dear to us! Oh, what trifles are all worldly riches to the

unsearchable riches of the Lord's grace! Oh, how stupid are they that are not taken with such great things as these!

3. Examine your profiting. It is one degree of profit to see so much in the word of God as to admire at it. Admire God's transcendent goodness in the pardon of sins. God giveth us such admirable precepts, assisting us in the performance of them, accepting our imperfect obedience; this giveth wonderful comfort in all our afflictions.

Thirdly, Observe, he that is sensible of the wondrous things that are in God's word will be talking of them.

1. It will be so.

2. It should be so.

1. It will be so. When the heart is deeply affected, the tongue cannot hold, but will run out in expressions of it; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' When cheered and revived in their afflictions, they are transported with the thought, with the excellency of God: Ps. lxvi. 15, Come, and I will tell you what God hath done for my soul.' The woman, when she had found the lost groat, calleth her neighbours to rejoice with her. He that hath but a cold knowledge, will not be so full of good discourse.

2. It should be so, in a threefold respect--for the honour of God, the edification of others, and for our own profit.

[1.] For the honour of God, to whom we are so much indebted, to bring him into request with those about us. Experience deserveth praise; when you have found the Messiah, call one another to him: John i. 41-45, Andrew calleth Peter, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias; and Philip calleth Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph.'

[2.] For the edification of others: Luke xxii. 32, And thou being

converted, strengthen thy brethren.' True grace is communicative as fire, &c.

[3.] For our own profit. He that useth his knowledge shall have more; whereas, on the contrary, full breasts, if not sucked, become dry. In the dividing, the loaves increased. All gifts, but much more spiritual, which are the best, are improved by exercise.

Well, then, get a sense and experience of God's truth, and then speak of it to others. That which we have seen we are best able to report of. God giveth us experiences to this end, that we may be able to speak of it to others. None can speak with such confidence as those that have felt what they speak. Christ saith those that come to him shall not only have a spring of comfort themselves, but flow forth to others: John vii. 38, He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'

Fourth point, In our desires of knowledge it is meet to propound a good end; as David here beggeth understanding, that he might see and discover to others what he had found in God's law. To know that we may know is foolish curiosity; to know that we may be known is vanity and ostentation; to see that we may sell our knowledge is baseness and covetousness. To edify others, this is charity; to be edified ourselves, this is wisdom. Good things must be sought to a good end: Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts,' James iv. 3. All things must be sought for to holy ends, to glorify God; much more spiritual gifts. The only good end is God's glory: Open thou my lips, that I may show forth thy praise,' Ps. li. 15. We are to desire knowledge, that we may the more enjoy God, and the more glorify him.

There is a natural desire of knowledge, even of divine knowledge; but we must look to our ends, that we may grow in grace, 1 Peter ii. 3;

that we may be more useful for God; not merely to store the head with notions, or to vaunt it over others, as having attained more than they. No; it should be only to do good to our own souls, and to save others: Rom. xv. 14, I am persuaded that ye are filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another.' But now, to make a market of our knowledge, or to use it for our vile ends, that is naught. Not for boasting, ostentation, curiosity, and vain speculation, but for practice, should be our end. When we improve our stock well, we please God, and shall have eternal profit ourselves.

Chapter 32

SERMON XXIX.

My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according to thy word.--Ver. 28.

A CHRISTIAN should neither be humbled to the degree of dejection, nor confident to the degree of security; and therefore he is to have a double eye, upon God and upon himself, upon his own necessities and upon God's all-sufficiency. You have both represented in this verse (as often in this psalm), his case and his petition.

1. His case is represented, my soul melteth for heaviness.

2. His petition and request to God, strengthen thou me according to thy word.

First, His case, My soul melteth for heaviness.' In the original the word signifies droppeth away.' The Septuagint hath it thus, My soul fell asleep through weariness.' Probably by a fault of the transcribers, one word for another. My soul droppeth. It may relate--(1.) To the plenty of his tears, as the word is used in scripture: Job xvi. 20, My friends scorn me; but mine eye poureth out tears unto God,' or droppeth to God, the same word; so it notes his deep sorrow and sense of his condition. The like allusion is in Josh. vii. 5, The heart of the people melted, and became as water.' Or, (2.) It relates to his languishing under the extremity of his sorrow; as an unctuous thing wasteth by dropping, so was his soul even dropping away. Such a like expression is used in Ps. cvii. 26, Their soul is melted because of trouble;' and of Jesus Christ, whose strength was exhausted by the greatness of his sorrows, it is said, Ps. xxii. 14, I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels.' Be the allusion either to the one

or to the other, either to the dropping of tears or to the melting and wasting away of what is fat and unctuous, it notes a vehement sorrow and brokenness of heart, that is clear: his soul was even melting away; and unless God did help him, he could hold out no longer.

Doct. That God's children oftentimes lie under the exercise of such deep and pressing sorrow as is not incident to other men.

David expresseth himself here as in a languishing condition which is not ordinary, My soul droppeth or melteth away for heaviness.'

The reasons of the point are three:--

1. Their burdens are greater.

2. They have a greater sense than others.

3. Their exercise is greater, because their reward and comfort is so great.

1. Their burdens are greater than others, as temptation, desertion, trouble for sin. The good and evil of the spiritual life is greater than the good and evil of any other life whatsoever. As their joys are unspeakable and glorious, so their sorrows are sometimes above expression: A wounded spirit who can bear?' Prov. xviii. 14. Common natural courage will carry a man through other afflictions, oh! but when the arrows of the Almighty stick in their heart, Job. vi. 3, that is an insupportable burden. According to the excellency of any life, so are the annoyances and the benefits of that life. Man, that hath a higher life than the beasts, is more capable of delights and sorrows than beasts are of pain and pleasure; and so a Christian that lives the life of faith is more capable of a higher burden. Consider, they that live a spiritual life have immediately to do with the infinite and eternal God; and therefore when he creates joy in the heart, oh, what a joy is that! And when God doth but lay his hand upon them, how great is their trouble! Sin is a heavier burden than affliction, and the wrath

of God than the displeasure of man--Coelestis ira quos premit miseros facit, humana nullos. Evils of an eternal influence are more than temporal, therefore must needs be greater and more burdensome.

2. They have a greater sense than others, their hearts being entendered by religion. None have so quick a feeling as the children of God. Why? Because they have a clearer understanding, and more tender and delicate affections.

[1.] Because they have a clearer understanding, and see more into the nature of things than those that are drowned in present delights and contentments. The loss of God's favour carnal men know not how to value, but the saints prefer it above life: The favour of God is better than life,' Ps. lxiii. 3. Therefore, if the Lord do but suspend the wonted manifestations of his grace and favour, how are their hearts troubled!' Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled,' Ps. xxx. 7. A child of God, that lives by his favour, cannot brook his absence; therefore, when they lose the sweet sense of his favour and reconciliation with him, oh, what a trouble is this to their souls! Other men make no reckoning of it at all. And so for sin, common spirits value it only by the damage it doth to their worldly interests; when it costs them dear, they may hang the head: Jer. ii. 9, Now know what an evil and bitter thing it is to forsake the Lord.' A worldly man may know something of the evil of sin in the effects of it, but a child of God seeth into the nature of it; they value it by the wrong, by the offence that is done to God, and so are humbled more for the evil in sin, than for the evil after sin. So for the wrath of God; carnal men have gross thoughts of it, and may howl upon their beds when their pleasant things are taken from them; but God's children are humbled because their father is angry; they observe more the displeasure of God in afflicting providences than others do; and one spark of God's wrath

lighting into their consciences, oh, what sad effects doth it work! more than all other straits whatsoever. Thus they have a clearer understanding, they see more into the dreadfulness of God's wrath, into the evil of sin, and they know how to prize and value his favour more than others.

[2.] They have delicate and tender affections. Grace, that gives us a new heart, doth also give us a soft heart: Ezek. xxxvi. 26, I will put a new heart into them.' What kind of heart? A heart of flesh,' as the old heart that is taken out is a heart of stone. A new soft heart doth sooner receive the impression of divine terror than another heart doth. A stamp is more easily left upon wax, or a soft thing, than upon a stone. Or thus, a slave hath a thicker skin than one nobly born, tenderly brought up; therefore he is not so sensible of stripes. A wicked man hath more cause to be troubled than a godly man; but he is not a man of sense; he hath a heart of stone, and therefore is not so affected either with God's dealings with him, or his dealings with God. Look, as the weight of the blows must not only be considered, but the delicateness of the constitution, so, because their hearts are of a softer and more tender constitution, being hearts of flesh, and receptive of a deeper impression, therefore their sorrows exceed the sorrows of other men.

3. The good that they expect is exceeding great, and their exercise is accordingly; for after the rate of our comforts so are our afflictions. Wicked men, that have nothing to expect in the world to come but horrors and pains, they wallow now in ease and plenty: Luke xvi. 25, Son, in thy lifetime thou receivedst thy good things.' God will be behindhand with none of his creatures; those that do him common service have common blessings in a larger measure than his own people have; they have their good things, that is, such as their hearts choose and

affect. But now good men, that expect another happiness, they must be content to be harassed and exercised, that they may be fitted and prepared for the enjoyment of this happiness. As the stones that were to be set in the temple were to be hewn and squared, so are they to be hewn, squared, and exercised with bitter and sharp things, that they may be prepared for the more glory.

Use 1. Then carnal men are not fit to judge of the saints when they report their experiences, if it be with them above the rate of other men. When afflicted consciences speak of their wounds, or revived hearts of their comforts, their joys are supernatural, and so are their sorrows; and therefore a natural man thinks all to be but fancy, all those joys of the Spirit, that they are but fanatic delusions; and he doth not understand the weight of their sorrows. When a man is well to see to, and hath health, strength, and wealth, they marvel what should make such a man heavy; all their care is to eat, drink, and be merry; and therefore because they are not acquainted with the exercises of a feeling conscience, they think all this trouble is but a little mopishness and melancholy. Poor contrite sinners, who are ready to weep out their hearts at their eyes, can only understand such expressions as these, My soul melteth away for heaviness.' There is another manner of thing in trouble of conscience than the carnal world doth imagine; and many that have all well about them, great estates, much befriended and esteemed in the world, yea, for the best things, yet when God hides his face, poor souls, how are they troubled! If he do but let a spark of his wrath into their conscience, and hide his face from them, it is a greater burden to them than all the miseries of the world.

David was a man valiant, that had a heart as the heart of a Son,' 2 Sam. xvii. 10. He was a man cheerful, called the sweet singer of Israel,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 1; of a ruddy sanguine complexion, and a great

master of music. He was no fool, but a man wise as the angel of God; and yet you see what a bitter sense he had of his spiritual condition. And when a man so stout and valiant, so cheerful, so wise, complains so heavily, will you count this mopishness and foolish melancholy? But alas 1 men that never knew the weight of sin cannot otherwise conceive of it; they were never acquainted with the infiniteness of God, nor power of his anger, and have not a due sense of eternity; therefore they think so slightly of these matters of the spiritual life.

Use 2. Be not too secure of spiritual joys. We warn you often of security, or falling asleep in temporal comforts, and we must warn you of this kind of security also in spiritual. All things change. You may find David in this psalm in a different posture of spirit; some times rejoicing in the word of God above all riches, and at other times his soul melteth away for very heaviness. God's own people are liable to great trouble of spirit; therefore you should not be secure as to these spiritual enjoyments, which come and go according to God's pleasure. Men that build too much upon spiritual suavities or sensible consolations occasion a snare to their own souls; partly as they are less watchful for the present (like mariners which have been at sea, when they get into the haven, take down their tackling, and make merry, and think never to see storm more), and so lose that which they are so confident of keeping; by their negligence and carelessness their spiritual comfort is gone. And there is another mischief--the loss is more heavy, because it was never thought of. And therefore in preparation of heart we should be ready to lose our inward comforts, as well as estates and outward conveniences. In heaven alone we have continual day without cloudings or night; but here there will be changes.

Use 3. Let us not judge of our condition if this should be our case,

that is, if we should lie under pressing troubles, such as do even break our spirits. This was the case of the Son of God; his soul was troubled, and he knew not what to say: John xii. 27, My soul is troubled; what shall I say?' And many of his choicest servants have been sorely exercised--Heman, an heir of heaven, and yet compassed about with the pains of hell; Job not only spoiled of all his goods, but for a time shut out from the comforts of God's Spirit. Our business in such a case is not to examine and judge, but to trust. Neither to determine of our condition one side or other, but to stay our hearts upon God, and so to make use of offers and inviting promises, when we cannot make use of conditional and assuring promises. So Isa. 1. 10, He that walketh in darkness, and seeth no light,' is directed, let him trust in the name of the Lord.' That is our business in such a case of deep distress, to make a new title rather than dispute the old one; and stay our hearts on God's mercy.

Thus much concerning David's case; which because it often comes under consideration in this Psalm, I would pass over more briefly.

Secondly, I come from David's case to his petition or request to God, Strengthen thou me according to thy word.' Where you have--

1. The request itself.

2. An argument to enforce it.

First, The request itself, Strengthen me;' that is the benefit asked.

Doct. 1. Observe this in the general, he doth but now and then drop out a request for temporal safety, but all along his main desire is for grace and for support rather than deliverance.

The children of God, the main thing that their hearts run upon is sustentation and spiritual support rather than outward deliverance: Ps. cxxxviii. 3, I called upon the Lord, and he heard me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.' Mark, David judgeth that to be an

audience, to be a hearing of prayer; though he had not deliverance, yet he had experience of inward comfort, that was it which supported him. The children of God value themselves by the inward man, rather than the outward. What David here prays for himself, Paul prays for others: Eph. iii. 16, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.' Yea, they are contented with the decays of the outward man, so that the inward man may increase in strength: 2 Cor. iv. 16, Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' The outward man in Paul's dialect is the body, with the conveniences and all the appurtenances thereof, as health, beauty, strength, wealth; all this is the outward man. Now this is not a Christian's desire, to increase in the world, or to make a fair show in the flesh; no, but his heart is set upon this, to grow stronger in the spirit, that the soul, as furnished with the graces of the Spirit, may thrive; this is the inner man. To insist upon this a little.

1. It is the inward man that is esteemed with God, and therefore that is it the saints mainly look after. God doth not look upon men according to their outward condition, pomp, and appearances in the world, but according to the inward endowments of the heart: 1 Sam. xvi. 7, Man's eye is upon the outward appearance, but God regards the heart;' and the hidden man of the heart,' that is said to be an ornament of great price with God,' 1 Peter iii. 4. Intellectual beauty is that which is esteemed in heaven, and spiritual wealth is only current in the other world. Poor creatures, that are led by sense, they esteem one another by these outward things; but God esteems men by grace, by the soul, how that is cherished and strengthened; and though we are otherwise never so well accomplished, we are hated if we have not his image stamped upon us.

2. The everlasting welfare of the whole person depends upon the flourishing of the inward man. When we come to put off the upper garment of the flesh, the poor soul will be destitute, naked, and harbourless, if we have made no provision for it, 2 Cor. v. 3, and then both body and soul are undone for ever. When the soul is to be thrown out of doors, whither will it go, if it hath not an eternal building in heaven to receive it? The soul is the man; the body follows the state of the soul, but the soul doth not follow the state of the body. The life of God, which he doth begin in the soul, does in time renew and perfect the body too. The apostle saith, Rom. vi. 11, The Spirit that now dwelleth in us will raise up our mortal bodies.' But now those that seek to preserve the outward man with the neglect of the inner, in time ruin both body and soul. Well, then, here is their care.

3. The loss of the outward man may be recompensed and made up by the strength of grace that is put into the inner man, but the loss of the inner man cannot be made up by the perfections of the outward man. A man that is afflicted in his outward estate, God makes it up in grace; if he makes him rich in faith, in the experiences of his favour, the loss is made up and supplied more abundantly; and the children of God can comfort themselves in this, that their inward man is strengthened and renewed day by day, 2 Cor. iv. 16; so that a man may be happy notwithstanding breaches made upon the outward man. But when there is a wounded spirit, and God breaks into the inward man, then what good will riches, estate, and all these things do? They are as unsavoury things as the white of an egg.

4. The outward man may fit us for converse with men, but the in ward man with God. We need bodies, and organs of speech, and reason, and present supplies, which fit us to converse with men; but we converse with God by thoughts and by grace, and by the perfections of the inward

man; this fits us for communion with him.

5. The life and strength of the inward man is a more noble thing than the strength of the outward man or the bodily life, for it draws nearer to the life of God, as the life and strength of the body draws nearer to the life, pleasure, and happiness of a beast. By the bodily life we eat, drink, labour, sleep, and so do the beasts; yea, many of the beasts excel us in the perfection of that kind of life. Lions excel in strength, roes in swiftness, eagles in long age; none of their pleasures are soured with remorse of conscience. But the inward spiritual life is called the life of God, Eph. iv. 18.

6. The inward life is the beginning of our life in heaven. A glorified saint and a saint militant upon earth both live the life of God; and the life of grace is the same life for kind, though not for degree; and one that is glorified and one here upon earth differ but as a child and a man. But now the life of sense and the life of grace differ as a toad and a man, not only in degree, but also in kind.

7. Yet further, this is that great thing which God hath been at such great expense about, to raise the being of the new creature: John vi. 51, This is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world.' The supports, the strength of the inward man cost dearer than all other comforts whatsoever: it must have nobler supports, it must have the blood of Christ, daily supplies from heaven. But the other life is called the life of our hands, Isa. lvii. 10. We patch up to ourselves some conveniences for the sensible life by labour and service here in the world. Well, then, this is that which the children of God do mostly look after, that the inward life may be kept free from annoyance, and fit for the purposes of grace.

Use. The use of this is to check our carnal and preposterous care for the outward man, to the neglect of the inward. How much are we for the

outward man, that it may be well fed and well clothed, well at ease for the present life! There is all our care; but not so careful to get the soul furnished with grace, and strengthened and renewed by continued influences from Christ. Certainly if men did look after soul-strength, they would be more careful to wait upon God for his blessing. You may know the disproportion of your care for outward things and for the inward man by these questions.

1. How much do you prize God's day, the means of grace, opportunities of worship, that are for the inward man? The Sabbath-day is a feast-day for souls. Now, when men are weary of it, it is the most burdensome day of all the week round: Amos viii. 5, When will the Sabbath be gone, that we may set forth wheat?' It is a sign they are carnal, when men count that day the only lost day: as Seneca saith of the Jews, they lost the full seventh of their lives, speaking of the Sabbath-day. So carnal men think it is a lost day to them, they look upon the Sabbath as a melancholy interruption of their affairs and business. The apostle James saith of those that are begotten by God, chap. i. 9, that they are swift to hear.' Certainly they that have an inward man to maintain, another life than an outward and animal life, must have the supply and will look after the comforts of it.

2. Consider how differently we are concerned with bodily and soul concernments. If the body be but a little diseased, if we want an appetite to a meal, or a little sleep in the night, we complain of it presently; we inquire what is the cause, and look for a remedy. But what a wonderful disproportion is there as to the soul! It is a strange expression that, 3 John 2, I wish that thy body prosper as thy soul prospers.' Alas! we may say of the most, Oh, that their souls did prosper as their bodies, as they flourish in the conveniencies of the outward man!

3. What care have you for the inward man, to adorn the soul, to beautify it with grace, that it may be of price and esteem with God, or to fortify it with grace? Now, when all our strength and travail is laid out for that which doth not conduce to the inward life, Isaiah lv. 2, and we lay out our money for that which is not bread, it is a sign we are wholly carnal. We read in ecclesiastical story of one that wept when he saw a wanton woman decking herself with a great deal of care to please her lovers; saith he, Have I been so careful to deck my soul for Christ Jesus?

4. Do you take in spiritual refreshments, even when afflictions abound? 2 Cor. i. 5, As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ;' then you are affected as the children of God, whose heart and care runs out mainly for the in ward man. This in general.

Doct. 2. Secondly, more especially observe he goes to God for strength. Let me show--

1. What is this spiritual strength.

2. How it is given out.

3. How God is concerned in it. David goes to God, Lord, strengthen me.'

First, What spiritual strength is. It is God's perfecting of his work. Strength supposeth life, therefore in general it is God's renewed influence; when he hath planted habits of grace, he comes and strengthens. There is gratia praeveniens, operans, et co-operans--there is preventing grace, working grace, and co-working grace. Preventing grace is when God converts us, when the Lord turns us to himself, and doth plant grace in the soul at first. Working grace is when God strengthens the habit. Co-working grace, when God stirs up the act, and helps us in the exercise of the grace we have. First he plants grace into the heart, then there is a constant influence, as the two

olive-trees in Zechariah were always dropping into the lamps; and then by excitation and co-operation he stirs it up. Saith Austin, Unless God gives us the faculties, and unless he gives us the will, we can do nothing; and unless he concurs with the exercise of these faculties, still we cannot work in the spiritual life as we ought to do; and therefore first God infuseth grace, and then strengthens grace; first he worketh in us, then by us. First we are objects of his work, then instruments, to show wherein the strength of the soul lies.

1. There are planted in the soul habits of grace. There are not only high operations of grace, but permanent and fixed habits, the seed of God that remaineth within us, 1 John iii. 9, which cannot be the indwelling of the Spirit; for this seed of God is some created thing: Ps. li. 10, Create in me a clean heart, God;' and it is some thing that grows: 2 Peter iii. 6, Grow in grace.' And therefore it is evident there are habits of grace planted in the soul, a good stock that we have from God at first, called the good treasure of the heart,' Mat. xii. These habits of grace are called armour of God,' the shield of faith,' the helmet of salvation.' This is the strength of the soul.

2. But besides this, there is a continuance and an increase of these graces, when the Lord confirms his work, and perfects what he hath begun, Phil. i. 16. The apostle most notably sets it forth: 1 Peter v. 10, The God of all grace make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.' All these words concern the habit, or the seed of grace in the soul; and to show God's concurrence towards our preservation in the spiritual state, he useth these words, Make you perfect;' that notes the addition of degrees that are yet wanting; stablish you,' that notes defending that grace which is already planted in the heart from temptation and dangers; and strengthen you,' that is, give you power for action or ability for working; and settle you,' that is to fasten

the root more and more. All may be represented in a tree. Look, as a tree grown downward in the root is defended from the nipping of the weather, and stablished and strengthened against injuries from beasts, and being filled with sap, springs forth, and becomes fruitful; so the Lord settle you, &c.

3. There is a concurrence of God to the act. Grace in habit is not enough, but it must be actuated and directed. About the act there are two things: The Holy Spirit actuates the grace that is implanted, draws it forth into exercise; so it is said, Phil. ii. 13, It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do,' that is, he does apply that grace in our heart, set it a-work; and then there is a directing or regulation of the soul to action: 2 Thes. iii. 5, The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God,' &c. Thus God plants grace in the heart by preventing us with his mercy and loving-kindness, taking us into favour; then he doth stablish us, and perfect it, root it in the soul more and more. Then as to the act, he doth excite and strengthen us.

Secondly, The uses for which we have this strength from God. It serves for three uses--for doing, for suffering, and for conflicting, to bear us out in conflict; as our necessities are many, so must our strength be.

1. Strength to perform duties. Weariness and uncomfortableness will soon fall upon our hearts, and we shall hang off from God, if the Lord doth not put forth a new force, and a new quickening upon our hearts; therefore the spouse saith, Cant. i. 4, Draw me, and we will run after thee. And here in this psalm, When the Lord shall enlarge my heart, I will run the ways of his commandments.' If we would be carried on with any fervour and motion towards God, we must go forth in the strength of God. The soul is a tender thing, and soon discomposed. When we think to go forth and shake ourselves as at other times, as Samson, we shall

find fetters and restraints upon our soul. Therefore God's work must ever be done in God's strength.

2. Strength for bearing of burdens with patience, that we may not faint under them: Col. i. 11, Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.' That we may not faint under our affliction: Prov. xxiv. 10, If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.' God's children, before they go to heaven, will have their trials, they will have many burdens upon them: Heb. vi. 12, Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' There needs not only faith, but patience. There will be trouble. Now a heavy burden need have good shoulders. We pray for strength, that we may break through difficulties and afflictions that we meet in our passage to heaven.

3. Strength for conflicts, that we may break through temptations. A Christian is not only to use the trowel but the sword. We cannot think to discharge duties or bear afflictions without a battle and conflict; therefore we need the strength of the Lord's grace to carry us through. Satan is the great enemy with whom we conflict, he is the manager of the temptation. This is the course of it; the world is the bait; the flesh is the traitor that works within men, which gives advantage to Satan; the devil lieth hidden, and by worldly things seeks to draw off our hearts from God. Now we are assaulted on every side, sometimes by the pleasures of the world, sometimes by the frowns and crosses of it; so that a Christian needs to be fit for all conditions: Phil. iv. 13, I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me;' for every way will the devil be enticing us to sin. Now these conflicts are either solicitations to sin, or tend to weaken our comfort; and in both respects we must have strength from God. Satan's first temptation is to draw us to sin; if he cannot weaken grace, then to disturb our comfort;

if not to deny God, yet that we may suspect our own estate; and therefore he follows us with blasphemies and other temptations, until he hath made our lives wearisome, till we call our condition into question; and therefore, as grace is strengthened, so is comfort: Neh. viii. 10, The joy of the Lord is your strength.'

Thus I have showed what is this spiritual strength, and what we beg of God when we say, Strengthen me;' and how this is given out, in what manner God conveyeth this strength to the soul, how suitable to our nature, to our temper, to our employment.

Thirdly, How God is concerned in it. David goes to God for this benefit, Lord, strengthen me.' From first to last he doth all. We do not stand by the stability of our own resolutions, nor stand by the stability of gracious habits in ourselves, unless the Lord supply new strength. Not by the stability of our own resolutions, for these will soon fail; for David was under a resolution to keep close to God; yet he saith, My feet had well-nigh slipped.' What upheld him? Thy right hand upheld me.' I was mightily shaken, all purposes of holding on of godliness were even gone; but I am continually with thee. Neither is it the stability of gracious habits in themselves, for of themselves they are poor vanishing things; faith, love, and fear of God of themselves will soon vanish: Rev. iii. 2, Be watchful, strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die. These are ready to die, therefore are only maintained by a renewed strength from God. It is the power of God that is engaged in our preservation. I might show in what order we have this from God; we are not only kept in general by the power of God through faith unto salvation,' 1 Peter i. 5, but all the persons work.

The Father, his act is judicial: Eph. iii. 14, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you to be strengthened with might in the inner man.' He issueth the grant, that

such souls coming in Christ's name, and petitioning relief, should obtain it. And God the Son hath bought this strength for us, and he intercedes for constant supply; and therefore it is said, Phil. iv. 13, I can do all things through Christ.' Christ puts in strength, that is, he observes all our temptations, our conflicts, how weak we are; and he intercedes with God night and day; he stands at God's right hand, to get out this strength; and the Holy Ghost applies it to our heart in the ordinances; for so it is said, Eph. iii. 16, To be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.'

Use. To press us to be dealing with God for this strength. What shall we do?

1. Be weak in your own sense and feeling. The way to be strong i to be weak: 2 Cor. xii. 10, When I am weak, then am I strong.' The bucket, if we would have it filled with the ocean, must first be empty. Saith Austin, Nemo erit a Deo firmus, nisi qui seipsum sentit infirmum--God strengtheneth those that are weak in their own feeling and sense of their own nothingness: Heb. xi. 34, Out of weakness they were made strong;' out of weakness felt and apprehended.

2. There must be a full reliance upon God's strength alone: Ps. lxxi. 16, I will go forth in the strength of the Lord God;' and Eph. vi. 10, Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;' and 2 Tim. ii. 1, Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.' What ever is in God and in Christ is for our use; it is forthcoming for our encouragement and help. We have firm grounds for this reliance--the infinite power of God, and the merit of Christ, which is of in finite value. What cannot the power of God do? The strength of God is engaged for our relief and succour.

3. Use the power that you have, and then it will be increased upon you. The right arm is bigger than the left. Why? Because of exercise, it is

fuller of spirits and strength: To him that hath shall be given,' Mat. xiii. 12, and he shall have abundance.' The more we exercise grace the more we shall have of it: Prov. x. 29, The way of the Lord is strength to the upright.' The more we walk with God the more strength.

4. Use the means, for they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength,' Isa. xl. 31. Because God doth all, oh! it is the greatest engagement that can be to wait upon God in the use of means, that we may draw out treasures of grace in God's way: Phil. ii. 12, Work out your salvation, for it is God that worketh in you,' &c. See that you keep not off from God. Why? For he doth all.

5. Avoid sin; that lets out your strength, as bleeding lets out the spirits of the body. When you grieve the Spirit of Christ which is to strengthen you, you cast away your strength from you. Let us then wait upon God for help, for when all things fail, God faileth not.

Secondly, I now come to the argument, Strengthen me according to thy word.' God's word binds him to relieve his people in distress. There are two promises; one is, 1 Cor. x. 13, God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.' A good man would not over burden his beast; certainly the gracious God will not suffer temptations to lie upon us above measure. Another promise is in Isa. lvii. 15-17, To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' He hath promised comfort and relief to poor broken-hearted sinners; you are called by name in the promise, it is spoken to people in your case. Again, upon such a word and promise of God is David's prayer grounded. A prayer grounded upon a promise is like to prevail; you may put a humble challenge upon God, plead his word to him. It is strange fire else you put in the censer, when you beg that which God never undertook to grant. David often saith according to thy word.' Again, the word of God is the only cure and

relief for a fainting soul. When David was languishing away under deep sorrow, then, Lord, thy word did bring strength. (1.) This is the proper cure. Natural means cannot be a remedy to a spiritual distemper, no more than a fine suit of apparel to a sick man, or a posy of flowers to a condemned man. Natural comforts carry no proportion with a spiritual disease; nothing but grace, pardon, strength, and acceptance from God can remove it. They that seek to quench their sorrows in excess and merry company take a brutish remedy for soul diseases. foolish creatures! that think to sport away or drink down their troubles! it is as foolish a course as to think that to sew up a rent in the garment will cure a wound in their body. And (2.) it is a universal cure; we have from the word life, comfort, strength. It is the word that must guide us and keep us from fainting, quicken us and keep us from dying. This is a full remedy in conjunction with the power of God, and makes the sore [11] joyful in the midst of outward troubles: Ps. lvi. 10, I will rejoice in God because of his word.'
Lastly, This word must be applied to the conscience by God himself, Strengthen thou me according to thy word.' He goes to God that he would apply his word, that it might be for his strength; for we can neither apprehend nor apply it further than we receive grace from God. The word is God's instrument, and worketh not without the principal agent.

SERMON XXX.

Remove from me the way of lying; and grant me thy law graciously.--Ver. 29.

THERE are two parts of Christianity--destructive and adstructive. The destructive part consists in a removing of sin; the adstructive part makes way for the plantation of grace; there is eschewing evil, and doing good. We are carried on in a forward earnestness in the way of sin, but there is a great backwardness and restraint upon our hearts as to that which is good. The one is necessary to the other; we must come out of the ways of sin before we can walk in the ways of God. In this prayer David respects both. (1.) In the first he instanceth in one sin, the way of lying;' not only lying, but the way of lying,' as being conscious to himself of his too often sinning in this kind. Now, he would not have this settled into a course or way; therefore he beggeth, Remove it, the guilt, the fault of it. (2.) As to the adstructive part, for the regulation of his conversation, he begs the favour and grant of the law, and that upon terms of grace. David had ever the book of the law, for every king of Israel was to have it always by him, and, the rabbis say, written with his own hand. But grant me thy law graciously;' that is, he desires he might have it not only written by him, but upon him, to have it imprinted upon his heart, that he might have a heart to observe and keep it. That is the blessing he begs for, the law; and this is begged graciously, or upon terms of grace, merely according to thine own favour and good pleasure. Here is--

1. The sin deprecated, remove from me the way of lying.

2. The good supplicated and asked, grant me thy law graciously.

In the first clause you have his malady: David had been enticed to a

course of lying. In the second we have his remedy, and that is the law of God.

First, Let me speak of the evil deprecated; here observe--

1. The object, the way of lying.

2. God's act about it, remove from me, &c.

First for the object, The way of lying.' It is by some taken generally, by others more particularly.

1. For those that expound it more generally, they are not all of a mind. Some think by the way of lying is meant corruption of doctrine; others of worship; others apply it to disorders of conversation; some take it for error of doctrine, false opinions concerning God and his worship, which are called lying, and so opposed to the way of truth spoken of in the next verse, I have chosen the way of truth.' Heresy and false doctrine is called a lie, Ezek. xiii. 22, Their diviners speak lies;' so 1 John ii. 21, A lie is not of the truth;' and the word used, The way of lying' is elsewhere rendered a false way,' ver. 104, and ver. 128 there is the same expression. Now, this he desires to be removed from him, because it sticks as close to us as our skin. Error is very natural to us, and man doth exceedingly please himself with the figments of his own brain. All practical errors in the world are but man's natural thoughts cried up into a voluble opinion, because backed with defences of wit, and parts, and secular interests, and other advantages; they are but our secret and privy thoughts which have gotten the reputation of an opinion in the world; for we speak lies from the womb;' even in this sense we suck in erroneous principles with our milk. Nature carrieth us to wrong thoughts of God, and the ways of God, and out of levity and inconstancy of spirit we are apt to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men.' Now, to this sense the latter clause will well agree, Keep me from a way of

lying,' that is, keep me from falling into error and mistakes about religion; for he begs that the law may be granted to him, or a certain stated rule, without which all things are liable to deceit and imposture. And according to this sense Austin beggeth that he may neither be deceived in the scriptures, nor deceive out of them; Nec fallar in iis, nec fallam ex iis--let me never be mistaken myself, nor cause others to mistake. Again, by a way of lying some understand false worship, for an idol is a lie: Isa. xliv. 20, Is there not a lie in his right hand?' meaning an idol. By others, a course of sinning, for a way of sinning is a way of lying, for it deceives us with a conceit of happiness which we shall never enjoy; therefore, Eph. iv. 22, Put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.' Lusts are called deceitful, because they promise what they never perform; they flatter us not only with hopes of impunity, but much imaginary comfort and satisfaction; oh, but it is a lie! Satan deceived our first parents, pretending to show them a way of immortality, whereas that brought death to the world. Most go this way, Remove from me the way of lying, that is, the way of sin; and the rather because the Septuagint translation reads it thus, Remove from me the way of iniquity; and Chrysostom in his gloss. He means, every evil deed should be removed from him, or it proves a lie in regard of all those flatterings and blandishments by which it enticeth the soul. Nay, there is a parallel place seems to make good this sense, Prov. xxx. 8, when Agur prays against sin, Remove from me vanity and lies,' meaning a course of sin. Thus it is taken more generally.

2. Those that take it more particularly for the sin of lying, or speaking falsely in commerce, they again differ. Some take it passively, keep me from frauds or deceits of other men; because it seems to be a hard thing to ascribe a way of lying to a child of God,

therefore they rather take it passively. But this is to fear where no fear is. But David begs that he might be kept from a way of lying, that it might not settle into a way, that is his meaning. Therefore I rather take it actively, that he might not run into a false and fallacious course of dealing with others.

Now why would David have this way of lying removed from him? Three reasons:--

1. Because of the inclination of his corrupt nature. We had most need pray to be kept from gross sins: as Ps. xix. 13, Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.' We need not only pray against lesser sins or spiritual wickedness, but from gross sins carried on presumptuously against the light of conscience. So Col. iii. 5, Mortify your earthly members,' &c. What members doth he speak of? Not worldliness and unbelief only; but he speaks of adultery, uncleanness, inordinate affections, and the like; and the children of God, if they do not deal with God for grace against their gross sins, they will soon know to their costs. Jesus Christ warned his own disciples, those that were trained up in his school, those that were to go abroad and deliver his gospel to the world: Luke xxi. 34, Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness,' &c. A candle newly blown out easily sucks light and flame again; and we that are newly taken out of the dominion of sin into a state of grace, may suck light and flame again; therefore we had need pray against gross sins.

2. Because he had been tripping and guilty in this kind. In the story of David you may trace too much of this way and vein of lying; as his feigning to Ahimelech the priest, 1 Sam. xxi. 8; and to Achish, 1 Sam. xxvii. 8, compared with ver. 10; his persuading Jonathan to tell his father he was gone about such a business. Now, this we may learn, when we are foiled by any sin, we should take heed lest we settle into a way

and course of sin; for in every sin, as there is culpa, the fault, or the transgression of the law, and reatus, the guilt, or obligation of punishment, so there is macula, the blot, an inclination to sin again, in like manner as a brand once on fire is more apt to take fire again. By every act of sin the law of God is lessened, our carnal inclination is increased; therefore we had need be earnest with God, Lord, keep me from a way of lying.

3. Man is strongly inclined to lying; it sticks close to our nature, so that God must remove it from us; as more fully afterwards. Thus for the object, a way of lying.

Secondly, God's act about it, Remoye from me.' Sin is removed either in a way of justification, when the guilt of it is done away; this David might intend. But rather in a way of sanctification, when the fault or blot is done away. This is mainly intended, as appears by the antithesis or opposite request, and grant me thy law graciously;' that is, let it be impressed upon my heart, that such a temptation may be prevented for the future. Let me observe--

Doct. That lying, especially a way or course of lying, should be far from God's people.

David begs the removal of it, as most inconsistent with the temper and sincerity of a child of God. Examine--

1. What is lying?

2. Upon what grounds this should be far from a child of God?

First, What is lying? Ans. Lying is when men wittingly and willingly, and with purpose to deceive, signify that which is false by gestures or actions, but especially by words. The matter of a lie is a falsehood; but the formality of it is with an intention to deceive; therefore a falsehood is one thing, a lie another. Then we lie when we not only do or speak falsely, but knowingly, and with purpose to deceive. Now this

may be done by gestures, as when a scorner counterfeiteth the posture of one that is praying, or as when David feigned himself to be distracted, scrabbling upon the doors of the gate, spitting upon his beard, 1 Kings xxi. 1; and in the pagan story Junius Brutus was taxed for feigning himself a fool to save himself from Tarquin. Aquinas saith gestures are a sign by which we discover our minds. But because these are but imperfect signs, and speech is the usual instrument of commerce, therefore in words do we usually vent this sin. Now in our words we are said to lie two ways--assertorily or promissorily.

1. Assertorily, in a matter past or present, when one speaketh that as false which he knoweth to be true, and that as true which he knoweth to be^false, which is called speaking with a double heart in scripture: Ps. xii. 2. With a heart and a heart;' that is, when we have one heart to furnish the tongue with what is false, and another heart to conceive of the matter as it is. An instance of this falsehood in our assertions, or untrue relating of things done, is Ananias and Sapphira, who brought part of the money for which he sold his possession, instead of the whole; therefore, Acts v. 3, Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost, in keeping back part of the price?' It was a lie, because there was a false assertion in saying that it was the whole; and it was a lie to the Holy Ghost, partly as being pretended to be done by his motion when they were acted by Satan, counterfeiting spiritual actions; or a lie against the Holy Ghost, because the Holy Ghost, being last in order of the persons, is fitly represented as conscious to our ways and the workings of our hearts: it is in condescension to us, because it is most conceivable to us to reflect upon him as knowing our hearts, and all the workings of our souls: Rom. ix. 1, I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost;' and when the psalmist speaks of hiding

himself from God, he saith, Whither shall I flee from thy Spirit?' Ps. cxxxix. 7. Or else a lie to the Holy Ghost, because of his presidency and superintendency over church affairs: Acts xiii. 2, The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them;' and Acts xx. 28, Take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.' Now, because this was an ecclesiastical or church case, therefore they are said to lie to the Holy Ghost, as one that is to supply Christ's place. It was not the sin against the Holy Ghost, but a lie against the Holy Ghost.

2. Promissorily we lie when we promise things we mean not to perform. This is a great sin. Paul spent the great part of a chapter to excuse himself, because he was necessitated by providence to break promise of coming to Corinth, 2 Cor. i. 16-18. It was grievous to him that he should seem to use lightness, and not make good his word, though he were hindered by the providence of God. Vain and empty promises, wherein we make a great show of kindness to others, without any intent to perform, is a great sin: Prov. xix. 22, The desire of a man is his kindness; and a poor man is better than a liar.' What is the meaning? Some read it, that which is desired of a man is kindness: you come to a man in power and great place, and beg his favour in such a business and request, and they are too apt to promise you. Ay! but a poor man is better than a liar; you shall find among these great men very little faith. The desire of a man is his kindness, or that which a man should do in a great and high condition is to show you kindness. But now many that covet the praise and reputation of it, are very forward in promises, but fail in performance; therefore a poor man that loves you, and is an honest neighbour, and will do his best, is a surer friend and a thousand times better than such lying great men, that only give you good words, and sprinkle you with court holy water. Now there is a

lying to men, and a lying to God.

[1.] A lying to God, which is the worst sort, because it argues un belief and atheism, low thoughts of God, as if he were not omniscient, did not know the heart, and try the reins. How do we lie to God? Partly when we put him off with a false appearance, and make a show of what is not in the heart, as if he would be deceived with outsides and vain pretences. So Hosea xi. 12, it is said, Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Judah with deceit.' God can see through and through all fair shows, and will not be mocked. We are said to lie to God when we perform not those professions and promises which we made in a time of trouble. Oh, when chastenings are upon us, then the vows of God are upon us! Men think they mean as they speak, but they are not conscious of the secrecy of their hearts: Ps. lxxviii. 36, They flattered me with their mouth, and they lied unto me with their tongue.' Their hearts were not sincerely set against sin, whatever professions of repentance they made. When there is a restraint upon our corruptions, then we think ourselves hearty and serious, because moved a little towards God. Moral integrity is when we intend not to deceive, but there was no supernatural sincerity to perform, as the event showed. They were only the fruit of the present pang, therefore it was said they lied unto him with their tongue. So Ezek. xxiv. 12, She hath wearied herself with lies, and her scum went not forth out of her,' speaking of her promises; when the pot was over the fire there seemed to be offers to throw off the scum, but she hath wearied herself with lies. And in this sense it is said, Hosea vii. 16, They return, but not to the Most High; they are like a deceitful bow;' that is, they did not seriously intend when they did promise. As a man that shoots, if he do not level right, and take care to direct the arrow to the mark, it will never hit; so they shoot, that is, they cast out promises to flatter

God till they get out of trouble, but they do not seriously set their hearts to accomplish it.

[2.] As to men, there are three sorts of lies--Mendacium jocosum, officiosum, et perniciosum: there is the sporting lie, tending to our recreation and delight; there is the officious lie, tending to our own and others' profit; and there is the pernicious and hurtful lie, tending to our neighbour's prejudice.

(1.) The sporting lie, when an untruth is devised for merriment. We have no instance of this in scripture; but it is a sin to speak untruth, and we must not make a jest of sin: Prov. xxvi. 19, As a madman that casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?' Have we nothing wherewith to refresh our neighbour but with the breach of God's law? If a Christian will be merry, let him sing psalms,' James v. 13; let him give thanks, Eph. v. 4, Not filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks;' that is, let him remember the sweet loves of God in Jesus Christ, and that is spiritual refreshment to a gracious heart. Let him not speak things against the sense of his own mind; let him use honest recreation. Certainly we that are to give an account for every idle word should not allow the sporting lie. Now to this sporting lie a fable or parable is not to be reduced, for that is only an artificial way of representing the truth with the more advantage, and putting of it into sensible terms which most are apt to apprehend; as Jotham brings in the trees that went forth to anoint a king over them, Judges ix. 8. Neither such sharp and piercing ironies as we find used by holy men in scripture, 1 Kings xviii. 27; as Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a God: either he is talking,' &c.; for this is a notable way to make truth strike upon the heart with some force; and therefore this must

not be reduced to this sporting lie.

(2.) The officious lie, for the help and relief of others. Many in stances of this we have in scripture. Thus Rebekah teacheth Jacob to lie that he might gain the blessing, Gen. xxvii.; and the Egyptian midwives saved the male children of the Israelites by feigning they were delivered before they came to them, Exod. i. 21; yet it is said they feared God, and it is rewarded by God. Non remunerata est fallacia sed benevolentia--not their lie, but their mercy is rewarded: their mercy is commended as proceeding from the fear of God, and their infirmities are pardoned. So Rahab spared the lives of the spies, by telling the men of her city that they were gone, when she had hid them under the stalks of flax, Josh. ii. 4-6. Thus Michal, to save David from the fury of her father, feigned him sick, 1 Sam. xix. 14; and David advised Jonathan to an officious lie, 1 Sam. xx. 6, 7; so vers. 26, 28, 29. Thus Hushai, by temporising with Absalom, preserved David, 2 Sam. xvi. 17-19, to divide his counsels pretendeth hearty affection to him.

(3.) There is a pernicious lie, that is to the hurt and prejudice of another. Of this nature was the first lie, by which all mankind was ruined--the devil's lie to our first parents, Ye shall be as gods,' Gen. iii. 4, 5. And of this nature was the patriarchs' lie concerning Joseph, when they spake to his father, Gen. xxxvii. 31, 32, This have we found, and know not whether it be thy son's coat or no,' yet they knew well enough; and that of the Jewish elders that said, Mat. xxviii. 12, 13, Say ye, his disciples came and stole him away while we slept.' All these are severely forbidden, but especially in point of witnessing in courts of judicature: Exod. xxiii. 1, Put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness;' and ver. 7, Keep thee far from a false matter,' &c. Now some question whether all these lies be sin or

no, sporting or officious lies. All these sorts of lies are sins; for--

1. The scripture condemns all without restriction: Eph. iv. 25, Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour;' Rev. xxi. 8, all liars are shut out of the New Jerusalem, Arid all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone;' and Rev. xxii. 15, Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.'

2. They all violate the natural order and conformity which God hath appointed between the heart and the tongue; and though officious lies are not for the hurt, but the good of others, yet it is to the hurt and prejudice of truth. A man is not to lie for the glory of God, therefore certainly not for the good of another man; you hurt your own soul more by sin than you can do him good. Augustine, treating of officious lies, he tells of one Firmus, who was Firmus nomine, et firmior voluntate--Firm by name, but more firm and fixed by will and resolved purpose; therefore, when one was pursued for casual homicide, he concealed him; and being asked for him, answered, Nec mentiri se posse nec hominem prodere--he could neither lie nor betray him. So much for the first thing, namely, what is a lie and lying.

Secondly, For the reasons why the children of God should be far from it.

1. In regard of outward commerce. That which is contrary to human society should be odious to the children of God, who, as they are in a peculiar sense members one of another, so are also of the same political body, and therefore should speak truth one to another,' Eph. iv. 25. Human society is mostly upheld by truth. Where there is no truth, there can be no trust; where there is no trust, there can be no commerce; it makes men unfit to be trusted. When a man hath much counterfeit money offered to him in payment, though there may be some

true gold and silver, yet he casts it away, and suspecteth it all. Men that are given to lying can have no credit nor faith with man, so they are unfit for human commerce; therefore it should be far from men; nay, it is the right of our neighbour that we should speak truth, for speech is a kind of traffic and commerce, and therefore it is a kind of theft to defraud your neighbour of his right, if you give him false words for true. Now, because it is the band and foundation of human society, therefore it should be far from the children of God.

2. It is a perversion of the order of nature. The tongue is the interpreter of the mind, and therefore if the interpreter of another man speak contrary to what he pronounceth, there were a manifest wrong and disorder; so when the tongue speaks otherwise than the man thinks, there is a great disturbance and deordination.

3. We resemble Satan in nothing so much as in lying, and we resemble God in nothing so much as in truth. Falsehood is the devil's character: John viii. 44, He was a liar from the beginning;' that is, the first inventor of lies, as Jubal was the father of them that played upon the harp, the first inventor; and herein we most resemble Satan. On the contrary, there is nothing wherein a man resembleth God so much as in truth. Truth is no small part of the image of God, for he is called the God of truth;' and it is said of him, Titus, i. 2, that he cannot lie;' it is contrary to the perfection of his nature; nor command us to lie. God hath commanded many other things which otherwise were sinful; as to kill another man, as Abraham to slay his son; to take away the goods of others, as lord of all, as when the Israelites spoiled the Egyptians of their jewels; but God cannot lie, it is against his nature: Eph. iv. 24, 25, Put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' Then presently, Wherefore put away

lying; speak every man truth with his neighbour.' Wherefore--that is, from your regeneration, when the image of God is planted in you. So the same: Col. iii. 9, Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.' There may be sin in the children of God, but there should be no guile in them. Habituated guile is the old man that is deceitful; the new man is framed to truth, and according to the will of God.

4. This is a consideration, that God never dispensed with this precept. He hath upon special occasion dispensed with other commands, but never with the ninth. With the seventh commandment in the polygamy of the patriarchs, and with the second in Hezekiah's passover; but a man must not lie for God, Job xiii. 7-9, because this commandment hath more in it of the justice and immutable perfection of God than others.

5. By the light of nature nothing is more odious. We love a just and true man, one that is without guile; we acknowledge it as a moral perfection. But a lie is counted the greatest disgrace; we revenge the charge of it. It is counted a base thing to lie. Why? Because it comes from fear, and it tends to deceit, both which argue baseness of spirit, and are contrary to the gallantry of a man; therefore it is shameful in the eyes of nature, and those that are most guilty of it cannot endure to be charged with it. When the prophet Micaiah told Zedekiah of his lying spirit, he smote him on the cheek,' 1 Kings xx. 23. So men take it ill to be charged with a lie. We count it a shameful sin among men. The old Persians had such a great respect to truth, that he that was three times taken with a lie was never more to speak in public, upon penalty of death.

6. It is a sin that is most hateful to God; therefore it should be far from the children of God. We hate that most which is contrary to our nature, so it is contrary to God's nature. There are six things God

hates, and a lying tongue is one of them; twice it is mentioned, Prov. vi. 17, 19, and Prov. xii. 22, Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord; but they that deal truly are his delight.' Now certainly because God hates it, therefore we should hate it. To will and nill the same thing, that is true friendship. God hates it, therefore a righteous man hates it: Prov. xiii. 5, A righteous man hateth lying; but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.'

7. It is a sin which God hath expressly threatened to punish in this life and in the life to come. In this life: Ps. v. 6, Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing;' and Prov. xix. 5, He that speaketh lies shall not escape.' God will cut them off as not being fit for human society. The first remarkable instance we have in the New Testament of God's vengeance was for a lie, Acts v. 5; yea, it is one of the sins that draws down public and national judgments; and therefore it is said, Hosea iv. 2, By swearing and lying, therefore, doth the land mourn.' And when God gives advice to his people how they should prevent his judgments, Zech. viii. 16, 17, These are the things that ye shall do, speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour: execute the judgment of truth; love no false oath: for all these are the things that I hate, saith the Lord.' When men have no care of their speeches, when a people bind themselves by oaths to do that which they mind not to perform, or wilfully do not perform, they are ripe for a judgment. And so in the life to come: Rev. xxi. 27, And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie;' and Rev. xxi. 8, All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone;' and Rev. xxii. 15, For without are dogs and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.'

Use. Oh, then, let us beware of all lying and dissimulation with

respect to God and men! Let our words consent with our minds, and our minds agree with the thing itself. A lie is most odious to God, a proud look, and a lying tongue;' and therefore a Christian that loves God, shall he do that which God so expressly hates? Will you rush upon the pikes, kick against the pricks, and run against the judgments of God? A lying tongue shall not escape. Nay, God reckons upon his children: Isa. lxiii. 8, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie.'

Disappointment, that is the worst vexation. God reckons upon it, surely you will make conscience of truth, not only in your oaths (certainly that is a barbarous thing to break the most sacred engagements that are among mankind, therefore you will be careful to perform what you have sworn to the Lord with your hands lift up to the Most High God), but also in your promises and ordinary speeches. Good men have been foiled by it (David begs, Keep me from a way of lying'), and it is a sin more common than we imagine; it is very natural to us, Isa. lix. 3. As soon as we are born we speak lies; before we could go we went astray, and before we were able to speak we spake lies; the seed of it was in our nature. It is a sin most natural, for it was the occasion of the first sin, and therefore we had need be cautioned against it.

Consider, there is a lying to God in public and private worship. In public worship, how often do you compass him about with lies! We show love with our mouths when our heart is at a great distance from God. Oh, how odious should we be to ourselves if our heart were turned inside outward in the best duty, and all our thoughts were turned into words! for in our worship many times we draw near to God with our mouths, when our heart is at a great distance. As when their bodies were in the wilderness, their hearts were in Egypt; so we prattle words without sense and spiritual affection. Nay, in our private worship, we confess sin without shame; we pray as if we cared not to be heard.

Conscience tells us what we should pray for, but our hearts do not go out in the matter, and we throw away our prayers as children shoot away their arrows, which is a sign we are not so hearty as we should be. We give thanks, but without meltings of heart. Custom and natural light tell us something must be done in this kind, but how hard a matter it is to draw near God with truth of heart?

Again, would we not be accounted better than we are? Who would be thought as ill as he hath cause to think of himself? We storm if others but speak of us half of what we speak of ourselves to God; therefore ail had need look to it to be kept from a way of lying. And for gross lying, how far are we from being willing that should be accomplished which the Lord speaks of, Zeph. iii. 13, The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth.' Rather we may take up David's complaint, Ps. xii. 1, 2, The godly man ceaseth; the faithful fail from among the children of men: they speak vanity every one with his neighbour; with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak.' Promises, oaths, covenants all broken; and therefore so many jealousies, because so much lying; all trust is lost among us. This lying is always ill, but especially in magistrates, men of public place: Prov. xvii. 7, Lying lips become not a prince.' So ministers: Rom. ix. 1, I say the truth in Christ, I lie not;' 2 Cor. xi. 31, The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ knoweth that I lie not.' Among private Christians, are we not too rash in our suspicions, and speak worse of others than they deserve? do we not take up and vent reports without search? it may be out of envy at the brightness of their profession. Do not unwary expressions drop from us? Much talk cannot be justified. Are there not rash promises we make no conscience to mind and look after? Many ways may we trace ourselves in this sin of lying; therefore look to the

prevention of it. What remedies are there against it?

1. Hate it; do not think it to be a venial matter: Ps. cxix. 163, I hate and abhor lying;' not only hate it, nor simply I abhor it, but hate and abhor, to strengthen and increase the sense, and make it more vehement. Where the enmity is not great against the sin, the matter may be compounded and taken up. Oh, but I hate and abhor it, and hate it with a deadly hatred! Slight hatred of a sinful course is not sufficient to guard us against it.

2. Love to the law of God; if that be dear to you, you will not break it upon any light occasion. In the text, Grant me thy law graciously.' If a man prize the laws of God, and would fain have them printed in the heart, he will not so easily break them.

3. Remember your spiritual conflict; you never give Satan so great an advantage as by falsehood and guile of spirit. The devil assaults by wiles, but your strength lieth in downright honesty: Eph. vi. 11, That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' Satan's strength lies in wiles, but you must beat him down in sincerity. The first piece of the spiritual armour is the girdle of truth that is, the grace of sincerity, whereby a man is to God and men what he gives out himself to be, or seems to be. This is that which will give you strength and courage in sore trials. Oh! when Satan shall accuse and challenge you for your base hypocrisy, then how will you hold up your heads in the day of spiritual conflict, if you have not the girdle of truth? But now uprightness gives us courage, strength, and stands by us in the very agonies of death.

4. Heedfulness, and a watch upon the tongue: Ps. xxxix. 1, I aid I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.' Let us speak of what we think, and think of what we speak, that the mind may conform itself with the nature of truth.

5. Avoid the causes of lying. There are three of them--(1.) Boasting, or speaking too much of ourselves. When men are given to boasting, whatever thing of weight is done, they were privy to it; their hand was in the work, in contriving and prosecuting the business, their counsel was for it. Nothing can be acted without their knowledge and approbation. This spirit of vainglory is the mother of vain talking, therefore of a lying tongue: Ps. xii. 3, Flattering lips,' and the tongue that speaketh proud things,' are joined together. (2.) Flattery, or desiring of ingratiating themselves with those that are great and mighty in the world, when they have men's persons in admiration: Ps. xii. 2, With flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak.' So Hosea vii. 3, They make the king glad with their lies.' To please their rulers, they soothe them up with flattering applause and fawning upon them. (3.) Carnal fear and distrust. This was that which put David to his shifts in his dangers; he was apt to fail, and deal a little deceitfully in time of temptation and danger. We had need to pray to God to be kept from all ways and counsels that are contrary to God's word. The scripture speaks, Deut. xxxiii. 29, of counterfeit submissions to higher powers: Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, thou shalt tread upon their high places;' the meaning is, shall be subdued by thee. So Ps. xviii. 44, Strangers shall submit themselves to me;' Ps. lxvi. 3, lxxxi. 15, and many other places. The word implieth feigned submission.

Object. But are we openly to profess our mind in all things in time of danger? I answer--Prudent concealment may be without fault, but a professed subjection should be sincere, for open and free dealing doth best become God's children. It is true we are not bound to speak all the truth at all times to every person. In some cases we may conceal something: Luke ix. 21, our Saviour straitly charged them, and

commanded them to tell nobody that he was the Christ,' 1 Sam. xvi. 2, when the Lord sent Samuel to anoint David, Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the Lord said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord;' that was a truth, but not the whole truth.

Object. But you will say, Will not this justify mental reservation and Jesuitical equivocation? I answer--There are two sorts of reservations; I may reserve part of the truth in my mind. But the mental reservations the Jesuits plead for is this--when that which is spoken is a lie, if abstracted from that which is in the mind; for instance, if a magistrate say, Art thou a priest? No; meaning not after the order of Baal. So that which is spoken is a lie. But if it be spoken with truth, we may reserve part of it. That in Samuel was not an untruth, but concealing some part of the truth not fit to be discovered. So Jer. xxxviii. 24-27, Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die. But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they shall come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee: then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house to die there. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him; and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded: so they left off speaking with him, for the matter was not perceived.'

Secondly, We now come to the blessing asked, Grant me thy law graciously.' Where first the benefit itself, grant me thy law; secondly, the terms upon which it is asked, implied in the word graciously.

The benefit asked, Grant me thy law.' David had the book of the law already; every king was to have a copy of it written before him; but he understandeth it not of the law written in a book. But of the law written upon his heart; which is a privilege of the covenant of grace: Heb. viii. 10, For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel in those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts,' &c.

Doct. 1. Then is the law granted to us when it is written upon our minds and hearts; that is, when we understand it, and our hearts are framed to the love and obedience of it; otherwise it is only granted to the church in general, but it is not granted to us in particular. We may have some common privilege of being trained up in the knowledge of God's will, but we have not the personal and particular benefits of the covenant of grace till we find it imprinted upon our hearts. Well, then--

1. Press God about this, not only to grant his word unto the church, but to grant it unto you, unto your persons: To reveal his Son in me,' Gal. i. 16. There is a general benefit, He hath showed his word unto Jacob, and his statutes unto Israel,' Ps. cxlvii. 19. And there is a particular benefit, Grant me thy law graciously.' The whole church may be under a covenant of grace, and some particular members of it may be all that while under a covenant of works, if they have only an external law without to show them what is good, but not a law within to urge and enable them to do it--Lex jubet, gratia juvat. Literal instruction belongeth only to the first covenant; but when the word is made ours, that is a privilege of the second covenant, The ingrafted word that is able to save our souls,' James i. 21, when it is received in our hearts, and doth prosper there, and fructify unto holiness, when it is written over again by the finger of the Spirit.

2. See if this effect be accomplished, if the law be granted to you. It is so--(1.) When you have a sense and conscience of it, and you own it as your rule for the governing of your own heart and life: Ps. xxxvii. 31, The law of God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.' It is not in his book only, but in his heart, to guide all his actions. (2.) It is so when you have some ability and strength to perform it. Their hearts carry them to it: as Ps. lx. 8, I delight to do thy will, God; yea, thy law is in my heart.' They have not only a sense and conscience of their rule, but a ready spirit to perform it, and set about this work cheerfully and heartily. A ready and cheerful obedience to God's will is the surest note that the law is given to us; when the study and practice of it is the great employment and pleasure of our lives.

Doct. 2. (1.) The law that is odious to the flesh is acceptable to a gracious heart. What others count a restraint, they count a great benefit and favour: Rom. viii. 7, The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' They shun all means of searching and knowing themselves, wishing such things were not sins, or not desiring to know them to be so; therefore hate the law, and will not come to the light, John iii. 20, For every one that doth evil hateth the light; neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' As a man that hath light ware is loath to come to the balance, or counterfeit coin to the touchstone, or as a bankrupt is loath to cast up his estate. They hate the directions and injunctions of the word as contrary to their lusts: 1 Kings xxii. 8, He doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil,' said wicked Ahab; and therefore would not hear him, and yet he was the prophet of the Lord. They are loath to understand their duty, are willingly,' ignorant: 2 Peter iii. 5, For this they are willingly ignorant of,' &c. But now a

gracious heart desireth nothing more than the knowledge of God's will; how contrary soever to their lusts, they approve it: Rom. vii. 12, Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.' The law and commandment, that which wrought such tragical effects in his heart. Therefore they desire the knowledge of it above all things: Ps. cxix. 72, The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver,' more than all earthly riches what soever; it is the best thing they can enjoy, to have a full direction in obedience. (2.) The practice is welcome to their souls: 1 John v. 4, His commandments are not grievous.' They are to others, not to them, because of the suitableness of their hearts: to a galled shoulder, the least burden is irksome, but to a sound back it is nothing; love sweetens all.

Use. Do you count the law an enemy or a friend? The law is an enemy to them that count it an enemy, and a friend to them that count it a friend. It is a rule of life to them that delight in it, and count it a great mercy to know it, and be subdued to the practice of it; but it is a covenant of works to them that withdraw the shoulder, count it a heavy burden not to be borne. Well, then, which do you complain of, the law or your corruptions? What are you troubled with, light or lusts? A gracious heart groaneth not under the strictness of the law, but under the body of death; not because God hath required so much, but because they can do no more.

Doct. 3. That the law is granted to us or written upon our hearts out of God's mere grace. Grant it graciously, saith David. I will do it, saith God; and God will do it upon his own reasons. The conditions of the covenant are conditions in the covenant, and the articles that bind us are also promises wherein God is bound to bestow so great a benefit upon poor creatures; which doth encourage us to wait for this work with the more confidence. We are sensible we have not the law so intimately,

so closely applied as we should have. Lord, grant it graciously. It is his work to give us a greater sense and care of it.

SERMON XXXI.

I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.--Ver. 30.

DAVID asserts his sincerity here in two things:--

1. In the Tightness of his choice, I have chosen the way of thy truth.

2. In the accurateness of his prosecution, thy judgments have I laid before me.

First, For his choice, I have chosen the way of thy truth.' God having granted him his law, he did reject all false ways of religion, and continued in the profession of the truth of God, and the strict observance thereof. There are many controversies and doubtful thoughts among the sons of men about religion, all being varnished with specious pretences, so that a man knows not which way to choose, till by the Spirit he be enabled to take the direction of the word; that resolveth all his scruples, and makes him sit down in the way which God hath pointed for him. Thus David, as an effect of God's grace, avoucheth his own choosing the way of truth.

By the way of truth is meant true religion; as 2 Peter ii. 2, By whom the way of truth is evil spoken of.' It is elsewhere called the good way wherein we should walk,' 1 Kings viii. 36; and the way of God,' Ps. xxvii. 11; and the way of understanding,' Prov. ix. 6; and the way of holiness,' Isa. xxxv. 8; and the way of righteousness,' 2 Peter ii. 21, Better they had not known the way of righteousness,' that is, never to have known the gospel, which is called the way of righteousness. It is called also the way of life,' Prov. vi. 23, And reproofs of instruction are the way of life;' and the way of salvation,' as Acts xvi. 17, the Pythoness gave this testimony to the apostles, These are the servants

of God, which show unto us the way of salvation.' Now all these expressions have their use and significancy; for the way of truth, or the true way to happiness, is a good way, showed us by God, who can only discover it; and therefore called the way of the Lord,' or the way of God,' in the place before quoted; and Acts xxviii. 25, 26, it is manifested by God, and leadeth us to God. The Christian doctrine was that way of truth revealed by him who is prima veritas, the first truth. The ways wherein God cometh to us are his mercy and truth; and the way wherein we come to God is the way of true religion prescribed by him; it is the way of understanding, because it maketh us wise as to the great affairs of our souls, and unto the end of our lives and beings; and the way of holiness and righteousness, as directing us in all duties to God and man; and the way of life and salvation, because it brings us to everlasting happiness. This way David chose by the direction of God's word and Spirit.

Secondly, There follows the evidence of his sincerity, the accurate prosecution of his choice, Thy judgments have I laid before me.' The Septuagint reads it, I have not forgotten thy judgments.' By judgments is meant God's word, according to the sentence of which every man shall receive his doom. He that walketh in a way condemned by the word shall not prosper; for God's word is judgment, and execution shall surely follow; and by this word David got his direction how to choose this way of truth, and this he laid before him as his line. His desire was to follow what was right and true, not only as to his general course and way of profession, but in all his actions; and so it noteth his fixed purpose to live according to this blessed rule which God hath given him. To have a holy rule and an unholy life is unconsonant, inconsistent. A Christian should be a lively transcript of that religion he doth profess. If the way be a way of truth, he must always

set it before him, and walk exactly.

The points are two:--

1. That there being many crooked paths in the world, it concerns us to choose the way of truth.

2. That when we have chosen the way of truth, or taken up the profession of the true religion, the rules and institutions of it should ever be before us.

There are two great faults of men--one in point of choice, the other in point of pursuit. Either they do not choose right, or they do not live up to the rules of their profession. Both are prevented by these points.

Doct. 1. That there being many crooked paths in the world, it concerns us to choose the way of truth.

I shall give you the sense of it in these eight propositions or considerations.

Prop. 1. The Lord in his holy providence hath so permitted it that there ever have been, and are, and, for aught we can see, will be, controversies about the way of truth and right worship. There was such a disease introduced into the world by the fall, that most of the remedies which men choose do but show the strength and malignity of the disease. They choose out false ways of corning to God and returning to him: Micah iv. 5, All people will walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever,' Mark, there is his God, and our God, and then all people, noting their common agreement in error; all people will, every man, noting their diversity as to the particular false way of religion and worship which they take up to themselves. When they turn their back upon the true God, and the knowledge of him, then they are endless in seeking out false gods: Jonah i. 5, They cried every man to his god.' Among

pagans, even in one ship, there were many false gods worshipped.

The controversy about religion mainly lay at first between the Jews and the pagans. The pagans had their gods, and the Jews had the Lord God of Israel, the only true God. Yea, among the pagans themselves there was a great diversity--every man will walk'--and sometimes a hot contention; and many times there were hot contests, which was the better god, the leek or the garlic. When religion, which restrains our passions, is made the fuel of them, and instead of a judge becomes a party, men give themselves up headlong to all manner of bitter zeal and strife; and persuasion of truth and right, which doth calm men in other differences, are here inflamed by that bitter zeal every one hath for his god, his service and party; and the difference is greater especially between the two dissenting parties that come nearest to one another.

We read afterward, when this difference lay more closely between the Jews and the Samaritans, and Christ decides, that salvation was of the Jews. The Jews were certainly the better party: John iv. 20, Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship'--Mount Sion, or Mount Gerizim, which was the temple of the true God, one or the other? Then we read afterward among the Jews themselves in their private sects, who were very keen against each other, Pharisees and Sadducees; and Paul, though an enemy to them both, and was looked upon as a common adversary, yet they had rather join with him than among themselves, Acts xxiii. 8, 9. Afterward you find the scene of contention lay between the Jews and Christians: Acts xiv. 4, But the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.' There it grew into an open contest and quarrel.

And then between the Christians and the pagans, which was the occasion

of that uproar at Ephesus, Acts xix. Ay! and after religion had gotten ground, and the way of truth had prevailed in the world, then the difference lay betwixt Christians themselves; yea, while religion was but getting up, between the followers of the apostles and the school and sect of Simon Magus, those impure libertines and Gnostics who went out of them because they were not of them, 1 John ii. 19. And afterward in the church story we read of the contentions between the Catholics and the Arians, the Catholics and the Pelagians, the Catholics and the Donatists, and other sects.

And now, last of all in the dregs of time, between the Protestants and the Papists, that settled party with whom the church of God is now in suit. As the rod of Aaron did devour the rods of the enchanters, so the word of God, which is the rod of his strength, doth and will in time eat up and consume all untruths whatsoever; but for a great while the contests may be very hot and sharp. Yea, among those that profess a reformed Christianity, there are the Lutherans and the Calvinists.

And nearer to us, I will not so much as mention those invidious names and flags of defiance which are set up, under which different parties do encamp at home. Thus there ever have been, and will be, contests about religion and disputes about the way of truth; yea, different opinions in the church, and among Christians themselves, about divine truths revealed in the scripture.

The Lord permits this in his holy and righteous providence, that the godly may be stirred up more to embrace truth upon evidence with more affection, that they may more encourage and strengthen themselves and resolve for God; for when all people will walk every one in the name of his god, we will walk in the name of our God for ever," Micah iv. 5.

And the Lord doth it that he may manifest the sincere, that when Christ calls, Who is on my side? who are willing to stick to him whatever

hazards and losses they may incur: 1 Cor. xi. 19, There must be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.' Ay! and that there may be a ready plague of strong delusion and lies for them that receive not the truth in the love of it, 2 Thes. ii. 11, 12; for damnable errors are the dungeons in which God holds carnal souls that play the wanton, and trifle with his truth, and never admit the love and power of it to come into their hearts.

Prop. 2. True religion is but one, and all other ways false, noxious, and pestilent: Eph. iv. 5, One Lord, one faith, one baptism.' There are many ways in the world, but there is but one good and certain way that leads to salvation. So much the apostle intimates when he saith, He will have all men to be saved.' How would he have them saved? 1 Tim. ii. 4, For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;' which text implies that salvation is by the knowledge of the truth, or knowledge of the true way; others tend to destruction. And so God promiseth, Jer. xxxii. 39, that he will give all the elect one heart and one way.' Though there be differences even in the church of God about lesser truths, yet there is but one true religion in the essence and substance of it; I mean, as to those truths which are absolutely necessary to salvation. To make many doors to heaven is to set wide open the gates of hell. Many men think that men of all religions shall be saved, provided they be of a good life, and walk according to their light.

In these later times divers unsober questionists are grown weary of the Christian religion, and by an excess of charity would betray their faith; and while they plead for the salvation of Turks and heathens, scarce show themselves good Christians. The Christian religion is not only the most compendious way to true happiness, but it is the only way: John xvii. 3, This is life eternal, to know thee the only true

God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' There is the sum of what is necessary to life eternal; that there is one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be known, loved, obeyed, worshipped, and enjoyed; and the Lord Jesus Christ to be owned as our Redeemer and Saviour, to bring us home to God, and to procure for us the gifts of pardon and life; and this life to be begun here by the Spirit, and to be perfected in heaven. This is the sum of all that can be said that is necessary to salvation. Certainly none can be saved without Christ; for there is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved but by Jesus Christ,' Acts iv. 12, and none can be saved by Christ but they that know him and believe in him.

If God hath extraordinary ways to reveal Christ to men, we know not. This is our rule; no adults, no grown persons can be saved but they that know him and believe in him. And now Christ hath been so long owned in the world, and his knowledge so far propagated, why should we dream of any other way of salvation? To us there is but one God and one faith. The good-fellow gods of the heathen could brook company and partnership, but the true God will be alone acknowledged. As the sun drowns the light of all the stars, so God will shine alone. No man can be saved without these two things--without a fixed intention of God as his last end, and a choice of Jesus Christ as the only way and means of attaining thereunto.

These things are set down in scripture as of infallible necessity to salvation; and therefore, though there be several apprehensions and contentions about ways of salvation and righteousness, yet there is but one true religion, and all other ways are false.

Prop. 3. As soon as any begin to be serious, they begin to have a conscience about the finding out this one only true way wherein they may be saved. Alas! before men take up that religion which the chance

of their education offers, without examination or any serious reason of their choice, they walk, in the language of the prophet, according to the trade of Israel;' they live as they are born and bred, and take up truth and error as their faction leads them; or else pass from one religion to another, as a man changeth his room or bed, and make a slight thing of opinions, and float up and down like light chaff, in a various uncertainty, according as their company or the posture of their interest is changed. But a serious and awakened conscience will be careful to lay the groundwork of religion sure; they build for eternity, therefore the foundation needs to be well laid. The woman of Samaria, as soon as she was touched at heart and began to have a conscience, she began also to have doubtful thoughts about her estate and religion. Christ had convinced her of living in adultery, by that means to bring her to God; but now she would fain know the true way of worship: John iv. 20, Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.' They that have a sense of eternity upon them will be diligent to know the right way. The same errand brought Nicodemus to Christ: John iii. 2, Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God.' He would fain know how he might come to God. So the young nobleman in the gospel: Mat. xix. 16, Good master, what good thing shall I do that I might have eternal life?' Though he disliked the bargain afterwards, yet he cheapens it, and asks what way he must take. For a great while persons have only a memorative knowledge, some apprehension which doth furnish their talk about religion; and after their memory is planted with notions, then they are without judgment and conscience; but when they begin to have a judgment and a conscience, then it is their business to make religion sure, and to be upon stable terms with God.

Prop. 4. When we begin to have a conscience about the true way, we must

inquire into the grounds and reasons of it, that we may resolve upon evidence, not take it up because it is commonly believed, but because it is certainly true; not take it up by chance, but by choice; not because we know no other, but because we know no better. It is not enough to stumble upon truth blindly, but we must receive it knowingly, and upon solid conviction of the excellency of it, comparing doctrine with doctrine, and thing with thing, and the weak grounds the adversaries of the truth have to build upon. The precepts of the word are direct and plain for this: 1 Thes. v. 21, Prove all things, hold fast that which is good;' and 1 John iv. 1, Try the spirits whether they are of God.' There must be trying and searching, and not taking up our religion merely by the dictates of another. The papists are against this, which argueth a distrust of their own doctrine; they will not come to the waters of jealousy, lest their belly should swell and their thigh rot. They dare not admit people to trial and choice, and give them liberty to search the scriptures; whereas truth is not afraid of contradiction: they first put out the light, then would have men shut their eyes. But what do they allege, since we are bidden to prove all things, and to try the spirits? That these places belong to the doctors of the church, and not to the people. But that exception is frivolous, because the apostolical epistles were directed to the body of the people; and they who are advised to prove all things are such as are charged to respect those that are over them in the Lord,' ver. 12, and not to despise prophecies,' ver. 20, and then prove all things,' ver. 21; and in another place, those that he calls paidi'a, little children,' them he adviseth to try the spirits; all that have a care of their salvation should thus do. Eusebius doth mention it as one of the errors of Apelles, that what he had taught them they should not pry into and examine, but take it and swallow it. And Mahomet forbids his

followers to inquire into their religion.

Object. But is every private Christian bound to study controversy, so as to be able to answer all the adversaries of the truth?

I answer--No; it is a special gift, bestowed and required of some that have leisure and abilities, and it is a duty required of ministers and church guides to convince gainsayers and stop their mouths. Ministers must be able to hold fast the truth. The word is, Titus, i. 9, antechomenon, holding fast the faithful word;' it signifies, holding fast a thing which another would wrest from us. We should be good at holding and drawing, to preserve the truth when others would take it out of our hands; otherwise he tells us, Rom. xiv. 1, Him that is weak in faith receive, but not to doubtful disputations.' Yet every true Christian is so far to be settled in the true religion, and study the grounds of it, that he may be fully persuaded in his own mind, Rom. xiv. 5, and may not be like chaff, but may be at a certainty in the way of truth. Surely the business is worthy our serious care. Eternal life and death are not trifles; therefore be not rash in this, but go upon sure evidence.

1. The providence of God doth necessitate us to such a course. Because there are different ways propounded to man, therefore he must follow all, or take up one upon evidence. Not only in point of practice, as life and death is set before us, Deut. xxx. 15, and the broad way and the narrow, Mat. vii. 13, 14; not only to counterwork the rebellions of the flesh, and the way of wisdom and folly, Prov. ix. No; but in matters of opinion and controversy about religion there will meet us several ways, Jer. vi. 16, and all pretending to God.

Therefore what should we do but search, pray, resolve to be thus with God, and take the way God will direct us? As the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, or at the head of the ways, to make

divination, Ezek. xxi. 21, so you meet with partings of ways that you need deliberate to make a wise choice; therefore the providence of God doth put you upon trial. Think, there are false teachers; ay, and the most holy and upright men are but in part enlightened, and they may lead you into a crooked path and a byway; they may mislead us; therefore we ought to see with our own eyes.

2. Consider the sad consequence of erring. There are damnable errors and heresies, 2 Peter ii. 1. Vice is not only destructive and damnable to the soul, but error. Now eternal damnation and salvation are no small matters. A man cannot please God in a false belief, how laudable so ever his life be; and they cannot put the fault upon others, that they are misled by them; for if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch;' not only the blind guide, but the blind follower.

3. If we light upon a good way without search and choice, it is but a happy mistake when we have not sufficient evidence. You may have the advantage ground, by chance may light upon a better way, and it is God's providence you are born there where it may be so. A Turk hath the same ground for his respect to Mahomet that many have for their owning of Christ; it is that religion he was born and bred in. This will not be counted faith, but simple credulity: The simple believeth every word.' It is almost as dangerous to love a truth ignorantly as to broach an error knowingly. Temere creditur, &c., saith Tertullian--that is believed in vain which is believed without the grounds whereupon it is propounded. The faith of Christians should not be conjectural or traditional. If a man should not have reasons to sway his choice, he will never be able to check temptations even in practical things. If men have not received religion upon true grounds, and, as Cyprian saith, when they do not look into the reason of these things, and when the Christian religion is represented to them without evidence and

certainty, they have but a probable faith, that is always weak against temptation, either against lusts within or errors and seductions without; therefore we had need look to the grounds of these things.

4. The profit is exceeding great, for truth will have a greater force upon the heart when we see the grounds and reasons of it. We are exposed here in this lower world to great difficulties and temptations. Now, when we do not lay up the supreme truths of religion with certainty and assurance, alas! these temptations will prevail over us and carry us away. Atheism lies at the root; therefore are there such doubtings in the heart in point of comfort, such defects in the life and conversation, because truth was never soundly laid in the soul, it was not chosen. If we were soundly settled in the belief of the unity of the divine essence, and the verity of salvation by Christ, and the divine authority of the scriptures, and the certainty of the promises therein, certainly we would be more firmly engaged to God; comfort would sooner follow us, and we would have better success in the heavenly life. If the fire were well kindled, it would of itself break out into a flame. If we did believe, indeed, that Jesus the Son of God hath done so much for us, and had this firmly settled in our hearts, this would be a real ground of comfort and constancy: 2 Peter iii. 17, Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.' It is put in opposition to one that stands by the steadfastness of another; he might be carried away by the error of the wicked. No; but he must have somewhat to say to engage his own heart, otherwise he is led thereby with every fond suggestion and simple credulity, and easily abused. But when men have chosen and are well fixed, they are not easily shaken. When men take up religion upon trust, without a satisfying argument, they are like light chaff, carried through the whole compass of the winds; as mariners dispose of

several winds which blow in the corners of the world into a circle and compass (the apostle's word alludes to that), We are carried all round the points of the compass,' Eph. iv. 14. When the chain of consent is broken, they are in continual danger to be seduced; and the greatest adversaries of truth are able to use such reasons as have in them great probability to captivate the affections of a weak understanding, by their sophistical arguments and insinuating persuasions.

Prop. 5. After this inquiry into the grounds and reasons of the way of truth, then we must resolve and choose it, I have chosen the way of truth,' as the way wherein we are to walk: Jer. vi. 16, Ask where is the good way, and walk therein, and then ye shall find rest for your souls.' You must not only so understand and form your opinions aright, not only see what is the good way, but walk therein; keep that way which you find to be the way of truth, renouncing all others. We should not lie under a floating uncertainty or sceptical irresolution, as those that keep themselves in a wary reservation, that are ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth,' 2 Tim. iii. 7--epignosin aletheias, the word is, they do not come to the acknowledgment of the truth;' always examining, but never resolve. You are to 1 prove all things,' but not in order to unsettlement, but settlement, 1 Thes. v. 21. Consider, inquire, where is God's presence most? where is the Son like to be glorified, and souls better to be satisfied, and built up in the faith of Jesus Christ? and resolve and stick there.

Prop. 6. That no religion will be found fit to be chosen upon sound evidence but the Christian. How shall I be persuaded of this? Why, that religion which God hath revealed, that religion which suits with the ends of a religion, that is, with the inward necessities of mankind, and most commodiously provides for man, that is true religion. Surely

the necessities of mankind are to be relieved thereby. The great ends of a religion are God's glory and our happiness. God is glorified by a return of the obedience of the creature, and man is made happy by the enjoyment of God. All these ends are advanced by this way of truth. First, That is the only religion which is revealed by God, for certainly so must a religion be if it be true; for that which pleaseth him must be according to his will; and who can know his will but by his own revelation, by some sign whereby God hath discovered it to us? Alas! if men were to sit brooding a religion themselves, what a strange business would they hatch and bring forth! If they were to carve out the worship of God, they might please themselves, but could never please God. Vain men indeed are ready to frame God like themselves, and foolishly imagine what pleaseth them pleaseth him also; they still conceive of God according to their own fancy. And this was the reason why the wisest heathens, having no revelation, no sense of God's will but what offered itself by the light of nature, they would employ their wits to devise a religion. But what a monstrous chimera and strange fancy did they bring forth!' Professing themselves wise, they became fools.' Rom. i. 22. Though they knew there was a great and eternal being by the light of nature, yet the apostle saith they became vain, en tois dialogismois, in their imaginations, how this infinite being should be worshipped; therefore what they carved out was not an honour, but a disgrace; they devised gods and goddesses that were patrons of murder, theft, and all manner of filthiness, and brought out Bacchus, the god of riot and good-fellowship, or the patron of boon companions, and Venus, the patroness of love and wantonness. But now God hath showed us his will, He hath showed us what is good, and what he doth require of us,' Micah vi. 8. Now that the gospel is a revelation from God, appears by the matter, which is so suitable to the nature of God;

it hath such an impress of God's wisdom, goodness, power upon it, that plainly it hath passed God; it is like such an infinite and eternal being as God is, in the worship and duties prescribed; it is far above the wisdom of mere man, though very agreeable to those relics of wisdom which are left in us. So that this is that true religion which surely will please God, because it came from him at first, and could come from no other. And also besides the evidence it carrieth with it, and the impress and stamp of God upon it, we have the word of those that brought this doctrine to us; and if we had nothing else, if they say, Thus saith the Lord,' &c., we are bound to believe them, they being persons of a valuable credit, that sought not themselves, but the glory of him that sent them. When the first messengers of it were men of such an unquestionable credit, that had no ends of their own, but ran all the extreme hazards and displeasures, surely it cannot incline us to think they did seek God's glory by a lie. Yea, they did evidence their mission from God by miracles that God sent them. Surely this doctrine is from heaven. Ay, and still God in his providence shows it from heaven, both in his internal government of the world; he blesseth it to the comfort of the conscience or to the terrifying of the conscience, for it works both ways. Wicked men are afraid of the light, lest their deeds should be made manifest, John iii. 20;--and also to the comforting and settling the conscience, that we may have great joy by believing in Christ. This for his internal government. And then his external government, by answering of prayers, fulfilling promises, accomplishing prophecies: Ps. xviii. 30, As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all that trust in him.' Put God to the trial by a regular confidence in a humble walking, and he will make good his promises; ay, and make good his threatenings. When people are ripe for judgment, God will fulfil the

threatenings of his word, and will accomplish what is spoken by the prophets and apostles; and God will reveal his wrath from heaven against all un righteousness of men.' Rom. i. 18. So that here are plain signs that this is a doctrine revealed from God, and God can best tell us how he is to be worshipped and pleased.

Secondly, Besides God's revelation, it notably performs all that which a man would expect in a religion, and so suits the necessities of man as well as the honour of God. Why?

1. That is the true religion, which doth most draw off the minds of men from things temporal and earthly to things celestial and eternal, that we may think of them and prosecute them. The sense of another world, an estate to come, is the great foundation upon which all religion is grounded. All its precepts and promises, which are like to gain upon the heart of man, they receive their force from the promise of an unseen glory, and eternal punishments which are provided for the wicked and contemners of the gospel. The whole design of this religion is to take us off from the pleasures of the flesh and the baits of this world, that we may see things to come. It is the excellency of the Christian faith that it reveals the doctrines of eternal life clearly, which all other religions in the world only could guess at. There were some guesses, but still great uncertainty, but obscure thoughts and apprehensions of such an estate. But here life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel,' 2 Tim. i. 10. Alas! there is a mist upon it in all other representations; they seem to see it, yet see it not. But this is brought to light in the gospel; it makes a free offer of it, upon condition of faith in Christ, John iii. 16. It quickens us to look after it; all its design is to breed in man this noble spirit, by looking upon things that are above, and not upon things on earth,' Col. iii. 1, 2; and it endeavours, with great power

and persuasiveness, that we may make it our scope, that we may neglect all present advantages rather than miss this; and make it our great design that we may look not to the things which are seen, but to the things unseen,' 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. This is the way of truth, because we believe it will make the worshippers of it everlastingly happy, which all men by nature have inquired about. Now it is but reason that a man's work be ended before he receive his wages, and if God will reward the virtuous, that it should be in the other world; for our work is not ended until we die; and we have a presagency of another world: there is another world which the soul of man thinks of. Now this is that which Christianity drives at, that we may look after our reward with God, and escape that tribulation, wrath, and anguish, which shall come upon every soul that doeth evil.

2. That doctrine which established purity of heart and life, as the only means to attain this blessedness, certainly that is the way of truth: Ps. xxiv. 3, 4, Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity.' There is no true holiness, no subjection of heart to God, but by the Christian doctrine: John xvii. 17, Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.' Hereby we know the word of God is truth, because it is so powerful to sanctification: Ps. cxix. 140, Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' All religious endeavour some kind of excellency; but now the holiness that is recommended in other religions is a mere outside holiness in comparison of what Christianity calls for. We have a strict rule, high, patterns, blessed encouragement; it promiseth a powerful Spirit, even the Spirit of the holy God, to work our heart to this holiness that is required. The aim of that religion is to remedy the disease introduced by the fall. All other religions do but make up

a part of the disease, and the gospel is the only remedy and cure; therefore this is the way of truth you should choose.

3. That doctrine which provideth for peace of conscience, and freedom from perplexing fears, which are wont to haunt us by reason of God's justice and wrath for our former misdeeds, that doctrine hath the true effect of a religion. Man easily apprehends himself as God's creature; and being God's creature, he is his subject, bound to obey him; and having exceedingly failed in his obedience (as experience shows), he is much haunted with fears and doubts. Now that is the religion that, in a kindly manner, doth dispossess us of these dreads and fears, and comes in upon the soul to deliver us from our bondage, and those guilty fears which are so natural to us by reason of sin. And therefore in a consultation about religion, if I were to choose, and had not by the grace of God been baptized into the Christian faith, and had the advantage to look abroad and consider, then I would bethink myself, Where shall I find rest for my soul, and from those fears which lie at the bottom of conscience, and are easily stirred in us, and sometimes are very raging? There is a fire smothering within, and many times it is blown up into a flame; where shall I get remedy for these fears? I rather pitch upon this, because the Holy Ghost doth, Jer. vi. 16, &c., as if he had said, If you will know what is the good way, take that way where you may find rest for your souls; not a false rest that is easily disturbed, not a carnal security, but where you may find true solid peace; that when you are most serious, and mind your great errand and business, you may comfort yourselves, and rejoice in the God that made you. In a false way of religion there is no establishment of heart and sound peace: Heb. ix. 9, They could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience.' That certainly is the true religion which makes the worshipper perfect as to the conscience, which

gives him a well-tempered peace in his soul; not a sinful security, but a holy solid peace, that when he hath a great sense of his duty upon him, yet he can comfortably wait upon God. And you know our Lord himself useth this very motive to invite men: Mat. xi. 29, Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;' that is, take the Christian religion, that easy yoke upon you, and you shall find rest for your souls. The Lord Jesus is our peace, and the ground of our peace; but we never find rest until we come under his yoke. Christians, search where you will, there is no serious answer to that grand question, which is the great scruple of the fallen creature, Micah vi. 7, how to appease angry justice. And we are told of those locusts who are seducing spirits, which come out of the bottomless pit, Rev. ix.; they had stings in their tails; their doctrine is not soundly comfortable to the conscience. Among others, this is designed by those locusts, that half Christianity which is taken up by the light-skirted people, which reflect upon privileges only; therefore there are such scruples and intricate debates. But some advantage there is, and some progress they may make in the spiritual life, that cry up them without duties; but they never have found peace upon their souls unless the Lord pardon their mistakes, and doth sanctify their reflections upon those spiritual and unseen privileges, so as to check their opposite desires and inclinations. It is best to be settled in God's way, by justification and sanctification. There is a wound wherein no plaster will serve for the cure, but the way the gospel doth take. Consider altogether Christ's renewing and reconciling grace, the whole evangelical truth, this gospel which was founded in the blood of Christ, his new covenant, and sealed with God's authority, and doth so fitly state duties and privileges, and lead a man by the one to the other. This is that which will appease the Lord. There is no settling

of the conscience without it; and therefore, whatever you would expect in a religion, here you find it in that blessed religion which is recommended to us in the gospel or new covenant; there is such holiness and true sense of the other world, which breeds an excellency and choiceness of spirit in men.

Prop. 7. Of all sects and sorts among Christians, the Protestant reformed religion will be found to be the way of truth. Why? Be cause there is the greatest suitableness to the great ends, the greatest agreement and harmony with God's revelation, which they profess to be their only rule. I say, as to God's worship, there is most simplicity, without that theatrical pomp which makes the worship of God a dead thing, and so most suitable to a spiritual being, and conducible to spiritual ends, to God who is a Spirit, and who will be worshipped in spirit and truth; for there God is our reward, and to be served by faith, love, obedience, trust, prayers, praises, and a holy administration of the word and seals; more suitable to the genius of the scripture, without the pageantry of numerous idle ceremonies, like flourishes about a great letter, which do rather hide religion than any way discover it; yea, betray it to contempt and scorn to a considering man. Besides, the great design of this religion is to draw men from earth to heaven, by calling them to a serious profession of saving truth. Popery is nothing but Christianity abused, and is a doctrine suited to policy and temporal ends; and it is supported by worldly greatness. Arid then as to holiness, which is the genuine product of a religion, the true genuine holiness is to be found, or should be found according to their principles, among Protestants and reformed; not external mortification, but in purging the heart. And here is the true peace of conscience, while men are directed to look to Christ's reconciling and renewing grace, and not to seek their acceptance in the

merit of their own works, and voluntary penance and satisfactions, and many other doctrines which put the conscience upon the rack. And then all this is submitted to be tried by the scriptures, which apparently are acknowledged by them to be the word, without running to unwritten traditions and the authority of men. Again, all this is recommended with the special presence of God as to gifts and graces, blessing these churches continually more and more. Therefore, if ever a man will find rest for his soul, and be soundly quiet within himself, here he must fix and choose, and take up the way of truth. Popery is but heathen ism disguised with a Christian name: their penal satisfactions are like the gashing and lancing of Baal's priests; their mediators of intercession are like the doctrines of demons among the Gentiles, for they had their middle powers, glorified heroes; their holy water suits with the heathen lustrations; their costly offerings to their images answer to the sacrifices and oblations to appease their gods, which the idolaters would give for the sin of their souls; adoring their relics is like the respects the heathens had to their departed heroes; and as they had their tutelar gods for every city, so these their saints for every city and nation; their St Sebastian for the pestilence, their Apollonia for the toothache, and the like. It is easy to rake in this dirt. It was not for the devil's interest, when the ensign of the gospel was lifted up, to draw men to downright heathenism; therefore he did more secretly mingle the customs and superstitions of the Gentiles with the food of life, like poison conveyed in perfume, that the souls of men might be more infected, alienated, and drawn from God. Popery doth not only add to the true religion, but destroys it, and is contrary to it. Let any considering man, that is not prejudiced, compare the face of the Roman synagogue with the beauty of the reformed churches, and they will see where Christianity lies. There you will find another sacrifice for

expiation of sin than the death of Christ; the communion of the cup, so expressly commanded in the word of God, taken away from the people; reading the scriptures forbidden to laics, as if the word of God were a dangerous book; prayers in an un known language; images set up, and so they are guilty, if not of primitive idolatry (which all the water in the sea cannot wash them clear of), yet certainly of secondary idolatry, which is the setting up an idol in God's worship contrary to the second commandment, the image of the invisible God represented by stones and pictures; invocation of saints and angels allowed; the doctrine of transubstantiation, contrary to the end of the sacrament; works of supererogation; popes' pardons; purgatory for faults already committed, as if Christ had not already satisfied; papal infallibility, not only contrary to faith, but sense and reason; their ridiculous mass and ceremonies; and many such human inventions, besides the word and against it. But the Protestants are contented with the simplicity of the scriptures, the word of God, and the true sacraments of Christ. Therefore you see what is the way of truth we should stick to.

Prop. 8. That in the private differences among the professors of the reformed Protestant religion, a man is to choose the best way, but to hold charity towards dissenters. In the true church, in matters of lesser moment, there may be sundry differences; for until men have the same degree of light, it cannot be expected they should be all of a mind. Babes will think one thing, grown persons will have other apprehensions; sick persons will have their frenzies and doubtings, which the sound cannot like. The apostle's rule is, Phil. iii. 15, 16, Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you,' &c. There are two parts of that rule. The perfect must be thus minded; they that are fully instructed in the mind of God, they must practise

as they believe. Strings in tune must not be brought down to those that are out of tune. But if others tainted with error do not give a thorough assent to all divine truth, yet let us walk together, saith the apostle, so far as we are agreed. God, that hath begun to enlighten them in other things, will in time discover their mistakes. Thus far the true Christian charity takes place. This should be our rule. Here we are agreed in the Christian reformed religion, and in all the points of it; let us walk together so far, and in lesser differences let us bear with and forbear one another in love. I speak now of Christian toleration; for the magistrate's toleration and forbearance, how far he is to interpose, that is another case: Eph. iv. 2, With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering forbearing one another in love.' What is bearing with one another? Not conniving at their sin, or neglecting ways to reclaim them; or forbear our profession when God calls us to it--they are great cases how far profession may be suspended, and how far it may be carried on--but to restore them with meekness; to own them in those things wherein they are owned by God; not to practise that antichristian humour which is now gotten into Protestantism, of unchurching, unministering, unchristianising one another, but to own one another in all those things wherein we are agreed, without imposing or censuring; not rending into factions, not endeavouring to destroy all, that we may promote the particular interest of one party to the prejudice of the whole; but walking under one common rule. And if others shall prove peevish, and if angry brethren shall call us bastards, and disclaim us as not belonging to the same father, we ought not to reject them, but still call them brethren; if they will not join with us we cannot help it, yet they are brethren notwithstanding that disclaim; and how pettishly and frowardly soever they carry themselves in their differences, a good Christian should take up this resolution

(their tongue is not Christ's fan to purge his floor), though they may condemn things which Christ will own, to bear their reproofs, and love them still; for the iniquity of their carriage doth not take away our obligation to them. As in the relation of inferiors, we are bound to be obedient to the froward as well as to the gentle parents and masters; so in the duties that are to pass between equals, we are to bear with the froward and to overcome their inclinations. For though we have corruptions that are apt to alienate us, and will put us upon furious passions, uncomely heats and divisions, yet God forbid we should omit any part of our duty to them, for uncharitable brethren are brethren still.

SERMON XXXII

I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.--Ver. 30.

I come now to answer an objection which may be made.

Object. But if you be so earnest to maintain unity among your own sects, why do you separate from the Papists, who are Christians as well as you, and own many things of Christianity wherein you may agree with them?

I answer--In the general, certainly the separation of one Christian, from another is a great evil, which should be carefully avoided; and if walls of separation be set up by others, yet we must do what in us lies to demolish them. They do no service to Christ that make separations needlessly, when as much as is possible there should be a union and coalition between Christians. Now, what shall we say to this separation from Borne, who were in the possession of a Christianity? I tell you, this bugbear needs not fright us out of the good way, if we can but clear three things to you.

1. That as to the rise, it was neither unjust nor unnecessary.

2. As to the manner of it, it was not made rashly and lightly, but as became them that had a serious sense of the interest of Christ and of his church in the world.

3. As to the continuance of this separation, that if it were made upon good grounds, and the same grounds still continue, certainly we have no cause to revert and return back; the Roman synagogue not being grown better, but much worse, since the first breach.

If all these can be proved, there is no reason to complain of our separation.

First, That this separation was neither unjust nor unnecessary. It is unjust if it be made without a cause: it is unnecessary if it be made without a sufficient cause, or such a cause as may warrant so great a breach in the Christian world. Certain it is that the schism lieth not in the separation, but the cause; and so is not chargeable on those that make the separation, but on those that give the cause. So that if we would examine whether the separation be good, I think we must examine the causes of it; therefore let us a little consider this very thing. Certainly the cause was not unjust; there was a cause (I shall show that by and by); and that it was not unnecessary, without a sufficient cause, and so no way culpable.

The business is, whether the controversies be of such moment as that there should be such a breach among Christians that we and they should keep such a distance (I speak only to the sufficiency of the cause, the justness we shall see by and by). Of what moment soever the controversies were, if the things that are taken to be errors be imposed as a condition of communion, a Christian cannot join himself with them. Certainly it is no sin to abstain from the communion of any church on earth, where the conditions of its communion are apparently unlawful and against conscience, though it may be the matters in debate be not of great moment. I only speak provisionally, be they or be they not of moment, yet if these be propounded as conditions of its communion; for no man is necessitated to sin. In some cases it is lawful to withdraw out of a place for fear of danger and infection; as if a house or town be infected with the pestilence, it is but a necessary caution to look to ourselves betimes, and withdraw out of that house or town.

But now when no men are permitted to tarry but those that are infected with the disease, the case is out of dispute; the sound must be gone,

and withdraw from them by all the means they can. Now, such are the corruptions of Popery, and the danger of seducement so manifest, that little children are by all means to keep themselves from idols,' 1 John v. 21. We should be very cautious and wary of that communion wherein there is so much hazard of salvation, if possible; we should keep ourselves untainted. But when we are bound to the belief, practice, profession of those errors, there needs no more debate; a Christian must be gone, else he will sin against conscience. Now this is the case clearly between them and us. Suppose the corruptions were not great, nor the errors damnable, yet when the profession of them is required, and the belief of them as certain truths is imposed, we are to endure all manner of extremity rather than yield to them. Therefore much more when it is easy to be proved that they are manifest and momentous corruptions. Therefore certainly to leave the communion of the popish faction is but to return to our union and communion with Christ; it can be no fault to leave them that left Christ, and the ancient faith and church. The innocent husband that leaves the adulterous wife is not to be blamed, for she had first broken the bonds, and violated the rights of the conjugal relation. Or, a good citizen and soldier are not to be blamed in forsaking their governor and captain, who first revolted from his allegiance to his prince, ay, and when he would engage them in the same rebellion too.

Secondly, As to the management of it, or the manner how it was carried on. It was not made rashly and lightly, without trying all good means, and offering to have their complaints debated in a free council; in the meantime continuing in their station, and managing the cause of Christ with meek but yet zealous defences, until they were driven thence by antichristian fury for blowing the trumpet, and warning the church of her danger from that corrupt party; until persecuted by censures not

only ecclesiastical but civil; cast out of the church, put to death, some for witnessing against, others merely for not owning and practising, these corruptions; and hunted out from their corners, where they were willing to hide, and worship God in secret, with all rigour and tyranny; driven first out of the church, then out of the world by fire and sword, unless they would communicate with them in their sin: thus were they used. So that the Romanists cannot charge the Protestants with schism for leaving their communion, any more than a man that thrusteth another out of doors can be offended at his departure. Yea, when the reformed did set up other churches, it was after all hopes of reformation were lost and defeated; and the princes, magistrates, pastors, and people were grown into a multitude, and did in great numbers run to the banner which God had displayed because of his truth, and so could not in conscience and spiritual safety live without the means of grace and the benefit of ordinances and church-societies, lest they should be scattered as sheep without a shepherd, and become a ready prey to Satan.

And then this separation, which was so necessary, was carried on with love and pity, and with great distinction between the corruptions from which they separated, and the persons from whom they separated; and they had the same affection to them, and carried it all along just as those that are freed from Turkish slavery, and have broke prison, and invited the other Christian captives to second them. It may be they have not the heart and courage to venture with them; though they leave them fast in their enemies' chains, and will not return to their company, they cease not to love and pity them, though it were long, of their fear they did not enjoy the like liberty themselves.

Thirdly, As to the continuance of this separation. It was made upon good grounds, and it is still to be continued upon the same grounds.

The Roman Church is not grown better, but worse; and that which was before but mere practice and custom is since established by law and canon, and they have ratified and owned their errors in the Council of Trent. And now Antichrist is more discovered, and God hath multiplied and reformed the churches, and blessed them with his gifts and graces, and the conversion of many souls, surely we should not now grow weary of our profession, as if novelty only led us to make this opposition.

If we shall think so slightly of all the truths of God and blood of the martyrs, and all this ado to bring things to this pass, that Christ may gain ground, and we should tamely give up our cause at last, as some have done implicitly, and others shrink, and let the Papists carry it quietly, it is such wickedness as will be the brand and eternal infamy of this generation. If Hagar the bond woman, that hath been cast out, should return again, and vaunt it over Sarah the lawful wife, the mischiefs that would follow are unspeakable. God permitted it to be so for a while in Queen Mary's days; and what precious blood was shed during that time we all know; and shall we again return to the garlic and onions of Egypt, as being weary of the distractions of the wilderness, and expose the interest of Christ, merely for our temporal good, which we cannot be secured of either? Therefore, since this separation was not unjust, without cause, nor unnecessary, without sufficient cause, and since it was carried on with so much meekness and Christian lenity, and since Borne is not grown better, but worse rather, surely we have no reason to be stumbled at for our departure from that apostatical church.

In short, this separation was not culpable; it came not from error of mind: They went out from us, but they were not of us,' 1 John ii. 19. Not from corruption in manners: These are those that separate themselves, sensual, not having the Spirit,' Jude 19. Not from strife

and contention, like those separations at Corinth, where one was of Paul, another of Apollos,' &c., 1 Cor. i. 12; not from pride and censoriousness, like those that said, Stand farther off; I am holier than thou,' Isa. lxv. 5. Not from coldness and tergiversation, as those that forsook the assembling of themselves together,' because they were in danger of this kind of Christianity, Heb. x. 25. But from conscience; and this not so much from the Christians, as from the errors of Christians; from the corruptions, rather than the corrupted. There is no reason we should be frightened with this suggestion.

But now, because that separation is good or evil according to the causes of it, let us a little consider the state of Rome when God first summoned his people to come out of this spiritual Babylon; and if it be the same still, there is no cause to retract the change.

The state of it may be considered either as to its government, doctrine, or worship; the tyranny of their discipline and government, the heresy of their doctrine, and the idolatry of their worship. And if our fathers could not, and if we cannot, have communion with them without partaking of their sin, it is certain the separation was and is still justifiable.

First, As to their government. Three things are matter of just offence to the reformed churches:--

1. The universality or vast extent and largeness of that dominion and empire which they arrogate.

2. The supremacy and absolute authority which they challenge.

3. The infallibility which they pretend unto.

And if there were nothing else but a requiring a submission to these things, so false, so contrary to the tenor and interest of Christianity, this were ground enough of separation.

1. The universality of headship over all other churches, this the

people of God neither could nor ought to endure.

Suppose the Roman Church were sound in faith, in manners, in discipline; yet, being but a particular church, that it should challenge such a right to itself, in giving laws to all other churches at its own pleasure, and that every particular society which doth not depend upon her beck in all things should be excluded from hope of salvation, or not counted a fellow-church in the communion of the Christian faith, this is a thing that cannot be endured.

That the Pope, as to the extent of his government and administration, should be universal bishop, whose empire should reach far and near throughout the world, as far as the church of Christ reacheth; this, as to matter of fact is impossible; as to matter of right, is sacrilegious. As to matter of fact it is impossible, because of the variety of governments and different interests under covert of which the particular churches of Christ find shelter and protection in all the places of their dispersion; and therefore to establish such an empire, that shall be so pernicious to the churches of Christ which are harboured abroad, is very grievous; and partly by reason of the multitude and diversity of those things that belong to governments, which is a power too great for any created understanding to wield. As to matter of right, it is sacrilegious; for Christ never instituted any such universal vicar as necessary to the unity of his church. But here was one Lord Jesus, and one God, and one faith, but never in union under one pope. And therefore we see, in temporal government, God hath distributed it into many hands, because he would not subject the whole world unto one, as neither able to manage the affairs thereof, nor brook the majesty of so large an empire with that meekness and moderation as becomes a creature. It is too much for mere man to bear. Now religious concernments are more difficult than civil, by reason of

the imperfection of light about them; and it would easily degenerate into superstition and idolatry; therefore certainly none but a God is able to be head of the church.

2. The authority of making laws. Consider it either as to matter or form, the matter about which it is exercised, or the authority itself; their intolerable boldness and proud ambition is discovered in either. As to the matter about which this power is exercised, for temporal things, God hath committed them to the care of the magistrate; and it is an intrusion of his right for the Pope to take upon himself to interpose in civil things, to dispose of states and kingdoms; a power which Christ refused: Man, who made me a judge over you?' Luke xii. 14. As to matter of religion, some things are in their own nature good and some evil; some things of a middle nature and indifferent. As to the first, God hath established them by his laws; as to the other y they are left to arbitrament, to abstain and use for edification, according to the various postures and circumstances of times, places, and persons, but so that we should never take from any believer, or suffer to be taken from him, that liberty which Christ hath purchased for us by his blood. It is a licentious abuse of power not to be endured. We are to stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,' Gal. v. 1. The apostle mainly intends it of the observance of the ceremonial law, which was a bondage, because of the trouble and expense. Oh! but then the price wherewith Christ bought our freedom should make us more chary of it, and stand in the defence of it with greater courage and constancy, whatever it cost us. The captain told Paul that his liberty as a Roman was obtained with a great sum,' Acts xxii. 28. Now, the court of Rome doth challenge such a power, that it commandeth and forbiddeth those things which God hath left free, as distinction of days, meats, marriage, according to their own pleasure,

1 Tim. iv. 3; nay, sometimes dispenseth with that which God hath expressly commanded or forbidden; and then what doth it but make him equal with God, yea, superior to him? That physician possibly may be borne with that doth only burden his patient with some needless prescriptions, if for the main he be but faithful; but if he should mingle poison with his medicaments, and also still tire out his patient with new prescriptions, that are altogether troublesome, and costly, and nauseous, and for the number of them dangerous to life, it behoveth his patient to look to his health. And this is the very case. The Pope doth sometimes make bold with dispensing with God's laws, and doth extinguish and choke Christian religion by thousands of impositions of indifferent things, which is not to be endured.

And then as to the authority itself; according to the eminency of the lawgiver, so is his authority more or less absolute. Therefore when a mortal man shall challenge an authority so absolute as to be above control, and to give no account of his actions, and it is not lawful to say to him, What doest thou? or inquire into the reason, or complain of the injury, this is that which the churches of Christ cannot endure. Therefore they had just ground and cause of withdrawing, and making up a body by themselves, rather than yield to so great encroachments upon Christian liberty; to receive the decrees of one church, and that so erroneous and imposing, without examination or leave of complaint.

3. That which grieveth, and did grieve, and cause this withdrawing, is both papal infallibility and freedom from error. That any church which is made up of fallible men should arrogate this to themselves (especially the Roman, which of all churches that ever Christ had upon earth is most corrupt), that they should fasten this infallibility to the papal chair, which is the fountain of those corruptions, this they look upon as a great contradiction, not only to faith, but to sense;

and as hard a condition as if I were bound, when I saw a man sick of the plague, and the swelling and tokens of death upon him, yet to say he is immortal, nay, that that part wherein the disease is seated is immortal. This was the burden that was imposed upon the people of God, that they should yield to this.

Secondly, Come to their heresy in doctrine. To rake in this filth would take up more time than will comport with your patience. It is almost everywhere corrupt; the only sound part in the whole frame is the doctrine of the Trinity, which yet the schoolmen have entangled with many nice and unprofitable disputes, which render their glorious and blessed mystery less venerable. We must do them right also in this, that they grant the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction, and that he not only died for our good, but in our stead, and bore our punishment; they grant the truth of it, but deny the sufficiency of it: so mightily weaken, if not destroy it, while they think it must be pieced up by the sacrifice of the mass, human satisfaction, by the merit of works, purgatory, and indulgences. But in all other points of religion, how corrupt are they! That which most offends the reformed churches is their equalling traditions with the scripture; yea, their decrying and taxing the scriptures as obscure, insufficient, and as a nose of wax, pliable to several purposes; their mangling the doctrine of justification, which we own to consist in the imputation of Christ's righteousness received by faith; and they plead in the works of righteousness which we have done; and so, if the apostle may be judge, make void the grace of God,' Gal. ii. 21. And then the merit of works, not expecting the reward of them from God's mercy, which becometh Christian humility; but from the condignity of the work itself, which bewrayeth their pharisaical pride. We say that sins are remitted by God alone, exercising his mercy in Christ through the gospel, towards those

that believe and repent. But the Papists say, pardon may be had by virtue of indulgences, if a man give such a price, do this or that, say so many ave marias and paternosters, though far enough from true faith and repentance. The one savours of the gospel, the other of the tyranny of the Pope of Rome, that hath set himself in the place of God, and substituted his laws instead of the law of Christ. So their portentous doctrine of transubstantiation, that a priest should make his maker, and a people eat their God. I could represent the difference of both churches, both in excess and defect. In excess, what they believe over and above the Christian faith. The true church believes, with the scriptures, and with the primitive churches, that there is but one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be religiously invocated and worshipped. They plead the creature, angels and saints, are to be both religiously invocated and worshipped. The scripture shows that there is but one surety and mediator between God and man, he that was both God and man, Jesus Christ. They say that the saints are mediators of intercession with God, by whose merits and prayers we obtain the grace and audience of our supplications. The scripture saith that Christ's propitiatory sacrifice offered on the cross is sufficient for the plenary remission of all our sins. They say the sacrifice of the mass, which the priest under the species of bread and wine substantially, that is, by consecration into the body and blood of Christ, offered to God, that this is available for the remission of sins both of quick and dead. That the remission of sins obtained by Christ, and offered in the gospel to the penitent believer, is bestowed and applied by faith, this is the opinion of the scripture. They say remission of sins is obtained and applied by their own satisfactions and papal indulgences. That true repentance consists in confession of sin with grief, and desire of the grace of Christ, with a serious purpose of newness of life, this is the

doctrine of the scripture. They think that to the essence of true repentance there is required auricular confession, penal satisfactions, and the absolvance of the priest, without which true faith profiteth nothing to salvation. Again, the scripture teacheth this doctrine, that the ordinances confer grace by virtue only of God's promises, and the sacraments are signs and seals of the covenant of grace to them that believe. And they would teach us that they deserve and confer grace from the work wrought. The scripture teacheth that good works are such as are done in obedience to God and conformity to his law, and are completed in love to God and our neighbour. They teach us that there are works of supererogation, which neither the law nor the gospel requireth of us; and that the chief of these are monastical vows, several orders and rules of monks and friars. The scripture teacheth us that God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is only to be worshipped, both with natural and instituted worship, in spirit and in truth; and they teach both the making and worshipping of an image, and that the images of saints are to be worshipped. The scripture teacheth that there is but one holy apostolical catholic church, joined together in one faith and one Spirit, whose head, husband, and foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ, out of which church there is no salvation; and they teach us the Church of Rome is the centre, the right mother of all churches, under one head, the Pope, infallible and supreme judge of all truth; and out of communion of this church there is nothing but heresy, schism, and everlasting condemnation. Instead of that lively faith by which we are justified by Christ, they cry up a dead assent. Instead of sound knowledge, they cry up an implicit faith, believing as the church believes. Instead of affiance, they cry up wavering, conjectural uncertainty.

Thirdly, Come to their worship. Their adoration of the host, their

invocation of saints and angels, their giving to the Virgin Mary and other saints departed the titles of mediator, redeemer, and saviour, in their public liturgies and hymns; their bowing to and before images; their communion in one kind, and that decreed by their councils, with a non obstante Christi institute, notwithstanding Christ's express institution to the contrary; their service in an unknown tongue, and the like, are just causes of our separation from them. But it is tedious to rake in these things. So that unless we would be treacherous to Christ, and not only deny the faith, but forfeit sense and reason, and give up all to the lusts and wills of those that have corrupted the truth of Christianity, we ought to withdraw, and our separation is justifiable notwithstanding this plea.

The use. Here is reproof to divers sorts.

1. To those that think they may be of any sect among Christians, as if all the differences in the Christian world were about trifles and matters of small concernment, and so change their religion as they do their clothes, and are turned about with every puff of new doctrine. If it were to turn to heathenism, Turcism, or Judaism, they would rather suffer banishment or death than yield to such a change; but to be this day of this sect and to-morrow of another, they think it is no great matter. As the wind of interest bloweth, so are they carried, and do not think it a matter of such moment to venture anything upon that account. You do not know the deceitfulness of your hearts; he that can digest a lesser error will digest a greater. God trieth you in the present truth. He that is not faithful in a little will not be faithful in much, as he that giveth entertainment to a small temptation will also to a greater, if put upon it. Where there is not a sincere purpose to obey God in all things, God is not obeyed in anything. Every truth is precious. The dust of gold and pearls is esteemed. Every truth is to

be owned in its season with full consent. To do anything against conscience is damnable. You are to choose the way of truth impartially, to search and find out the paths thereof.

2. It reproves those that will be of no religion till all differences among the learned and godly are reconciled, and therefore willingly remain unsettled in religion, and live out of the communion of any church upon this pretence, that there is so much difference, such show of reason on each side, and such faults in all, that they doubt of all, and therefore will not trouble themselves to know which side hath the truth. You are to choose the way of truth. And this is such a fond conceit, as if a man desperately sick should resolve to take no physic till all doctors were of one opinion; or as if a traveller, when he seeth many ways before him, should lie down and refuse to go any farther. You may know the truth if you will search after it with humble minds: John vii. 17, If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' The meek he will teach the way.' If you be diligent, you may come to a certainty notwithstanding this difference.

3. It reproves those that take up what comes next to hand, are loath to be at the pains of study, and searching, and prayer, that they may resolve upon evidence; that commonly set themselves to advance that faction into which they are entered. Alas! you should mind religion seriously; though not lightly leave the religion you are bred in, yet not hold it upon unsound grounds. As antiquity: John iv. 20, Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.' Or custom of the times and places where you live: Eph. ii. 2, According to the course of the world,' the general and corrupt custom or example of those where we live; nor be led by affection to, or admiration of some persons, Gal. ii. 12. Holy men may lead you into error. Nor by multitude, to do as the most do:

Follow not a multitude to do evil;' but get a true and sound conscience of things; for by all these things opinions are rather imposed upon us than chosen by us.

4. It reproves those that abstain from fixing out of a fear of troubles; as the king of Navarre would so far put forth to sea as that he might soon get to shore again. You must make God a good allowance when you embark with him; though called not only to dispute, but to die for religion, you must willingly submit: If any man come to me, and hate not his own life, he cannot be my disciple,' Luke xiv. 26. How soon the fire may be kindled we cannot tell; times tend to Popery; though there be few left to stick by us--the favour of the times runs another way--we ought to resolve for God, whatever it costs us.

5. It reproves those that think to reserve their hearts, notwithstanding outward compliance; the way of truth, being chosen, is to be owned, 2 Cor. vii. 1; the outward profession is required as well as the inward belief: Rom. x. 10, For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' A man that should lift himself among the enemies of his country, and fight with them, and say, I reserve my heart for my country, this is a mockage; as if a wife that prostitutes her body to another, should tell her husband she reserveth her heart for him. Satan would have outward prostration; he did not ask the heart, but, Fall down and worship me.'

Use 2. To press us to choose the way of truth. Take it up upon evidence, and cleave to it with all the heart.

First, Take it up upon evidence, the evidence of reason, scripture, and the Spirit. Reason will lead us to the scripture, the scripture will lead us to the Spirit; so we come to have a knowledge of the truth.

1. Reason; that is preparative light, and will lead the soul thus far. It is a thousand to one but Christianity is the way of God; it will see

much of God in this representation: and if you should go on carnally, carelessly, neglecting heaven and Christ, reason will tell you you run upon a thousand hazards, that there are far more against you than for you in your sinful courses. Stand upon the way. Where may you find such likelihood of satisfaction, or probability of salvation as in the religion we have? Either this is true or there is none: that you should venture your souls rather here than elsewhere; and at least, that you should profess the Christian religion as men go to a lottery; reason will tell you thus. A man that comes to a lottery, it is uncertain whether he shall have a prize or no; but it is but venturing a shilling, possibly he may have a prize; so reason will tell you, if it be uncertain whether there be a heaven or a hell, yet it is a thousand to one there are both: I may have a prize; and it is but venturing the quitting of a few lusts that are not worth the keeping. There are some truths above reason, but none contrary to it; for grace is not contrary to nature, but perfects it; therefore there is nothing in the gospel but what is agreeable to sound reason. Reason will tell us there is no doctrine agreeth so much with the wisdom, power, goodness, justice, truth, and the honour of God, as that doctrine revealed in the scripture.

2. When reason hath thus brought you to the scripture, there is the great warrant of faith: John xvii. 20, They that believe in me through their word.' And Isa. viii. 20, To the law, and to the testimony, else there is no light in them.' That is the sacred standard by which we should measure all doctrines, and these will make wise the simple,' Ps. xix. The plainest, meanest, simplest man may find out the right way to heaven, if he will consult with God's book diligently, there he may become wise to salvation; the veriest fool and simple man may be taught how to walk directly and safely. This is the clue which brings us

through all the labyrinths and perplexing debates in the world, to consult with the word of God, that we may not receive the truth upon man's credit, but see the grounds of it with our own eyes. He that finds the pearl of price must dig for it: Mat. xiii. 44, he must read the scriptures, be much in the study of God's book.

3. The scripture leads us to the Spirit, because there are many mysteries in the gospel difficulty known, that will not be taken up by a sure faith without illumination from above. Besides, there are so many various artifices used by men to disguise the truth, Eph. iv. 14. And besides, there is a connate blindness and hatred of truth, which is natural to men, and therefore it is the Spirit of God must help us to make a wise choice. Look, as in practical things, we shall never choose the way of truth in opposition to the falsity of worldly enjoyments without the light of the Spirit; therefore it is said, Prov. xxiii. 4, Labour not to be rich, cease from thine own wisdom.' If a man be guided by his own understanding, he will choose riches: so also in matter of opinion, when we lean to our own understanding, we shall choose amiss. John xvi. 13, it is the Spirit of God that must guide us into all truth, therefore you must beg his direction; for if we that are so blind of heart be left to our own mistakes or the deceits of others, left to the direction of ourselves, how easily shall we err! Say, Lord, send out thy light and thy truth, to lead me to thy holy hill.'

Secondly, As we should choose the way of truth, so cleave to it with all firmness and perseverance, without seeking out any other way, John vi. 67, 68. If you turn away from Christ, where will you get a better master? Change where you will, you will change for the worse; you will turn your back upon true comfort and true happiness, for he hath all this. So much for the first part, the Tightness of David's choice, I have chosen the way of truth.'

In the latter clause, there you have his diligence and accuracy in walking according to the tenor of the true religion, Thy judgments have I laid before me.' By judgments is meant the precepts and directions of the word, as invested with threatenings and promises; for so the word contains every man's doom: not only the execution of God's providence, but the word, shows what will become of a man. Now these I have laid before me;' that is, propounded them as the rule of my life; as the king was to have the book of the law always before him, Deut. xvii. 19.

Doct. When we have chosen the way of truth, or taken up the profession of true religion, the rules of it should be ever before us.

Three reasons for this:--

1. To have a holy rule and not a holy life is altogether inconsistent. A Christian should he a lively transcript of that religion he doth profess. A Christian should be Christ's epistle, 2 Cor. iii.; a walking Bible: Phil. ii. 15, 16, shining as lights, holding forth the word of life.' How? Not in doctrine, but in practice. A suitable practice joined with profession puts a majesty and splendour upon the truth. If there are many doubts about the true religion, why they are occasioned by the scandalous lives of professors; we reason from the artist to the art itself. Look, as there is a correspondence between the stamp and the impress, the seal and the thing sealed, so should there be between a Christian's life and a Christian's belief; the stamp should be upon his own heart, upon his life and actions; his action should discover his opinion, otherwise he loseth the glory and the benefit of his religion; he is but a pagan in God's account,' Jer. ix. 25; he makes his religion to be called in question; and therefore he that walks unsuitably, he is said to deny the faith,' 1 Tim. v. 8. To be a Christian in doctrine and a pagan in life is a temptation to atheism to others; when the one destroys the other, practice confutes their

profession, and profession confutes their practice; therefore both these must be matched together. Thus the way of truth must be the rule, and a holy life must be suited.

2. As to this holy life, a general good intention sufficeth not, but there must be accurate walking. Why? For God doth not judge of us by the lump, or by a general intention. It is not enough to plead at the day of judgment, you had a good scope and a good meaning; for every action must be brought to judgment, whether it be good or evil, Eccles. xii. 14. When we reckon with our servants, we do not expect an account by heap, but by parcels; so a general good meaning, giving our account by heap, will not suffice, but we must be strict in all our ways, and keep close to the rule in every action, in your eating, trading, worship: Eph. v. 15, See that you walk circumspectly,' &c. See that you do not turn aside from the line and narrow ridge that you are to walk upon.

3. Accurate walking will never be, unless our rule be diligently regarded and set before us. Why?

[1.] So accurate and exact is the rule in itself, that you may easily swerve from it; therefore it must always be heeded and kept in your eye, Ps. xix. David admired the perfections of the law for the purity of it, and for the dominion of it over conscience. What was the issue of that contemplation? See ver. 12, Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.' Thus the best man, when he compares himself with the law, will be forced to blush, and acknowledge more faults than ever he took notice of before. When we see the law reacheth not only to the act but the aim, not only to the words but the thoughts and secret motions of the heart, then, Lord! who knows his errors? The law of God sometimes is said to be broad and sometimes narrow; a broad law: Ps. cxix. 96, Thy commandment is exceeding broad.'

Why broad? Because it reacheth to every motion, every human action; the words, the thoughts, the desires, are under a law. Nay, yet more, the imperfect and indeliberate motions of the soul are under a law; therefore the commandment is exceeding broad. On the other side it is said to be narrow, A strait gate, and a narrow way.' Mat. vii. 14. Why? Because it gives no allowance to corrupt nature; we have but a strait line to go by. So that we need regard our rule.

[2.] We are so ignorant in many particulars relating to faith and manners, that we need often consult with our rule. The children of light have too much darkness in them, therefore they are bidden to look to their rule: Eph. v. 17, Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.' Blind consciences will easily carry us wrong; and we have some new things still to learn from the word of God, for know ledge is but in part; therefore our rule should be ever before us.

[3.] So many and subtle are those temptations which Satan sets on foot to make us transgress this rule. The devil assaults us two ways--by fiery darts,' and by cunning wiles,' Eph. vi. 11. He hath not only violent temptations, burning lusts, or raging despair, but he hath ensnaring temptations by his wiles, such as most take with a person tempted; and he transforms himself into an angel of light,' 2 Cor. xi. 14; covers his foul designs with plausible pretences; therefore we need have our rule and the word of God ever before us.

[4.] We are weak, and easily overborne, and therefore should bear our rule always in mind. God's people, their greatest sins have been out of incogitancy; they sin oftenest because they are heedless, and forgetful, and inattentive. Therefore, as a carpenter tries his work by his rule and square, so should a Christian measure his conversation by the rod of the sanctuary. God, whose act is his rule, cannot miscarry. So the schoolmen, when they set out God's holiness, say God's hand is

his rule. But we, that are creatures, are apt to swerve aside, therefore need a rule. We should always have our rule before us. We are to walk according to rule, Gal. vi., and Josh. i. 7, 8, The book of the law shall not depart from thee,' &c. If we would have our rule before our eyes, we should not so often swerve. Christians, though you be right in opinion, that will not bring you to heaven, but you. must have the rules of this holy profession before you.

Use. Oh, then, let the word of God be ever in sight as your comforter and counsellor! The more we do so the more shall we walk in the fear of God. You are not to walk according to the course of this world, but according to rule; and therefore you are not to walk rashly and in deliberately, and as you are led and carried on by force of present affections, but to walk circumspectly, considering what principle you are acted by, and what ends; and the nature and quality of our actions are always to be considered. Remember you are under the eye of the holy and jealous God, Josh. xxiv. 9, and eyed by wicked men who watch for your halting, Jer. xx., and eyed by weak Christians, who may suffer for your careless and slight walking, who look to the lives of men rather than their principles. You are the lights of the world,' Mat. v. 14, and light draws eyes after it; you are as a city upon a hill.' You that pretend to be in the right way, the way of truth, will you walk carelessly and inordinately? You are compassed about with snares; there is a snare in your refreshments, Ps. lxix.; your estates may become a snare, 1 Tim. vi. 9; your duties may be come a snare: be not a novice, lest you come into the condemnation of the devil,' 1 Tim. iii. Therefore take heed to your rule, be exact and watchful over your hearts and ways.

SERMON XXXIII.

I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame.--Ver. 31.

IN the former verse David speaks of his choice, I have chosen the way of truth;' then of the accurateness of his prosecution, Thy judgments have I laid before me.' Now he comes to his constant perseverance therein, I have stuck unto thy testimonies.' These two verses follow one another in a very perfect order and coherence. We must begin with a right choice, there we must lay the foundation, I have chosen the way of truth,' and then persevere. There is a constancy in good and an obstinacy in evil. The devils sin from the beginning, as the good angels continued in their first estate. Men that are engaged in an evil course often continue in it without retractation; they are no changelings, always the same; that is no honour to them. Luther, when he was charged with apostasy for appearing against the Pope: Confitetur se apostatam esse, sed beatum et sanctum, qui fidem diabolo datam non servavit--he confesseth he was an apostate, but a holy and blessed one, that he did not keep touch with the devil. Constancy must ever be understood with respect to a right choice; for to break faith with Satan is not matter of dishonour, but of praise. We must go on with an accurate prosecution, for that giveth us experience, and causeth us to find joy and sweetness, and power in the truth, and is a great means of constancy.

If men would be constant, the next thing they must do is to practise that religion they choose, and live under the power of it. Holiness is a great means of constancy: 1 Tim. iii. 9, Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.' As precious liquors are best kept in clean

vessels, so is the mystery of faith in a pure conscience. Men may be stubborn in their opinions out of natural courage, and the engagement of credit and interests; but this is of little worth without practical godliness: their orthodoxy and rightness in opinion will not bring them to heaven, nor shall they be saved because they are of such a sect or party. But then all must be closed up by persevering in our resolutions; otherwise all our former zeal will be lost. I have chosen the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me;' and then now, I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame:' 2 John 8, Look to yourselves, that ye lose not those things which ye have wrought.' All that a man hath done and suffered, watching, striving, praying, they come to nothing unless we stick to it and persevere. Under the law a Nazarite was to begin his days of separation again, if he had defiled himself; if he had separated himself for a year, and kept his vow within two days of the year, he was to begin all anew, Num. vi. 12; and the interpretation of that type I cannot give you better than in the prophet's words: Ezek. xviii. 24, When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be remembered.' When they turn head against their former profession, it comes to nothing. Thus you see what a perfect dependence there is between this verse and the former.

In the words there is--

1. A profession, I have stuck unto thy testimonies.

2. A prayer, O Lord, put me not to shame.

First, For the profession, I have stuck to thy testimonies.' Saith Chrysostom, he doth not say, I have followed thy testimonies, but stuck or cleaved; stuck so fast that nothing could remove him, no difficulties, trials, shakings; he was still firm.

Doct. Those that have chosen the way of God, and begun to conform their practice thereunto, ought with all constancy to persevere therein.

First, We have the same reasons to continue that we had to begin at first. There is the same loveliness in God's ways; Christ is as sweet as ever; heaven is as good as ever. If there be any difference, there is more reason to continue than there was to begin. Why? Because we have more experience of the sweetness of Christ. You knew him heretofore only by report and hearsay; but now, when you have walked in the way of holiness, then you know him by experience; and if you have tasted, 1 Peter ii. 2, then certainly you should not fall off afterwards. Upon trial Christ is sweeter; and the longer you have kept to conscience, heaven is nearer; and would a man miscarry and be discouraged when he is ready to put into the haven? Rom. xiii. 11, Your salvation is nearer than when you first believed.' The nearer we are to the enjoyment of any good, the more impatient in the want of it; as natural motion we find swifter in the end, because it is nearer to the centre; but violent motion is swiftest at first; as when a stone is thrown upward, it is swifter at first, but when the impression of the external force is more spent, then the motion is weaker. It argues that you are not seriously thorough with God, if you should break with him after some profession of his name; now your motion should be more earnest, more strong towards him. I speak this, because we are so apt to cast off our first faith,' 1 Tim. v. 12; and to lose our first love,' Rev. ii. 4; and to grow remiss and lazy, and neglect our first works, 2 Chron. xvii. 3. Jehoshaphat is said to walk in the first ways of his father David.' We see many at the first are carried on with a great deal of affection and zeal; and there are many promising beginnings of a very flourishing spring; but yet they are no sure prognostications of a joyful harvest. Why, consider with yourselves, We

have the same reasons to continue as to begin, yea, much more, as heaven is nearer. In a marriage relation true affection increaseth, but adulterous love is only hot while it is new. If our hearts be upright with God, we will increase with zeal for his glory and love to his testimonies.

Secondly, The danger and mischievous effects of apostasy, and falling off, that is another reason why we should stick to his testimonies.

1. It is more dishonourable to God than a simple refusal; for you bring an ill report upon him, as if he were not a good master. A wicked man that refuseth grace doth not so much dishonour God, be cause his refusal is supposed to be the fruit of his prejudice; but now you that cast him off after trial, your apostasy is supposed to be the fruit of your experience, as if the devil were a better master; when you have tried both, you return to him again. Tertullian, in his book De Poenitentia, hath this saying, After you have tried God, you do as it were deliberately judge Satan's service to be better, or at least you do not find that in God you did expect. Therefore the honour of God is mightily concerned, and lies at stake when you fall off after you have seemed to begin with him with a great deal of accurateness. And God pleads for himself, and stands for his credit, which seems to be wronged by this apostasy, Jer. ii. 5, casting off his service for the idols of the nation: What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?' and Micah vi. 3, O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.' What! can you complain of God? Is God hard to be pleased, backward to reward? What cause of distaste have you found in him?--for implicitly you do as it were accuse him.

2. When you fall off after a taste of the sweetness and practice of godliness, your condition is worse than if you had never begun. There

are two dreadful scriptures which speak of the condition of total apostates after some taste, and after they have had some savour of holy things, and some delight in the ways of God. One is Heb. vi. 4-6, For it is impossible,' &c. Christians, after they have had some taste, and some enlightening, and made a savoury profession of godliness, afterwards they split themselves; some fall forward to errors and preposterous zeal; others fall backward by an unfaithful heart; one breaks his face, the other breaks his neck, as old Eli. But a little to clear that place. Certainly all of us should stand in fear of this heavy judgment of being given up to perish by our apostasy, to an obstinate heart, never to reconcile ourselves by repentance, even the children of God; for he proposeth it to them, supposeth they are made partakers of the heavenly calling. The apostle doth not speak there of every sin against knowledge, but of apostasy from the faith of Christ, and not of apostasy of general professors, that lightly come and lightly go, as the loose sort of Christians here among us; but specially of those that had a taste, savoury experience of the sweetness of God's ways. Again, he doth not speak of apostasy for a fit, in some great temptation of fear, but of deliberate apostasy of those that were enlightened, feeling, tasting, so as to make some strict profession; afterward turn off, lose all, turn atheists, antiscripturists, formalists, renouncing Christ and the world to come, in the hope of which they seemed before to be carried out with a great deal of delight, and strength and affection. The apostle saith, It is impossible they should be saved, because it is impossible they should repent. This is a fearful state; and yet, as fearful as it is, it is not unusual: it is a thing we see often in some that have made a savoury profession of the name of God, and afterwards have been blasted, either given up to an injudicious mind, or to vile affections,

and are fallen off, and it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Oh, then, you that have begun, and have had a taste of the ways of God, and begun to walk closely with him, you should lay this to heart! Therefore this is propounded to believers, that they should keep at a very great distance from such a judgment, lest we grow to such an impenitent state as to be given up to a reprobate mind and vile affections.

The other place is 2 Peter ii. 21, 22, It had been better, for them not to have known,' &c. Mark, there are some that through the knowledge of Christ may upon some general assent to gospel truths take up a strict profession of the name of Christ, may escape the pollution of the world, that is, outward and gross sins, being enrolled among God's children, and have the privileges of the members of his church, and yet after this may fall off dreadfully. It were far better for such never to have been acquainted with God and Christ than to return to their old bondage. A sin after knowledge and profession of the right way is greater than a sin of bare ignorance; therefore their condition is far more deplorable than the condition of other sinners, for no men sin with such malice as they do; they have had greater conviction than others, not only external representations of the doctrine of Christ, but some taste, and have made some closure with it in their own souls; they are more given over by God than others; and so there are none persecute and hate profession and strictness so much as they that are fallen from it; and they are more oppressed and entangled by Satan, as the jailor that hath recovered the prisoner which ran from him, loads him with irons. Therefore we had need betimes look to it, and continue and persevere in the practice of the ways of God, which we have owned and taken up upon experience.

Use 1. Get grace, then look after perseverance. Evil men must get

grace; and God's children their business is to persevere in that state to which they have attained.

But what should we do to persevere?

First, Be fortified against what may shake you from without; beware of being led away by offences and scandals. Three things are wont to give offence, and exceedingly shake the faith of some, viz., errors, persecutions, scandals.

1. Errors. Be not troubled when differences fall out about the truths of God, nor shaken in mind; the winds of error are let loose upon the floor of the church to sever the chaff from the solid grain: 1 Cor. xi. 19, There must be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest.' Take heed of taking offence at errors. I do not speak now of being led captive by error. Many question the ways of God, and give over all religion because there are so many differences and sects; therefore they think nothing certain. Certainly God saw this discipline to be fittest for his people; he hath told us there must be errors; he would not have us take up religion upon trust, without the pains of study and prayer. Lazy men would fain give laws to heaven, and teach God how to govern the affairs of the world; they would have all things clear and plain, that there should be no doubt about it. But the Lord in his wise providence saw it fit to permit these things, that they which are approved may be made manifest.' Men to excuse the trouble of search, study, and prayer, would have all agreed, else they take offence at religion, and think it to be but a fancy; that is one means to draw them off, even after some profession. What the canonists say grossly, this was their blasphemy, that God were not discreet and wise, unless he had appointed one universal test and one infallible interpreter; this is men's natural thoughts, they would have such a thing. The Jews say, Certainly Christ was not the true Messiah. Why?

Because if he had, he would not come in such a way as to leave any of his countrymen in doubt. So many think religion is but a fancy; they fall off to atheism and scepticism at last, and irresolution in religion, because there are so many sects and divisions, and all upholding it with plausible pretences. To excuse laziness, we pretend want of certainty. But God's word is plain to one that will do his will, John vii. 17, if we will use all the means God hath appointed, and unfeignedly and with an unbiassed heart come to search out the mind of God.

2. Persecutions, they are an offence: Mat. xi. 6, Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.' When the people of God are exposed to great troubles when they are in the world, they have but a mean outside. What! are these the favourites of heaven? It makes men take offence. Christians, what religion is it you are of? Is it not the Christian religion, whose great interest and work it is to draw you off from the concernments of the present world unto things to come? The whole drift and frame of the Christian religion is to draw men's hearts off from earthly things, and to comfort and support them under the troubles, inconveniences, and molestations of the flesh; therefore for a Christian to hope an exemption from them, is to make the doctrine of the gospel as incongruous and useless as to talk of bladders and the art of swimming to a man that never goes to sea, nor intends to go off from the firm land.

3. A great occasion to shake the faith of many is scandals, the evil practices of those that profess the name of God. Oh! when they run into disorder, especially into all manner of unrighteousness, and iniquity, and cruel things, and make no conscience of the duties of their relations as subjects, as children, and the like, it is a mighty offence; and we that have to do with persons and sinners of all sorts

find it a very hard matter to keep them from atheism, such stumbling-blocks having been laid in their way. Scandal is far more dangerous than persecution. There are many that have been gained by the patience, courage, and constancy of the martyrs, but never any were gained by the scandalous falls of professors. Persecutions do only work upon our fear, which may be allayed by proposal of the crown of life; but by scandalous action, how many settle into a resolved hardness of heart! In crosses and persecutions a man may have secret likings of truth, and a purpose to own it; but by scandal he dislikes the way of God, of religion itself; it begets a base and vile esteem thereof in the hearts of men, so they are loose and fall off. And this mischief doth not only prevail with the lighter sort of Christians, but many times those which have had some taste, it makes them fly off exceedingly: Mat. xviii. 7, There will be offences, but woe be unto them by whom they come.' Christ hath told us all will not walk up to the religion they own; therefore we must stand out against this temptation.

Secondly, Be fortified within, by taking heed to the causes of apostasy, and falling off from the truth either in judgment or practice. What is there will make men apostates?

1. Ungrounded assents. A choice lightly made is lightly altered. When we do not resolve upon evidence, and have not taken up the ways of God upon clear light, we shall turn and wind to and fro as the posture of our interest is changed. First we must try all things,' then hold fast,' 1 Thes. v. 21. Men waver hither and thither for want of solid rooting in truth. They take up things hand over head, and then like light chaff they are driven about with every wind of doctrine,' Eph. iv. 14. Half conviction leaveth us open to changes: James i. 8, A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways;' a man that seems to

have a faith concerning such a thing, then seems to have a doubt concerning such a thing; sometimes led by his faith, at other times carried away by his doubts. If we have not a clear and full persuasion of the ways of God in our own minds, we shall never be constant.

2. Want of solid rooting in grace, that is, rooted in faith,' Col. ii. 7, or rooted and grounded in love,' Eph. iii. 17; as to both it is said, Heb. xiii. 9, It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace,' that is, by a sound sense of the love of God in Christ. A sweet superficial taste may be lost, but a sound sense of the love of God in Christ will engage us to him. Oh 1 we have felt so much sweetness, and have had such real proof of the goodness of Christ, that all the world cannot take us off. The more experience you have, and the deeper it is, the more you will be confirmed. The most of us content ourselves but in a superficial taste. When we hear of the doctrine of salvation by Christ, we are somewhat pleased and tickled with it; but this is not that which doth establish us, but a deep sense of God's grace, or feeling the blood of Christ pacifying our consciences; this is that which establisheth our hearts, and settleth us against apostasy.

3. Unmortified lusts, which must have some error to countenance them. By an inordinate respect to worldly interests, we are sure to miscarry. A man governed by lusts will be at uncertainty, according as he is swayed by the fear or favour of men or his carnal hopes: 2 Tim. iv. 10, Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world.' If a man hath love to present things, if that be not subdued and purged out of his heart, he will never be stable, never upright with God. It may be he may stand when put upon some little self-denial for Christ; he may endure some petty loss, or some tender assault. Ay, but at length the man will be carried away as Joab, that turned after Adonijah, though he

turned not after Absalom, 1 Kings ii. 28; there will some temptation come that will carry them away, though at first they seem to stand their ground, as long as lust remains unmortified in the heart.

4. Sometimes a faulty easiness. As there is an ingenuous facility--The wisdom that is from above is gentle, and easy to be entreated,' James iii. 17 so there is a faulty easiness, when men cannot say nay; when they change their religion with their company, out of a desire to please all, and cameleon-like they change colour with every object. Some are of such a facile easy nature, soon persuaded into great in convenience. This faulty easiness always makes bold with God and conscience to please men, when we are of this temper: Jer. xxxviii. 5, The king is not he that can do anything against you.' It is not a good disposition, but baseness and pusillanimity. It is observed of Chrysostom, though a good man in the main, yet he ran into many inconveniences. Why? Because he was, through simplicity and plainness of his nature, easily to be wrought upon. Therefore though a good man (in regard of the sweetness of his temper and converse) should be as a loadstone, yet he should be also resolute and severe in the things of God. Paul, though they did even break his heart, they could not break his purpose.

5. Self-confidence, when we think to bear it out with natural courage and resolution, as Peter did, Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I.' We are soon overborne, and a light temptation will do it. God gives men over that trust in themselves, for the Lord takes it to be his honour to be the saint's guardian, to keep the feet of his saints,' 1 Sam. ii. 9. He will be owned and depended upon.

6. There is an itch of novelty, when men are weary of old truths, and only rejoice in things for a season, John v. 35. There are many that look for all their virtue and their experience from their notions in

religion. Thus they run from doctrine to doctrine, from way to way, so remain unmodified.

Thirdly, Take heed of the first decays, and look often into the state of your hearts. A man that never casts up his estate is undone insensibly; therefore look often into the state of your hearts, whether you increase in your affections to God, in the power of holiness, or whether you go backward. It is the devil's policy, when once we are declining, to humble us further and further still, as a stone that runs down the hill; therefore take heed, look to the first declinings. A gap once made in the conscience, grows wider and wider every day; and the first declinings are the cause of all the rest. Evil is best stopped in the beginning. And, therefore, when you begin to be cold, careless in the profession of godliness, and not to have the like savour as you were wont to have, take heed. A heavy body, moving downward, still gets more strength, it goes down and moves faster still. Oh, therefore, stay at first! The first remitting of your watch and spiritual fervour is that which is the cause of all the mischief that comes upon many, so that they are given up to vile affections and lying errors. It is easier to crush the egg than kill the serpent. He that keeps his house in constant repair prevents the fall of it, therefore look to your hearts still. Our first declinings, though never so small, are very dangerous. Pliny speaks of the lioness, lib. viii. cap. 16; first she brings forth five lions, then four, then three, then two, then one, and for ever afterward is barren. Thus we first begin to remit of our diligence in holy things, and are not so frequent in acts of communion; then this and that goes off, till we have but little left us; and then all is gone, and men grow worse and worse. I may resemble it to Nebuchadnezzar's image, the head of gold, the breasts of silver, the thighs of brass, the feet of iron and clay, still worse and worse. So

men are embasing by degrees, and fall off from God, and their savour of the ways of God.

Fourthly, Often review your first grounds, and compare them with your after experiences, and what fresh tastes you had then of the love of God to your souls: Heb. iii. 14, We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.' The first rejoicing of faith, the sweet sense that you had, oh, how precious was Christ to you then, when first you came out of your fears! Revive this upon your heart; this will stir you up to be faithful to God. When the love of Christ was fresh upon your hearts, your motions were earnest. Many begin like a tree full of blossoms, give great hope of fruit. We should labour to keep up this affection, and that a cursed satiety may not creep upon us.

Use 2. If those that have chosen the way of God and begin to conform their practice ought with all constancy to persevere, then it reproveth--

1. Those that take up religion only by way of essay, to try how it will suit with them; they do not entirely, and by a resolute fixed purpose, give up themselves to the Lord. You should resolve upon all hazards; not take up religion for a walk, but for a journey. Not like going to sea for pleasure; if they see a storm coming, presently to shore again; but for a voyage to ride out all weathers. Thus you should do, stick to the ways of God, and at first make God a good allowance, that neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, nor anything, may separate you from Christ.' Rom. viii. 35. We should count all charges, and resolve upon the worst.

2. It reproves aguish Christians, whose purity and devotion come upon them by fits: Hosea vi. 4, Their righteousness is as the morning dew.' The morning dew, that cannot endure the rising sun, is soon wasted and

spent when the sun ariseth with his heat and strength; whereas our righteousness should not be like the morning dew, but like the morning light.

3. It reproves them that are only swayed by temporal advantages, that are oft and on; as the Samaritans, when the Jews were favoured by Alexander and other princes, then they would deny the temple that was upon Mount Gerizim, and say that they were brethren to the Jews; but when the Jews were in danger, then they would disclaim them. Thus many are swayed by temporal advantages, either intending or omitting the conscience of their duty, as they are favoured by men. But we are to stick to God's testimonies.

Secondly, Let us come to David's prayer, O Lord, put me not to shame.' It is in the nature of a deprecation, or a prayer for the prevention of evil. The evil deprecated is shame. By shame some understand the reproaches of wicked men: Lord, let me not suffer their reproach, for I have stuck unto thy testimonies. A man that doth not stick to God's testimonies, that is not zealous and constant, will be put to shame before God and man, and made a scorn by them, and lie under great reproach; therefore, Lord, prevent this reproach. These reproaches are grievous, to be borne. It is against the spirit of man to be contemned, especially when he doth well. But certainly this cannot be meant; he would not so earnestly deprecate this, I should think, at least, not in such an expression, O Lord, put me not to shame.' He speaks of such a shame wherein God had a great hand. It is true, God may suffer this in his providence. Well, then, this shame may be supposed to result either from his sin or from his sufferings.

First, From sin, I have stuck unto thy testimonies;' oh! suffer me not to fall into any such sinful course as may expose me to shame, and make me become a reproach to religion. Observe--

Doct. The fruit of sin is shame.

Shame is a trouble of mind about such evils as tend to our infamy and disgrace. Loss of life is matter of fear; loss of goods is matter of grief and sorrow; but loss of name and credit is matter of shame; and therefore it is a trouble of mind that doth arise about such evils as tend to our infamy and disgrace. Now this infamy and disgrace is the proper fruit of sin. To prove it by scripture, reason, and experience.

To prove it by scripture: Shame entered into the world by sin; though they were naked, yet till they had sinned they were not ashamed,' Gen. ii. 25, with Gen. iii. 10; there was verecundia, an awful majesty, or a holy bashfulness in innocency; but not pudor, a fear of reproach and infamy; that came in by the fall. To prove it by reason: There are two things in sin, folly and filthiness, and both cause shame; it is an irrational act, and it hath a turpitude in it; therefore the fruit of sin is shame, and a fear of a just reproof. And then by experience: How do men hang the head and blush when they are taken in any unseemly action! All evil causeth shame. All sin, as soon as it is committed, it flasheth in the face of conscience. Shame is the striving of nature to hide the stain of our souls, by sending out the blood into the face for a covering; it labours most under this passion. And this shame accompanieth sin, not only when men are conscious of what we do, but it is a fear of a just reproof from God, nay, of a just reproof from themselves. There is a double loathness and fear in shame--when men sin, they are loath to look into their own heart, and loath to look God in the face: 1 John iii. 20, If our heart condemn us,' &c. When men have guilt upon their hearts, they are loath to take the candle of the Lord and look into the state of their souls. And they are loath to look God in the face; therefore the apostle adds, If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God,' that our prayers be not

interrupted. As holy David had his shyness when he had been sinning away his peace; he kept silence,' Ps. xxxii. 3. He was fain to thrust forth his heart by a practical decree, and bring it by force into God's presence. Indeed some men are grown shameless, having a depraved judgment, and corrupted all their doings, Zeph. iii. 7; such have outgrown the common principles of natural honesty; and of all diseases, those which are insensible are the worst. Therefore when men are grown into a state of insensibility, and lose those feelings of conscience, it is very sad. Yet those which are most obdurate have their hidden fears, and are afraid of God and conscience, and are loath to be alone themselves, and are fain to knit pleasure to pleasure, to keep up this victory, and are forced to live in a jolly course, that they may bring a greater brawn upon their hearts.

Use. Let this press us to avoid sin: Rom. vi. 21, For what fruit had ye of those things whereof ye are now ashamed?' If you sin, there will be shame. Sin in the greatest privacy brings shame. Though, you should be solitary and alone with yourselves, yet there is an eye sees and an ear hears all that you do. It was one of the rules of Pythagoras, Reverence thyself. If there were no other witness, there is a law of God in our own hearts that will upbraid us for sin.

Again, David makes this request when he had professed perseverance, I have stuck unto thy testimonies,' yet, Lord, put me not to shame.' Note from thence--

Doct. A man that hath long kept close to God in the way of his testimonies, yet he should pray to be kept from falling into shameful sin. Why?

1. They which are most steadfast are not past all danger: 1 Cor. x. 12. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' He that hath the firmest footing may fall, and that foully too. When he

begins to grow negligent and secure, he may be soon surprised, and drawn to dishonour the name of God; and as David, who was a man after God's own heart, sinned so foully that the name of God was blasphemed among the heathen. When once we come out of our fears, and are possessed of the love of God, we think there needs not be such diligence as when we were doubtful, and kept in an. uncertain condition, and so carry the matter as if we were past all danger. Oh, no! sin many times breaks out of a sudden; and after the first labours of soul in regeneration and terrors of the law are gone, there is great danger of security, and secretly and silently things may run to waste in the soul. God's children have been in most danger when to appearance there was least cause of fear. Lot, who was chaste in Sodom, fell into incest where there were none but he and his two daughters. He, whose righteous soul was vexed at their abominations, how was his conscience cast asleep by security! A child of God may fall into the grossest sins. David, whose heart smote him for cutting off the lap of Saul's garment, yet afterward fell into uncleanness and blood, and his conscience falls asleep. Therefore there needs watching and praying to the last.

2. The miscarriages of God's children are most shameful. Oh, how will the Hams of the world laugh to see a Noah drunk! So a child of God, when he hath fallen into disorder, how will this furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised! Blind Samson did not make such sport for the Philistines as a child of God for a wicked man, when he hath fallen into some notable excess: 2 Sam. xii. 14, By this deed thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.' Wicked men have a conscience, and they would be glad of any pretext to shake off the name of religion. When the children of God keep up the lustre of it, and live up to the majesty of their religion, the awe of it falls upon

wicked men. But when they run into practices condemned by the light of nature and the laws of nations, it hardens wicked men, and takes off this awe and fear upon them. It is no matter what a rude Scythian or barbarous Goth doth, if they should exercise rapine and commit uncleanness; no matter what open enemies which are at defiance with God; though they break the laws of God over and over again, it is no such dishonour; but for a child of God, he that professeth the Christian name, to walk disorderly, it reflects dishonour upon God.

3. Because of the hopes they have of speeding in prayer: 1 Tim. ii. 8, I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.' Those that in a humble sense of their own weakness and fear of the mischief of being a blemish to religion, when they come to pray, they may be persuaded of God's goodness, of whom they have such long experience, that he will not fail them at length.

Use. Let us pray that we may not dishonour the gospel in our trials, that God would not leave us to sin or shame, by total apostasy or by any scandals, that our crown may not be taken from us.

Secondly, As this shame may be supposed to arise from his sin, so also from his sufferings, or from the disappointment of his hopes. Hope deferred leaves a man ashamed; therefore, Rom. v. 5, the apostle saith Hope maketh not ashamed.' When a man hath given out to others he hath such defences, hopes, expectations, and these fail, then he is ashamed. Thus David begs God would own him, that he might not be a scorn to wicked and ungodly men. Note--

When they that stick to God's testimonies are disappointed of their present hopes, it is matter of shame.

Observe it, and humble yourselves in your Father's anger, when he seemeth to go cross to our prayers and hopes, and gives to wicked men advantages against us: Num. xii. 14, If her father had but spit in her

face, should she not be ashamed seven days?' When God doth not make good the confidence of his people, rather the contrary, the confidence of their enemies does as it were spit in their face; then it is time to take shame to themselves, and humble themselves before the Lord.

SERMON XXXIV.

I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.--Ver. 32.

IN these words there are two parts:--

1. A supposition of strength or help from God, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

2. A resolution of duty, I will run the way of thy commandments.

Where--(1.) Observe, that he resolves, I will. (2.) The matter of the resolution, the way of thy commandments. (3.) The manner how he would carry on this purpose, intimated in the word run, with all diligence and earnestness of soul.

The text will give us occasion to speak--

1. Of the benefit of an enlarged heart.

2. The necessary precedency of this work on God's part before there can be any serious bent or motion of heart towards God on our part.

3. The subsequent resolution of the saints to engage their hearts to live to God.

4. With what earnestness, alacrity, and vigour of spirit this work is to be carried on, I will run.'

First, Let me speak of the enlarged heart, the blessing here asked of God. The point from hence is--

Doct. Enlargement of heart is a blessing necessary for them that would keep God's laws.

David is sensible of the want of it, and therefore goes to God for it.

1. 1 shall speak of the nature of this benefit.

2. The necessity of it.

First, As to the nature, what this enlargement of heart is. There is a

general and a particular enlargement of heart.

1. The general enlargement is at regeneration or conversion to God. When we are freed from the bonds of natural slavery, and the curse of the law, and the power of sin, to serve God cheerfully, then is our heart said to be enlarged. This is spoken of in scripture: John viii. 36, If the son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' There are two things notable in that scripture--that this is freedom indeed, and that we have it by the Son. (1.) That this the truest liberty, then are we free indeed. How large and ample soever our condition and portion be in the world, we are but slaves without this freedom. As Austin said of Rome, that she was Domitrix gentium et captiva vitiorum--the mistress of the nations and a slave to vices; so vicious men are very slaves, how free and large soever their condition be in the world. Joseph was sold as a bondslave into Egypt; but his mistress, that was overcome by her own lust, was the true captive, and Joseph was free indeed. (2.) The other thing observable from this text is, that we have this liberty by Christ, he purchased it for us. This enlargement of heart from the captivity of sin cost dear. Look, as the Roman captain said, Acts xxii. 28, With a great sum obtained I this freedom,' they were tender of the violation of this privilege of being a citizen of Rome, a free-born Roman, because it cost so dear. And when the liberties of a nation are bought with a great deal of treasure and blood, no wonder that they are so dear and precious to them, and that they are so willing to stand for their liberty. Certainly our liberty by Christ was dearly bought. One place more I shall mention: Rom. viii. 2, For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.' The covenant of grace is there called the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus;' and the covenant of works is called the law of sin and death.' To open the place: The covenant of grace, that is accompanied

with the law of the spirit; the covenant of works, that is the law of the letter--that only gives us the letter and the naked knowledge of our duty. Lex jubet, gratia juvat; it is the law of the spirit;' and not only so, but the law of the spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus,' because it works from the Spirit of Christ, and conforms us to the life of Christ as our original pattern. Well, then, this law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, it makes us free. This freedom, though purchased by Christ, is yet ap plied, executed, and accomplished by the Spirit. The Spirit makes us free, and from what? From the law of sin and death;' that is, from the law as a covenant of works, which is therefore called a law of sin and death, because it convinceth of sin, and bindeth over to death. It is the ministry of death to condemnation to the fallen creature.

Let us see what this general enlargement and freedom is from these places. It consists in two things--a freedom from the power and from the guilt of sin, or the curse and obligation to eternal damnation.

The first sort of freedom from the power of sin is spoken of Rom. vi. 18, Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.' There is a freedom from sin, and a freedom for sin, or a freedom from righteousness, as it is called, ver. 20, When you were the servants of sin,' saith the apostle, you were free from righteousness.' To be under the dominion of sin is the greatest slavery, and to be under the dominion of grace is the greatest liberty and enlargement. Then is a man free from righteousness, when he hath no impulsions or inclinations of heart to that which is good, when righteousness hath no command over him, when he will not be held under the restraints of grace, when he hath no fear to offend or care to please God. But on the other side, then is a man free from sin when he can thwart his lust, always warring against it, cutting off the

provisions of the flesh; when he hath no purpose and care to act his lust, but it is always the bent and inclination of his heart to please God; and this is our liberty and enlargement.

The other part of this liberty and enlargement is, when we are freed from the bondage of conscience, or fears of death and hell. Every covenant hath a suitable operation of the spirit attending upon it: the covenant of works hath an operation of the spirit of bondage; the covenant of grace hath an operation of the spirit of adoption. I say, the covenant of works, rightly thought of, produceth nothing in the fallen creature but bondage, or a dreadful sense of their misery; it is called the spirit of bondage, and every one which passeth out of that covenant hath a feeling of it: Rom. viii. 15, You have not received the spirit of bondage, again to fear.' You had it once, but not again. Then are we enlarged in this sense when the shackles are knocked off from our consciences, when we have that other spirit, the spirit of adoption, or that free spirit, as it is called: Ps. li. 12, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit.' This free spirit enlargeth us, that we may serve God cheerfully and comfortably.

According to this double captivity (the slavery of sin and bondage of conscience) so must our freedom and enlargement be interpreted; a freedom from the power of sin, and a freedom from the guilt of sin. The carnal estate is often compared to a prison; as Rom. xi. 32, God hath concluded,' or shut them all up together in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all;' Gal. iii. 22, The scripture hath concluded,' or shut up all under sin;' sunekleisen, that is the word. A man in his sinful and unbelieving state is like a man shut up in a strong prison, that is made sure and fast with iron bars and bolts, so that there is no hope of breaking prison; mercy alone must open the door to him: this

being in prison notes the power of sin. But take the other notion, because of the guilt of sin. Now this prison is all on fire in the apprehension of the sensible sinner; and therefore the poor trembling captive, when the prison is all on a light flame, runs hither and thither, seeking an outgate and a way of escape, and mourns and sighs through the grates of the flaming prison. This is all our condition by nature. Now, when God loosens the bolts, and shoots back the many locks that were upon us, as the angel made Peter's chains fall off, Acts xii. 12, then are we said to be enlarged, to run the way of his commandment, or, as it is expressed Luke i. 74, to be delivered out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life;' when we are delivered from the powers of corruption, which are as bolts and locks upon us, and the power of sin is broken, and we let out of the stocks of conscience, that we might serve God without slavish fear. This is the first thing we should mainly look at; the general enlargement must always go before the particular. First see that you be converted to God. It is that which hardeneth many. You shall find many are praying for strengthening grace when they should ask renewing grace; and when they should bewail the misery of an unregenerate carnal state, they confess only the infirmities of the saints, and so are like little children, that attempt to run before they can stand or go. Therefore here God must enlarge you, free you from the slavery of sin and bondage, that you may serve God.

2. There is a particular enlargement, or the actual assistance of the Lord's grace, carrying us on in the duties of our heavenly calling with more success. This is that which David begs in this place, If thou wilt enlarge my heart.' There are, after grace is received, many spiritual distempers which are apt to seize upon us. Sometimes we are slow of

heart, sometimes in bonds and straits of conscience as to God's service. A man of spiritual experience is sensible of these things, of a damp which is many times upon his life and comfort, and want of strength and largeness of heart for God's service. Whosoever makes conscience of daily communion with God, and that in every service would do his uttermost, cannot but be sensible of straits; and therefore it is grievous to him to be under bonds and restraints, and that he cannot so freely let out his heart to God. Others that do not make communion with God their interest, that go on in a dead track and course of duty, are never sensible of enlargement or straitening.

But briefly, that we may know when the heart is enlarged, understand the nature of it, let us see when the heart in scripture is said to be enlarged.

1. You may look upon this enlargement as the effect of wisdom and knowledge; and so Solomon is said to have a large heart: 1 Kings iv. 29, And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart even as the sand that is on the sea shore.' The greater stock of sanctified wisdom and knowledge a man hath, the more is the heart enlarged; for he hath a treasure within him, and he is ready to bring out of the good treasure of his heart good things. He that hath more gold than brass farthings, when he puts his hand into his pocket, will more easily bring forth gold than farthings; so when the heart hath a good stock of holy principles within, they are ready at hand, they break out more easily in our discourse, in our praying; we are ready in all temptations to check the sin. All grace is increased to us by knowledge: 2 Peter i. 2, Grace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord.' Still this way doth God enlarge the heart of his people. When the understanding is full of pregnant truths, the greater awe there is and

check upon the heart to sin, and the greater impulsion to duty. Look, as the influences of heaven pass through the air, but they produce their effects in the earth; they do not make the air fruitful, but the earth; so do the influences of grace pass through the understanding, but they produce their fruit in the will, and show forth their strength in the affections; and therefore when we would have our affections for God, the way is to enlarge the understanding.

2. You may look upon it as the effect of faith, which wideneth the capacities of our souls, and doth cause us more to open towards God, that we may take in his grace; it doth enlarge our desires and expectations: Ps. lxxxi. 10, Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' Surely a temple for the great God, such as our hearts should be, should be fair and ample. If we would have God dwell in our hearts, and shed abroad his influences, we should make room for God in our souls by a greater largeness of faith and expectation. The rich man thought of enlarging his barns when his store was increased upon him: Luke xii.; so should we stretch out the curtains of Christ's tent and habitation, have larger expectations of God, if we would receive more from him. The vessels failed before the oil failed. We are not straitened in God, but in ourselves, by the scantiness of our own thoughts; we do not make room for him, nor greaten God: Luke i. 46, My soul doth magnify the Lord.' Faith doth greaten God. Why, can we make God greater than he is? As to his declarative being, we can have greater and larger apprehensions of his greatness, goodness, and truth*

3. We may look upon it as an effect of comfort and joy, through the assurance of God's love; for that enlargeth the heart, but sorrow straitens it, and puts it in bonds. The word that we translate grief, Judges x. 16, His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel;' in the Hebrew it is shortened or lessened.' A man's mind is lessened when he

is under that passion. Griefs contract and lessen the soul, but joy enlargeth it, as Isa. lx. 5; and in this sense it is said, Ps. iv. 1, Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.' In sorrow the spirits return to comfort and support the heart, but in joy they are dilated and scattered abroad; and so this is that affection which sends abroad strength and life into all our actions. As this is true of joy and sorrow in common, so especially of spiritual joy and spiritual sorrow, which are the greatest of the kind; no sorrow like that sorrow, no joy like that joy; therefore nothing more enlargeth the heart. When God hides his face, when pressing troubles do revive a sense of wrath, alas!' My soul is troubled,' saith the Psalmist, I cannot speak;' we cannot pour out our hearts to God with that largeness, that measure of strength, spirit, and life as before. But now, when we can joy in God as those that have received the atonement, when we have the comfort of a good conscience, the joy in the Holy Ghost, this causeth a forward and free obedience; and those that could hardly creep before, but languished under the burden of sorrows, when cheered and revived with the light of God's countenance, they can run and act with vigour and alacrity in God's service: Neh. viii. 10, The joy of the Lord is their strength.' It is as oil to the wheels, as wings by which we mount to meet with God: Ps. xxx. 11, Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.' It is an allusion to those eastern countries; when their garments were girded and tucked up, they were more expedite and ready to run. So here, when thou shalt enlarge my heart, then I will run the way of thy commandments. When our soul is filled with gladness, and comfortable apprehensions of the Lord's grace, we are carried out to God with greater strength and liveliness.

4. We may look upon it as a fruit of love. For thus the apostle doth

express his love to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. vi. 11, O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.' It is love which is the great poise and weight upon the soul that sets all the wheels a-going. When love is strong, the heart is carried out with fervour and earnestness: Neh. iv. 6, We built the wall.' Why? For the people had a mind to the work;' then it went on speedily. Where we have no affection to a thing, the least service is burdensome; but when our hearts are for it, then the most difficult thing will seem easy; Jacob's seven years' hard service were sweetened by his love to Rachel; yea, duties against the hair, as Shechem for Dinah's sake submitted to be circumcised. Love sets us a-work strongly.

Thus the general enlargement is when we are freed from the slavery of sin and bondage of conscience, that we may serve God cheerfully; and the particular enlargement, you may look upon it as a fruit of wisdom and knowledge, or of faith, or of joy, or of love; when we have a fruitful understanding, a large faith, a sweet delight in God, and a strong love to him.

Secondly, For the necessity of this, that the heart should be enlarged before we can run the way of God's commandments.

1. There needs a large heart because the command is exceeding broad: Ps. cxix. 96, I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad.' A broad law and a narrow heart will never suit. We need love, faith, knowledge, and all to carry us through this work, which is of such a vast extent and latitude.

2. We need an enlarged heart because of the lets and hindrances within ourselves. There is lust drawing off from God to sensual objects: James i. 14, Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.' Therefore there needs something to poise us, to incline us, to draw us on, to carry us out with strength and life another way, to

urge us in the service of God. Lust sits as a clog upon us; it is a weight of corruption, Heb. xii. 1, retarding us in all our flights and motions, thwarting, opposing, breaking the force of spiritual impulsions, if not hindering them altogether, Gal. v. 17. Well, then, lust drawing so strongly one way, God needs to draw us more strongly the other way. When there is a weight to poise us to worldly and sensual objects, we need a strength to carry us on with vigorous and lively motions of soul towards God, an earnest bent upon our souls, which is this enlargement of heart.

Use 1. Let us therefore look after this benefit, and acknowledge God in it.

First, Ask it often of God. God keeps assisting grace in his own hands, and disposeth it at pleasure, that he may the oftener hear from us. The prodigal, that had his portion in his own hands, went away from his father; and therefore we have but from hand to mouth, that we may be daily kept in a dependence and constant course of communion with God. It is pleasing to God, when we desire him to renew his work, to bring forth the actings of grace out of his own seed, to blow with his wind, with the breath of his Spirit upon our gardens, that the spices may flow out, Cant. iv. 15. But now, when we depend upon ourselves, and neglect God, and think to find always a like largeness of heart and a like savouriness of spirit, we shall be but like Samson: Judges xvi. 20, When his locks were gone, he thought to go forth and shake himself as at other times, and wist not that the Lord was departed from him.' So when our strength is gone and God withdrawn, we shall not find a like pregnancy and consistency of thoughts, a like readiness and vigour of affections in holy duties, but all will be out of order; the understanding is lean, dry, and sapless, the heart averse and dead; and therefore God will be acknowledged in our enlargements, both as to

prayer and praise. In a way of prayer we should often seek to him; and he will be acknowledged in a way of praise likewise: Ps. lxiii. 8, My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me.' If you find any strong actings of faith and love stirred up to follow hard after God, to pursue him close in holy duties, when you feel any of these vigorous and lively motions, ascribe it not to yourselves, but to God's right hand; he is to be owned in the work.' Not I,' saith the apostle, but the grace of God wrought in me.'

Secondly, Avoid the causes of straitening, if you would have this enlarged heart. What are they?

1. Ignorance and defect of gifts; for it is by knowledge all grace comes into the soul: Col. iii. 16, Let the word of God dwell in you richly.' When the understanding is fraught with spiritual treasure, when the word of God dwells in us richly, then we have it upon all occasions to help us, we have at home a truth ready, and can call it to mind, either for suppressing of temptation, or encouraging us to duty, or for allaying of such a grief, speaking comfort under such a cross; otherwise we are lean, dry, and cannot act with that fulness of strength. But--

2. Another thing that straitens the heart is the love of present things. So much as your hearts are enlarged to the flesh, so much they are straitened to the spirit, 2 Cor. vi. 13; as what the land loseth the sea gains. By pleasures and by the cares of the world your hearts are straitened towards God, they are overcharged,' Luke xxi. 34.

3. Sorrow and uncomfortable dejection of spirit, through the fears of God's wrath, or by reason of desertion, when we have a sense of his wrath, and when we can find no effects of his grace. God with draws, you have not your wonted influences, your wonted answers of prayer: Ps. lxxvii. 4, I am so troubled that I cannot speak.' This locks up the

heart, and hinders it in the service of God, that it cannot so freely come and pour out its soul.

4. Great sins work a shyness of God. The faulty child blusheth, and is loath to look his father in the face, when he hath been doing some offence. The Israelites, after they had sinned in the matter of the calf, they stood afar off, and worshipped every man in his tent-door. You lose your freedom by gross sins: 1 John iii. 21, If our hearts condemn us not, then parresian echomen, we have confidence towards God;' we may come into God's presence without a self-accusing and condemning conscience. You have not this liberty and enlargedness of heart towards God when an accusing conscience pursues you. When a man hath lost his peace and comfort, he cannot come and tell God all his mind, his temptations, straits, doubts, fears.

5. Unbelief. That is a cause of straitening, when it represents God under an ill notion; as terrible: Lam. iii. 10, He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places;' Isa. xxxviii. 13, I reckoned till morning, that as a lion so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.' It fills us with misconceits of God, as if he were terrible. When one came tremblingly with a petition to Augustus, What! said he, art thou giving a sop, a bit to an elephant? We disguise the majesty of God by our unbelieving thoughts; we come to him as to a bear and lion that is ready to tear us in pieces, and then we cannot have that cheer fulness and delight in his service.

6. Pride. We are not humbled, but puffed up, when our heart is enlarged, and abuse the quickening influences of the Lord's grace to feed our pride: Ps. li. 15, Open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.' He doth not say, Mine own praise; then I will discover my gifts, and show what I can do: but, Thy praise. Many beg quickening and

enlargement to set off themselves, and ask contributions of heaven to supply the devil's service; or as he that lighted his lamp at the altar that he might go and steal with-it. We would put up self as an idol in God's stead, and have help from God that we might make him serve with our iniquities, that we might set off ourselves with honour and esteem in the world. Therefore God with draws and withholds his hand. These are the causes of straitening.

Use 2. Let us then see if we have this benefit, an enlarged heart, which is so necessary for the keeping God's commandments.

Two things will deceive us: many think they have it when they have it not, and many think they have it not when indeed they have it.

1. Many think they have it when they have it not. Enlargement of gifts differs from enlargement of grace. A ready tongue many have--that depends upon the temper of the body--but not a humble heart. They may take pride and complacency in their own gifts, and yet not delight in communion with God. There are many in the world that have abilities of utterance, and some fanatical joys accompanying the exercise of it, and yet they have not an unfeigned love to God. Such as are enlarged in point of gifts, it is many times seen in this, that generally in private they are more careless, and they are more in expression than in feeling. The great deceit and counterfeit of grace is parts and common gifts, especially when exercised in holy things, in a spiritual way, and for the good and edification of others. Certainly men have not spiritual enlargement when they still lie under the bondage and dominion of sin; and so though they may seem to have particular enlargement in some duties, and may be carried on with a great flush of gifts, yet they have not a general enlargement, the yoke is not broken, but still they are the servants of corruption.

2. On the other side, some think they have it not when indeed they have

it. Why? Because they are not carried out in the work of God, as sometimes they seem to have been, with that liveliness and comfort. Let me tell you, there are necessary aids of grace, and there are more liberal aids of grace, over and above the necessary. If you have the necessary aids of grace, you are to acknowledge God hath enlarged your hearts, though you have not the larger measure, strength, and activity in God's service, which, upon the days of his magnificence and spiritual bounty, he is wont to dispense to his people. God doth not always continue these dispensations. Sometimes we find that Christians outgo themselves, and are enlarged beyond the ordinary pitch. Let me represent it by a similitude. We are not to esteem a river by its swelling and running over the banks after a mighty, long, and continued rain, but by its constant course; nor are we to judge of a town by the great concourse at a fair or market, the town is not every day so filled. So neither are we to judge of God's assistance by those high tides of comfort or strength of gracious impulses which, in the days of spiritual bounty, he is wont to give. If you are enabled to walk humbly with God, though you have not such heights of affection, you should be thankful.

So much for the first thing the text offers, the blessing asked, viz., an enlarged heart.

SERMON XXXV.

I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.--Ver. 32.

THE second thing that is offered here is the necessary precedency of this work on God's part before there can be any serious bent and motion of heart towards God on our part. When thou shalt enlarge my heart.' When is causal, because thou shalt enlarge it. God only can enlarge the heart. We are sluggish, and loath to stir a foot in the ways of obedience, therefore God must enlarge. From first to last God doth all in the work of grace; he gives the habit and act. He plants graces in the heart, knowledge, faith, love, and delight; and then excites and quickens them to act. The habit of grace is called the seed of God,' 1 John iii. 9; there it begins. Before we can fly we must get wings, we must have grace before we can run the way of God's commandments; and then quickening of the habits, the exciting of the soul to action; the deed as well as the will, Phil. ii. 13; it is from God, the first inclination and actual accomplishment; he giveth to will, that is, the first inclination: 1 Kings viii. 58, That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways,' &c. And then the deed, the outward expression of our obedience, it is still from God: Acts iv. 29, the apostle goes to God for that, Grant unto thy servants that, with all boldness, they may speak thy word;' and so Col. iv. 3Jie begs, prays to God to open a door of utterance for them. There is a door shut until God opens it. We cannot utter and express ourselves in a. way of obedience without God's concurrence.

Use. Whenever you would undertake for God, get God first to undertake for you, as Hezekiah doth: Isa. xxxviii. 14, O Lord, I am oppressed;

undertake for me.' Let every earnest prayer be accompanied with a serious purpose, and let every serious purpose be accompanied with earnest prayer: Cant. i. 4, Draw me and we will run after thee.' So here, Lord, I will run the ways of thy commandments.' Ay, but as to the event, we must suspend it: If thou wilt enlarge my heart.' This is the method we should use: first engage God by prayer, then engage our hearts by promise. Though we cannot lay wagers upon our own strength, yet we may resolve in God's strength, and ought to engage ourselves to duty: Jer. xxx. 21, Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?' We must promise what is due, but not presume as if we could carry our purpose without God. As to the event, they speak conditionally, When thou shalt enlarge my heart.' The children of God have no other confidence of their own affections but as God will put forth his power. They know they have a deceitful and corrupt heart; and to stand to their resolutions immutably, faithfully, needs more strength than their own. They resolve as to work, but as to event, they suspend that; they know their resolution will not be brought to anything unless God continue his grace and favour. The children of God, as they would own Christ as Lord, and commanding the work, so they promise obedience; that is their duty; and as they would own him a Saviour in helping them through the work, so they promise conditionally in his strength. As they are swayed by his sovereignty in his command, so they depend upon his all-sufficiency in his promise.

Here two cases may be handled; one is more generally--

Case 1. Whether we are to resolve upon a course of obedience when we are uncertain of God's assistance? The reason of doubting is, be cause we cannot perform it in our own strength. I answer--

1. It is your duty to engage and consent to give up yourselves to God's service whatever comes of it: 2 Chron. xxx. 8, Yield yourselves unto

the Lord.' In the Hebrew it is strike hands with him in his holy covenant: Rom. xii. 1, I beseech you, present yourselves,' &c. You ought to come and present yourselves, own yourselves solemnly in a way of dedication to God. It was implied in our baptism, which is therefore called, 1 Peter iii. 21, An answer of a good conscience to wards God;' an answer upon God's demands in his covenant. An answer supposeth a question. God puts us to the question, Will you be my people? will you serve me faithfully and do my will? Then we ratify it by baptism. Necessary duties must be done whatever comes of it, as Abraham obeyed God, not knowing whither he went.'

2. As this is your duty, so, whether you resolve or no, you are already obliged by God's command. This actual resolution of entering into covenant with God is only required as a means to strengthen us. Natural relations enforce duty without consent; a father is a father whether a child will own him in the quality of that relation, yea or nay. God's right is valid whether you will consent or not. Actual consent or purpose in your heart doth not give God greater right, but makes duty more implicit and active upon your own hearts. We cannot make the bonds of duty stronger, for God's authority is greater than ours, but we have a deeper sense when we own God's authority by our own engagement.

3. You have more cause to expect God's assistance in this way of engaging your heart to him than in standing loose from God, and neglect of his appointed means. You know the promise is made, Rev. xxii. 17, To him that will, let him take of the waters of life freely.' When there is a fixed bent of heart that comes from a secret impression of God's grace which causeth this will in you, when you have declared your will, you have more reason to expect God's concurrence.

4. It is a foolish course to refuse to make the covenant for fear of breaking it; as if a tradesman should neglect his calling, forbear to

set up, because it is possible losses may come. Make it, then keep it in God's strength. Make it, but remember, your security lieth in God's promises, not in your own. It is your duty to engage to God; but as to the event, you cannot say you can go through with it, unless the Lord put in with his grace.

Case 2. The second case is more obvious and usual, viz., whether we are to do duties in case of deadness, indisposition, and straits of spirit?

The reason of doubting is, because David seems to suspend his running upon God's enlarging--If thou wilt enlarge, then I will run. Ans. He suspends the event, but not his duty. He doth not say I will not stir unless thou enlarge my heart, but, If thou enlarge then I shall run.

The plea of weakness must not be used, from the doctrine of God's concurrence to all acts of grace, as a shift, or turned into a plea for laziness. The right use of this doctrine is a constant dependence in a sense of our own weakness, and hearty thanksgiving when we have received any command from God. Now a form of thanksgiving is abused when it is made a plea for laziness. To resolve upon a loose course, and give over all, is an absurd inference from this doctrine; it is as if a man should say, my ploughing and sowing, unless God give the increase, will never make the corn grow, therefore I will hold my hand, and take the other sleep. It is God sends the wind, therefore I will not put forth the sails; that is no good inference. For further arguments, see ver. 25, where the question is handled, whether we are to do duties in case of deadness. It is a most commendable thing to work notwithstanding indispositions. There is more faith in it; God's love is glorified when you can cast yourselves into his arms, then when he seems to shut up himself from your prayers, and to suspend the influences of his grace, Esther had great confidence to venture when no golden sceptre was held forth; so when we have no sensible comfort,

then to venture and cast ourselves upon God. And it argues more faith in the power of God. As Abraham's faith was commended, that he could believe against hope; so, when all is dead, yet you will see what God will do for the quickening and enlarging of the soul. Then there is more obedience in it. No duty so commendable as that which is recovered out of the hands of difficulty, when in the face of temptation we can venture to go to God. And there is humility in it, when we can look upon ourselves as bound though God be free. I must wait upon him in the use of means, though I have a dead heart.

Thirdly, The subsequent operation of the saints; they that are acted by God act under him: Then will I run the way of thy commandments.' First, Mark, he resolveth, Then I will run.' He doth not say, Then I should run, but will run, as binding his soul by a resolution, and his resolution by a solemn promise, Then I will run the way of thy commandments.' Here I might take occasion to speak of the good of binding the heart, and being resolved in a course of godliness. It is good to engage us to come to God, to keep to God, and to be hearty in his service.

1. This is that which engageth us to come to God, because of ourselves we are off and on, hanging between heaven and hell, and have many loose and wavering thoughts, until we come to a firm purpose and determination, and that engageth the heart: Jer. xxx. 21, Who is this that engageth his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?' Before we come to this engagement, there are several things:--(1.) A simple and bare conceit of the ways of God, or of the goodness of holiness, this will not bring us to God, some general approbation of his ways. Many will say, God is good to Israel,' Ps. lxxiii. 1; but the heart never comes off kindly to choose God till the judgment determines, It is good for me to draw nigh to God,' ver. 28. This puts an end to many anxious

traverses, debates, and delays in the soul. (2.) There are weak and wavering purposes, and faint attempts in the soul, that end but in wishes, which are soon broken off; but we are never converted and thoroughly brought to God till there be a full and fixed purpose: Acts xi. 23, He exhorted them all, that with full purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.' When it comes to a plenary thorough purpose of heart, then grace hath wrought upon us.

2. As it will bring us to come to God, so it causeth us to keep to God. He that is unresolved is never constant: James i. 8, A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' There is in us a changeable heart, a rebelling nature; that meeting with temptations from without, unless there be a fixed purpose, alas! we shall be unstable in all our ways; all good wishes and faint purposes come to nothing, but we shall give out at every assault. But when we are firmly and habitually resolved, Satan is discouraged. This bindeth our holy purposes, like hemming of the garment, that keepeth it from ravelling out. Whilst we are thinking and deliberating what to do, we lie open to temptations, the devil hath some hope of us; but when the bent of our hearts is set another way, and the devil sees we are firmly resolved, and have holy purposes, he is discouraged. This was that which made Daniel so courageous and resolute in God's service: Dan. i. 8, He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat.'

3. By resolution we are quickened to more diligence and seriousness. Good purposes are the root of good works, and without the root there is no fruit to be expected. A true and inward purpose will not let us be idle, but still urging and soliciting us to that which is good, then we make a business of religion; whereas otherwise we make but a sport and recreation, that is, mind it only by the by. But now, One thing have I desired, and that will I seek after,' Ps. xxvii. 4. When the heart is

set upon a thing we follow it close, whatever we neglect. Whereas otherwise we are very lazy, careless, and do it as if we did it not; this makes us diligent, earnest, careful to maintain communion between God and us.

Use. Well, then, do you thus resolve and engage your hearts to walk with God. And for your direction--

1. Let it be the resolution of the heart, rather than the tongue: Jer. xxx. 21, Who is this that engageth his heart?' And Acts xi. 23, He exhorted them with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord.' Our resolution is not to be determined and judged of so much by the course of our language as by the bent of our heart. Empty promises signify nothing unless they are the result of the heart's determination: Deut. v. 28, 29, The people hath said well,' saith God, all that the Lord hath said, we will do. Oh, that they had such a heart within them!' Otherwise the duty hath no root, unless it be a fixed determination of the soul.

2. Let it not be a weak, broken, but full resolution. Cold wishes are easily overcome by the love of the world: Acts xxvi. 28, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' That will not do, unless we be altogether. Carnal men, though they are not converted, yet they have a kind of half turn; they have good wishes on a sudden upon a lively sermon; they would, but they will not. There needs a strong bent of heart. Bad purposes are more easily resolved and performed than good; Satan, the world, and the flesh do not hinder, but further them; so that good resolutions need to be thoroughly made: 1 Chron. xxii. 19, Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.' When the heart is fixed by a persevering durable purpose, grace possesses it.

3. Let it not be a rash but a serious resolution, all difficulties being well weighed. In a fit or pang of devotion men will resolve for

God, but it is soon gone: Josh. xxiv. 19, 20, We will serve the Lord, for he is our God: and Joshua said, Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is an holy God, he is a jealous God;' that is, do you consider what you say? When you have weighty reasons and considerations to bear you up, you are more likely to hold. Sit down and count the charges; if you resolve for God, see what it is like to cost you, and consider where it is likely to fail, what difficulties you are most likely to meet withal, what lusts are most apt to break your purpose.

4. It must be a thorough, absolute, and peremptory resolution. Whatever it cost you, resolve to part with all for the pearl of price, Mat. xiii. 46, 47, and take Christ for better for worse. A marriage may be almost made, but there is one article they stick at, and it is broken off; so some are at the very point of giving up themselves to God, but there is one article they stick at; it is not an absolute resolution.

5. Let it be a present, and not a future resolution: Ps. xxvii. 8, When thou saidst, Seek ye my face;' like a quick echo he returns upon God, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' As soon as you hear God's voice, before the heart grow cold again, it is good to resolve; for after wards it is but a cheat to put off importunity of conscience for the present.

6. Let it be a resolution made in a sense of your own insufficiency, and with dependence upon Christ, not in a confidence of your own strength. Peter went forth in a confidence of his own resolution, Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I;' but how soon did he miscarry! Resolve in God's strength: Ps. cxix. 8, I will walk in the way of thy statutes: forsake me not utterly.' If God forsake you, all comes to nothing; therefore in and by God's strength resolve for God.

Secondly, The matter of the resolution, The way of thy commandments.' Which we may consider either simply and absolutely in itself, or with respect to the resolution. With respect to the resolution ob serve, the

matter is good he resolves upon. Some will resolve upon a course of sin, as they, Acts xxiii. 12, that bound themselves under a curse to kill Paul. In this case a vow is a bond of iniquity. Many will bind themselves never to forgive their neighbour such an offence. Again, the matter is necessary. It is contrary to Christian liberty needlessly to bind ourselves where God hath left us free. Many will in some indifferent things bind themselves, make rash and unnecessary vows, as to play no more at such a game, drink no more in such a house or company. Alas! what doth this do to cure the heart? This is but like the stopping of one leak in a ruinous ship that is ready to fall in pieces. Resolution is for the weighty things of Christianity, or cleaving to God in a course of obedience, not for some by-matters. Resolve on the most necessary work. Again, this resolution is propounded universally, indefinitely, in the way of God's commandments,' whatever shall appear to be the will of God. When our consent is bounded with reservations, we do not come up to the mind of God, and that will bring you but half way to heaven. He that is half holy, half religious, will be but half saved. Paul gives God a blank, and bids him write his terms: Acts ix. 6, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' So we must submit ourselves to all the ways of God without exception. Thus we may consider it as it falls under a resolution, The way of thy commandments.'

But consider the expression absolutely, why are the commandments called a way?

1. There is an end for which man was appointed, and that was to seek after true happiness. All desire to be happy by an inclination of nature, for hereunto were we appointed by God. Many say, Who will show us any good?' Ps. iv. 6; but men's practice is contrary, they live as if their end were to be miserable.

2. This true happiness lieth in the enjoyment of God; that is the great end of reasonable creatures, angels and men, actively to glorify God, and to enjoy him: other creatures were made to glorify him objectively, but not to enjoy him.

3. For the compassing this end there is a way; for every end is attained by the means. What is this way? God's commandments: Eccles. xii. 13, Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.' That was the result of Solomon's critical search in and about the ways of true happiness; he found that a constant, uniform, universal obedience was the only way to true happiness.

4. The commands of God are legal and evangelical: they are both to be regarded:--(1.) The evangelical commands come first into consideration by the fallen creature; there the great command is to believe in Christ, John vi. 29, 1 John iii. 23. To believe in Christ is the only way to the Father. Then (2.) The moral law, that is the rule of our duty, without which we can never be saved, Rom. x. 14.

Use. Well, then, let me press you to consideration and resolution. (1.) Consideration, that we may think of our end, and think of our way, and may not go on as beasts, without any recollection. Luke xv. 17: We never come to ourselves till we consider the end why we were born and why God sent us into the world. Whence am I? why do I live here? To delight myself in the creature, to wallow in pleasures, or to look after communion with God? We live but as beasts, not as men, till we return and remember our creator, in the enjoyment of whom is our only happiness. (2.) Then come to resolution; there is intentio, electio, consensus, and imperium; all these should be fixed after we have considered for what am I made? what is the way I am to walk? The first act of the soul is intentio; that belongs to the last end; surely this must be my scope, that God may be my portion. The next act is electio,

or choice; that belongs to the means. Now the great means is Christ Jesus, he is the way to the Father. Oh, let me choose him that I may enjoy God for my portion! The next act is consensus, the will and understanding together; there is a consent to the terms. Notwithstanding all the conditions upon which these means are to be had, yet there is a full consent of the will to use them, so a consent to take Christ upon his own terms. After this there is imperium, a command for an industrious prosecution; this shall be my business, this I will look after. There should be a decree in our souls for God; God is my scope, Christ my way; I must take him; I will go about this work, walk in this way, that I may at length enjoy him.

Fourthly, The last circumstance is the manner, I will run the way,' &c. By running is meant cheerful, ready, and zealous observance of God's precepts. It is not go or walk, but run. They that would come to their journey's end must run in the way of God's commandments. It noteth speedy or a ready obedience without delay. We must begin with God betimes. Alas! when we should be at the goal, we scarce set forth many of us. And it noteth earnestness; when a man's heart is set upon a thing, he thinks he can never soon enough do it. And this is running, when we are vehement and earnest upon the enjoyment of God and Christ in the way of obedience. And it notes, again, when the heart freely offereth itself to God. Now this running is very necessary, as it is the fruit of effectual calling. When the Lord speaks of effectual calling, the issue of it is running; when he speaks of the conversion of the Gentiles, Nations that know thee not shall run to thee;' and Draw me, and we will run after thee;' and In the day of thy power thy people shall be a willing people.' There are no slow motions, but when God draws there is a speedy, an earnest motion of the soul. And this running, as it is the fruit of effectual calling, so it is very

needful; for cold and faint motions are soon overborne with every difficulty and temptation: Heb. xii. 1, Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.' When a man hath a mind to do such a thing; though he be hindered and jostled, he takes it patiently; he goes on, and cannot stay to debate the business. A slow motion is easily stopped, whereas a swift one bears down that which opposeth it; so when men run and are not tired in the service of God. And then the prize calls for running: 1 Cor. ix. 24, So run that ye may obtain.' There is a prize, which is eternal life in Christ Jesus, the reward or crown which he keepeth for us in heaven. They that ran for a gar land of flowers in the Isthmic games--the apostle alludes to them--how would they diet themselves that they might be in breath and heart to win a poor garland of flowers! There is a crown of glory set before us, therefore we should so run that we may obtain, and be temperate in all things; we should keep down the body, deny fleshly lusts, and the like. Use. To reprove faint cold motions in the things of God. Many, instead of running, lie down, or, which is worse, go back again, or at best but a very slow pace. Christ is running to you to snatch you out of the fire, and will you not run towards him? When we have abated the fervour of our motion towards God, then we lie open to temptation; therefore let us not loiter; run, it is for a crown. If heaven be worth nothing, lie still; but if it be, run. Wicked men run fast to hell, as if they did strive who should be soonest there; bewail your slowness and lameness in obedience.

SERMON XXXVI.

Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.--Ver. 33.

THE man of God had promised to run the way of God's commandments; but being conscious of many swervings, beggeth God further to teach him.

In the words two things are observable:--

1. A prayer for grace.

2. A promise made upon supposition of obtaining the grace asked. He promiseth--

[1.] Diligence and accuracy of practice, I will keep it.

[2.] Perseverance, unto the end.

First, In the prayer for grace observe--

1. The person to whom he prays, O Lord.

2. The person for whom, teach me.

3. The grace for which he prayeth, to be taught.

4. The object of this teaching, the way of God's statutes.

The teaching which he beggeth is not speculative, but practical; to learn how to walk in the way of God.

1. David, a man after God's own heart, maketh this prayer. The more love any have to God, the more they desire to know his ways. Carnal men are of another spirit; they say, Job xxi. 14, Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' The more ignorant the more quiet. They that love their lusts cannot heartily desire the knowledge of those truths which will trouble them in the following of their lusts. We often consult with our affections about our opinions; and where we have a mind to hate, we have no desire to know, Ordinary professors, a little knowledge serveth their turn, some few obvious truths, but

others, such as David, follow on to know the Lord. David, that had a singular measure of knowledge already, yet there is no end of his desire in this psalm; and shall we be contented as if we needed no more?

2. Consider David, a prophet, a teacher, a penman of scripture. There was some knowledge which the prophets got by ordinary means, and some by immediate revelation; as Daniel by vision, and Daniel by reading of books, Dan. vii. 2, ix. 2; either by a new revelation, or by the study of what was already revealed. And if extraordinary men were bound to the ordinary duties of God's service as the means of their improvement and growth in grace, such as reading, prayer, hearing, meditation, use of seals, &c., surely none can plead exemption or conceit themselves to be above duties. Now, that they were thus bound we find by David's prayer for knowledge, Daniel's reading of books, namely that of Jeremiah, and all of them meditating or inquiring diligently what manner of salvation should ensue: 1 Peter i. 10, 11, Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow;' meditating and prying into the meaning of that salvation which by the motion of the Spirit they held forth to others, labouring to make these truths their own, and to get their hearts affected therewith. In their prophetic revelations they were pheromenoi, 2 Peter i. 21, forcibly moved by the Spirit, and carried beyond their intention, and the line of their natural strength, but in other things they got knowledge by the same means that we do, and as believers were to stir up the gifts and graces which they had in the ordinary way of duty, waiting and crying for the influences of the

Lord's grace. You must distinguish, then, of what they did when they acted as prophets and when they acted as believers.

3. David, that had means external sufficient to direct him in the way of God, as the scriptures then written, the ordinances of the law, and the expositions of the scribes, yet beggeth God to teach him. So must we beg God to teach us, whatever means we have. It is true we have an advantage above the Old Testament church, as we have their helps and more, and the doctrine of salvation is now clearer, and the gifts and graces of the Spirit more plentifully dispensed since the price of redemption is actually paid, than before, when God gave out grace and glory only upon trust; yet still we are to go to God for his teaching, because the means are not successful unless he join his influence; especially to give us this practical knowledge, teaching in order to keeping the way of God's statutes. I say, though we have the word, and many pastors and teachers better gifted than in the Old Testament, Eph. iv. 11, yet God must be our teacher still, if we mean to profit; for Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God giveth the increase,' 1 Cor. iii. 6. To seek knowledge in the means with the neglect of God well never succeed well with you; as we ministers must not rest upon our work, but pray much for success (bene orasse est bene studuisse--Luther), so you hearers must not rest in the fruit of our studies, but still beg God to teach you every truth.

But all this will be more evidently made out in the following points.

Doct. 1. Divine teaching is necessary for all those that would walk in the way of God's statutes.

1. We have lost our way to true happiness. Adam lost it, and all mankind in him; ever since we have been wandering up and down: Ps. xiv. 3, They are all gone aside,' i.e., gone out of the way of holiness as it leadeth to true happiness: Eccles. vii. 29, God hath made man

upright, but they have sought out many inventions;' wander in a maze. Man at first, that had perfect wisdom to discern the way to true happiness, and ability to pursue it, now is full of crooked counsels, being darkened with ignorance in his mind, and abominable errors and mistakes, and seconded with lusts and passions.

2. We can never find it of ourselves till God reveal it to us: He hath showed thee, man, what is good,' Micah vi. 8. It is well for man that he hath God for his teacher, who hath given him a stated rule by which good and evil may be determined.

[1.] Because there are many things which nature would never reveal to him; as the whole doctrine of redemption by Christ. The book of the creatures discovereth the mercy of God, but giveth not the least hint of the way how that mercy should come unto us, speaketh nothing of God incarnate, two natures in Christ's person, the two covenants, the way of salvation by Christ's death, &c. These could never be known by natural reason, for all these things proceed from the mere motion of God's will, without any other cause moving there unto than his own love and compassion: John iii. 16, God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And how could any man divine what God purposed in his heart, unless he himself revealed it?

[2.] Because those things that nature teacheth it teacheth but darkly, and with little satisfaction, without the help of scriptures; as that there is one God, the first cause of all, omnipotent, wise, righteous, good, and that it is reasonable he should be served; that reasonable creatures have immortal souls, and so die not as the beasts; that there is no true happiness in these things wherein men ordinarily seek it; that since virtue and vice receive not suitable recompenses here, there must be punishment and reward after this life; that men live justly, do

as they would be done to, be sober and temperate; that reason be not enslaved to sensual appetite; all which nature revealeth but darkly: so that the wisest men that have lived according to this light in one thing or other have been found fools: Rom. i. 22, Professing themselves wise, they became fools.' But all these things are clearly revealed in scripture, which discovers the nature and way of worshipping the true God, what that reward and punishment after this life is, and the right way of obtaining the one and eschewing the other, with weighty arguments to enforce these things.

[3.] That we may have assurance that the worship which we give to God is pleasing to him, there must be a revelation of his will; otherwise, when we have tired ourselves in an endless maze of superstitions, he might turn us off with Who hath required these things at your hands?' Isa. i. 12. Therefore, for our security and assurance it concerneth us to have a stated rule under God's own hand, and God must be both author and object of worship.

3. Besides the external revelation there must be an inward teaching: They shall all be taught of God,' John vi. 45; not all the prophets that wrote scripture, but all that come to Christ for salvation. And this is prophesied of that time when the canon and rule of faith should be most complete; then there will be still a need that they should be taught of God before their hearts be drawn into Christ. As the book of the scriptures is necessary to expound the book of the creatures, so and much more is the light of the Spirit to expound the book of the scriptures. Others teach the ear, but God openeth the heart. The rule is one thing, and the guide is another. The means were never intended to take off our dependence upon God, but to engage it rather, that we may look up for his blessing: 1 Cor. iii. 6, I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase;' 2 Cor. iv. 6, God, that commanded

(ho eipon) light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' Though the gospel hath enough in it to evidence itself to the consciences of men, yet God must make use of his creating power before this light can break in upon our hearts with any efficacy and influence: The law is light,' Prov. vi. 23. Yet not comprehended by darkness: John i. 5, The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not,' which rests in the hearts of all men that remain in their natural condition. It is not enough to see any object to have the light of the sun, unless we have the light of the eye. The scripture is our external light, as the sun is to the world; the understanding is our internal light. Now this eye is become blind in all natural men, and in the best it is most imperfect; therefore the eyes of the understanding must be opened by the spirit of wisdom and revelation, Eph. i. 17, 18. Though truths be plainly revealed by the Spirit of God in scripture, yet there must be a removal of that natural darkness and blindness that is upon our understandings. Outward light doth not make the object conspicuous without a faculty of seeing in the eye; a blind man cannot see at noonday, nor the sharpest sight at midnight. The work of the Spirit is to take off the scales from our eyes, that we may see clearly what the scripture speaketh clearly. Now scripture is perfected, that is the great work, to strengthen the faculty.

4. This inward teaching must be renewed and continued from day to day, or else we shall soon miscarry by our mistakes and prejudices. David is often pressing God with this request, Lord, teach me;' which plainly showeth that not only novices, but men of great holiness and experience, need new direction every day. The shameful miscarriages of God's wisest people are enough to show the necessity of this, and the

many cautions in the word of God do abundantly confirm it: Prov. iii. 5, 6, Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' There is nothing that keepeth up our dependence upon God, and should quicken us in our daily prayers, as the sense of this. Many times we come to God in the morning, and pray coldly and drowsily, because we go forth to the occasions of the day in the presumption of our wit; but it is a thousand to one but we smart for our folly before the evening come. Alas! such is the in constancy and uncertainty of man's understanding, that unless we have continual light and direction from God, and he lead us by the hand through all our affairs, passion or unbelief, or some carnal affection, will make us stumble and dash against one divine precept or another. This concerneth all Christians, much more those in public station, whose good or evil is of a more universal influence. Such was David. Men of place and power and interest had need have this often in their mouths and hearts, Lord, teach me the way of thy statutes.' Homer has a notable saying in his Odyssey--

"Toios ga`r no'os estin epichthonion anthro'pon,
Hoion ep' emar a'gesi pate`r andronte theonte."

See Casaubon, Ep. 702,--a most divine sentence from a heathen poet, that mortal man should not be proud of his wit, for he hath no more understanding of his affairs than God giveth him from day to day. A sentence so admired by the heathens, that many of them transcribed it in their writings with admiration; as Clemens Alexandrinus speaketh of Archilochus, who, as he took other things from Homer, so his putting it into his verse thus--

"Toios ga`r anthro'poisi thumo`s, Glauke, Lepti'nes pai,
Thnetois opoi'on Zeus eph' eme`ren a'goi."

Augustine De Civitate Dei, telleth us, lib. v. cap. 8. Cicero rendered it into Latin verse thus, though with some loss of the sense--

"Tales sunt hominum mentes quales pater ipse,
Jupiter auctiferas lustravit lumine terras."

I quote all this to show you how precious such a hint was to heathens, as expressing a great deal of reason; and shall not we Christians wait upon God for the continual direction of his Spirit?

Now there is a twofold reason for this:--

1. Because this actuateth our knowledge, which would otherwise lie asleep in the habit; and then, though we are wise in generals, we should be to seek for direction in particular cases, or at least not have such a lively sense of God's will as to check the present temptations we meet with in the course of our affairs, and do too often induce us to miscarry. The temptation being dexterously managed by Satan, and entertained by our present thoughts, will easily overbear a latent principle long ago received, unless it be afresh revived and set a-work by God's Spirit; therefore we need that the Spirit should be our monitor, and cause truths formerly delivered to return with fresh force upon the heart. And indeed it is his main work to bring things to our remembrance,' John xiv. 26, and to blow up our light and knowledge into an actual resistance of whatever is contrary to the will of God, or to furnish us with seasonable thoughts in every business and temptation.

2. We have but a glimmering light when we are blinded with passions, and are in some sort ignorant of what we know, cannot deduce those conclusions which are evidently contained in known and avowed principles. Hagar could not see the well before her eyes, by reason of her passion and grief, till God opened her eyes: Gen. xxi. 19, And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.' The ground was not opened to cause the fountain to bubble up, but her eyes were opened to

see it. And Calvin giveth the reason why she saw it not, because dolore attonita, quod expositum erat oculis non cernebat--things at hand cannot be seen when the mind is diverted by the impression of some strong passion; and it is true of the eyes of the mind; we do not see what we see, being overcome by love, or fear, or hope, or anger, or some cloud that interposeth from the passions. As David, when he fumbled about God's providence, being blinded by the prospering of the wicked, calleth himself beast for not discerning his duty in so plain a case: Ps. lxxiii. 22, So foolish was I, and ignorant, and as a beast before thee.' In the perplexities of his mind he could not see clear principles of faith which before he had sufficiently learned, but could not then make use of for the settling and composing his heart.

Use 1 is for information.

1. The difference between the way of God and the way of sin. We have need of none to teach us to do evil--Vitia etiam sine magistro discuntur; we have that from nature; but in the way of God we must be taught and taught again; God must be our teacher and daily monitor.

2. It informs us that as to knowledge and direction there must be much done. Poor man, lying in the darkness and shadow of death, it was necessary for him--

[1.] That some doctrine should be revealed by God, by which he might understand how God stood affected towards him, and he ought to be affected towards God.

[2.] That this doctrine being revealed by God, it should be kept safe and sound, free from oblivion and corruption, in some public and authentic record, especially in these last times, when not only the canon is enlarged, but the church propagated far and near, and ob noxious to so many calamities, and men are short-lived, and there are not such authentic witnesses to preserve the credit of a divine

revelation.

[3.] That this writing and record be known to come from God's own hand by some infallible proof, to the end that it may be entertained with the more reverence.

[4.] To own this authority, and discern God's mind, we need a suit able faculty, or a heart disposed by the Holy Ghost to receive the proof which God offereth, namely, that we should be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and open our eyes.

[5.] It is not enough to own our rule, but we must be continually excited to study it, that we may come to a saving measure of the knowledge of God's mind in the word.

[6.] After some knowledge our ignorance is apt to return upon us, unless the Holy Ghost do still enlighten us and warn us of our duty upon all occasions.

Use 2. In the sincerity of your hearts go to God for his teaching. God is pleased with the request: 1 Kings iii. 9, 10, Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.' Oh! beg it of God.

1. The way of God's statutes is worthy to be found by all.

2. So hard to be found and kept by any.

3. It is so dangerous to miss it, that this should quicken us to be earnest with God.

1. It is so worthy to be found; it is the way to eternal life and to escape eternal death; and in matters of such a concernment no diligence can be too much: Prov. xv. 24, The way of life is above to the wise, to depart from hell beneath.' It is the way that leadeth to life and true happiness.

2. It is so hard to find and keep; it is a narrow way: Mat. vii. 13, 14, Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' There is defect, here excess. A gracious spirit, that would keep with God in all things, is sensible of the difficulty; there are many ways that lead to hell, but one way to heaven.

3. It is so dangerous to miss it in whole or in part; in whole, you are undone for ever; in part, in every false religion such disadvantages, so little of God's presence and the comforts of his Spirit: 1 Cor. iii. 15, If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.' A man should look after the most clear and safe way to heaven.

Doct. 2. That divine teaching is earnestly desired by God's children. How often doth David repeat this request! These expressions are strange to us, who, as soon as we have gotten a little knowledge, think we know as much as we need to know, and are wise enough to guide our way without further direction; but they are not so to the people of God.

Reas. 1. It is a hard matter to understand a thing spiritually and as it ought to be understood. There is an understanding of things literally, and a spiritual discerning: 1 Cor. ii. 14, A natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' There is a knowing things at random and by a general knowledge, and a knowing things as we ought to know: 1 Cor. viii. 2, If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.' There is a knowing the truth as it is in Jesus: Eph. iv. 21, If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him,

as the truth is in Jesus.' It is not every sort of know ledge that is saving; a man may go to hell with speculative light; that never reacheth the heart: such as is practical and operative, the scripture presseth knowledge, and the modus of it.

2. God's children are sensible of their own insufficiency, and so of the need of a constant dependence upon God; sound and saving know ledge is ever humble. They have clearer light than others, and so best see their own defects: Prov. xxx. 2, Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man;' and are, too, most sensible of corruptions, and see most of the excellency of the object: 1 Cor. viii. 2, If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.' They study their own hearts, and so are conscious to many weaknesses; they know how easily they are misled by the wiles of Satan and the darkness of their own hearts; whereas a presumptuous formalist goeth on boldly, and in the confidence of his own wit runneth headlong into temptation.

3. Their strong affection to knowledge; they desire to know more, for there is more still to be learned in the word of God. Though taught in part, they see what a small measure of knowledge they have attained unto; till they attain the beatifical vision they are never satisfied: Hosea vi. 3, Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord;' still increasing and bettering their notions concerning the things of God.

4. Their great care that they may not go astray, nor offend in mat ter, or manner, or principle, and end. They whose hearts are set upon exact walking would fain know what God would have them to do in every action and in every circumstance: Lord, teach me; let thy Holy Spirit guide me, and direct me in performing acceptable obedience to thee. It was David's resolution, ver. 32, I will run the way of thy

commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.' Now we have his prayer for direction in this verse, Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes;' I would know it that I may keep it. It is a very trouble some condition to a child of God when he is in the dark, and knoweth not what to do, and is forced to walk every step by guess, and cannot find the ground sure under him. The conflict between duty and danger doth not trouble so much as between duty and duty: John xii. 35, He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.' Oh! it is a sad judgment to wander in a maze of confusions, and to be like those that thought to go to Dothan, and found themselves in Samaria, 2 Kings vi. 20.

Well, then, the use is, Have we this temper of God's people? Do we look after spiritual knowledge, such as will not only store the head with notions, but enter upon the heart? Are we sensible of our weakness and Satan's wiles, and that God, that hath begun the work, must perfect it? Do we make it our happiness to grow rich in know ledge, and better our apprehensions concerning God and the things of God? Would we understand every point of duty that we may fulfil it? As face answereth to face in water, so should heart to heart, the heart of one child of God to another.

Doct. 3. All that teaching that we expect or get from God must still be directed to practice: Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.'

1. This is God's intention in teaching, therefore should be our end in learning. The end of sound knowledge is obedience: Deut. iv. 5, 6, Behold I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it: keep therefore and do them, for this is thy wisdom.' Others do little more than learn them by rote, when they know them only to

talk of them, or fashion their notions and plausible opinions that they may hang together.

2. It is not the knowing, but obeying, will make us happy. We desire to know the way that we may come to the end of the journey; to inquire the way and sit still will not further us: Blessed are they that hear the word and keep it,' Luke xi. 28;' He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction,' Prov. x. 17. None but desire to be happy; walk in God's way; he goeth on right that submitteth to the directions of the word.

3. All the comfort and sweetness is in keeping: Ps. xix. 11, In keeping thy commandments there is a great reward;' many sweet experiences. Notions breed a delectation when they are right, but nothing comparable to practice.

4. He that will do shall know: John vii. 17, If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine whether it be of God.' Such as truly fear God, and make conscience of every known duty in their practice, have God's promise that they shall be able to discern and distinguish between doctrine and doctrine; others provoke God to withhold light from them. Not that the godly are infallible. Alas! the best men's humours and fleshly passions do often mislead them, but this is the fruit of their careless walking.

Use 1. Is to reprove them that desire knowledge, but only to inform their judgments or satisfy their curiosity, not to govern their hearts in the fear of God, or to reform their practices. Such are foolish builders: Mat. vii. 26, 27, Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man that built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.' These do but increase their own condemnation: Luke xii. 47, That servant which knew his lord's will and

prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.' Like many that study maps, not to travel, but only to talk and understand how countries are situated.

Use 2. It directeth us in our desires of knowledge, what should be our scope. Come with a fixed resolution to obey, and refer all to practice. Knowledge is the means, doing is the end: Deut. v. 31, I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.' Media accipiunt amabilitatem, ordinem et mensuram a fine--the desire, measure, order of the means are to be esteemed as regulated by the end; therefore still prize this knowledge, so far forth as it directs to practice.

Doct. 4. In this practice we must be sincere and constant. I will keep it'--

1. Having such a help as this continual direction.

2. Such an engagement as this condescension to direct and warn a poor creature. And to the end,' that is to the end of my life; there is no other period to our obedience but death. The Greek hath it, dia` panto`s, continually.' The word doth properly signify the heel or sole of the foot; by traduction thence, the end of a thing, and some times a reward and recompense.

[1.] It is not enough to begin a good course, but we must go on in it, if we mean to reach the goal, else all our labour is lost; the end crowneth the work.

[2.] God, that made us begin, doth also make us to continue to the end. Is the beginning from God, the end and perfection from us? This is to ascribe that which is less perfect to God, and that which is more perfect to us.

SERMON XXXVII.

Give me understanding and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.--Ver. 34.

IN these words you have--(1.) A prayer, give me understanding. (2.) A promise, and I shall keep thy law. (3.) The promise amplified, by expressing the exactness and sincerity of that obedience, yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. The first point is--

That there needeth a great deal of understanding to keep God's law.

1. That he may know his way, and understand what God commandeth and forbiddeth; for it is the wisdom of a man to understand his way, and to know the laws according to which he liveth: Col. i. 9, 10, Filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye may walk worthy of God unto all well-pleasing.' We have such great obligations to God, both in point of hope and gratitude, that we have reason to study our duty exactly, that we may not displease him and cross his will in anything. We take it for granted that a man should comply with the will of him upon whom he dependeth. We have all and look for all from him; therefore we should walk worthy of God unto all well-pleasing, which we can never do without much knowledge and understanding; therefore we should search out the mind of God in everything.

2. To avoid the snares that are laid for us in the course of our duty to God. There is a crafty devil and a deceitful heart; so that a man that would walk with God had need have his eyes about him. For the wiles of Satan: Eph. vi. 11, Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' His enterprises or devices: 2 Cor. ii. 11, Lest Satan should get an advantage of us,

for we are not ignorant of his devices.' He is ready to entrap us and ensnare us by plausible temptations; he suiteth the bait to every appetite. Then our own hearts: Jer. xvii. 9, The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can, know it?' There is a deceiver in our own bosoms, that will represent good under the notion of evil, and evil under the notion of good; that will cheat us of present duties by future promises. And therefore Ingeniosa res est esse Christianum. He that would keep God's law had need be a very understanding man, that Satan entrap him not, and his own heart deceive him not, and so he smart for his folly: Walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil,' Eph. v. 15.

3. That he may respect things according to their order and places, and give them precedency in his care and practice as their worth deserveth, which certainly belongeth to understanding or wisdom to do. As (1.) That God should be owned before man, and served and respected before our neighbour or ourselves; for God hath a right in us antecedent to that of the creature: Acts v. 29, We ought to obey God rather than men.' Many times God's children are put to it, divided between duty and duty; duty to their parents, duty to their magistrates, and duty to God. Now it requireth understanding how to sort both duties. When the inferior power crosseth the will of the superior, the higher duty must take place, and we must dispense with our duty to men, that we may be faithful to God. Alas! the corruption of nature would teach us to do otherwise; we love ourselves more than our neighbour, and our neighbour more than God. Out of self-interest we comply with the lusts of men, and in complying with the lusts of men make bold with God. This wisdom every one that would keep God's law must learn, that we are bound to none so much as to God, from whom we have life, and breath, and all

things; that none can reward our obedience so surely, so largely, as God, who can bear us out when men fail; that none can punish our disobedience so much as God. If these considerations were more in our hearts, we would not sin so boldly, nor serve God so fearfully and cowardly as usually we do, nor comply with men to the wrong of our souls. We may refuse obedience in a particular instance where we do not refuse subjection. (2.) That heaven is to be preferred before earth, and the salvation of our souls before the interests and concernments of our bodies: Mat. vi. 33, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' And whosoever fail in this point of wisdom are very fools: Luke xii. 20, But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?' There should be no delays in heavenly matters. We busy ourselves about other things, and defer our care for eternity from day to day; but this should be sought before every other thing. (3.) That present affliction is to be chosen rather than future, and temporal rather than eternal. A wise man would have the best at last, for to fall from happiness is the utmost degree of misery--Miserum est fuisse beatum. And therefore better suffer now, with hopes of reward in another world, than take pleasure now, to endure pains to come: 2 Tim. ii. 3, Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.' It is better to do so than to have all our hopes spent: Son, in thy lifetime thou receivedst thy good things,' Luke xvi. 25. That which is present is temporal, that which is to come is eternal: 2 Cor. iv. 18, While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. The good and evil of the present state is soon over. Now we stand not upon a short evil, so we may compass a

great good. (4.) That things of profit and pleasure must give place to things that belong to godliness, virtue, and honesty; for the bastard good must give place to the true, real good. Profit and pleasure are but bastard goods. They are counted understanding men in the world that make pleasure give way to profit; therefore Solomon saith, Where there are no oxen the crib is clean, yet there is much gain by the labour of the ox.' I am sure he is an understanding man before God that maketh both give way to honesty and godliness; for the same reason that will sway us to make pleasure give way to profit will also teach us to make profit give way to the interest of grace. As for instance, that pleasure is a base thing as being the happiness of beasts; so is profit, as being the happiness of the children of this world, in contradistinction to holiness, the perfection of the next. The pleasure of sense is only in this life, so is worldly gain only serviceable in our pilgrimage; pleasure in excess destroyeth profit; so doth profit destroy grace. As the world scorneth a man that hath wasted an estate upon his pleasures, so do God and angels him that, from the abundance of his wealth, maketh havoc of a good conscience, and neglecteth things to come: Godliness is the great gain,' 1 Tim. vi. 6. (5.) That the greatest suffering is to be chosen before the least sin. In sufferings, the offence is done to us; in sin, the offence is done to God. The evil of suffering is but for a moment, the evil of sin for ever; in suffering we lose the favour of men, in sin we lose the favour of God; suffering bringeth inconvenience upon the body, sin upon the soul; suffering is only evil in our sense, sin whether we feel it, yea or nay. It requireth spiritual wisdom and understanding to choose of evils the least, as well as of goods the best: Moses, Heb. xi. 25, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.' (6.) That a general good is to be

chosen before a particular, and that which yieldeth all things rather than that which will yield a limited and particular comfort. Riches will avail against poverty, and honour against disgrace; but godliness is profitable for all things,' 1 Tim. iv. 8; it will yield righteousness, comfort, and peace eternal, and food, and raiment, maintenance, and eternal life. Now these and many such principles must be engrafted in the heart if we would keep God's laws. The reasonableness of such propositions in the theory may easily appear; but as to practice, we are governed by sense and human passion, which judgeth the quite contrary of all this, and causeth us to make bold with God because afraid of men, to follow earthly things with the greatest delight and earnestness, and spiritual things in a formal and careless manner, to be all for the present and nothing for things to come, and to sell the birthright for a mess of pottage, to make a wound in our souls to avoid a scratch in our bodies, and for a little particular contentment to neglect the things of God.

4. Understanding is necessary, that we may judge aright of time and place and manner of doing, that we may do not only things good but well, where to go, where to stand still; as it is said, they sought of God a right way, Isa. viii. 21, [12] and David behaved himself wisely in. all that he did, 1 Sam. xviii. 5. It is for the glory of God, and the credit of religion, and the peace of our own souls, that we should regard circumstances as well as actions, and discern time and judgment, that we do not destroy what we would build up. Therefore understanding is necessary. See further ver. 98 of this psalm.

5. Because our affections answer our understanding. If we understand not, how can we believe? If we believe not, how can we love? If we love not, how can we do? Knowledge, persuasion, affection, practice, these follow one another, where the faculties of the soul are rightly

governed, and kept in a due subordination. Indeed, by the fall the order is subverted: Titus iii. 3, Serving divers lusts and pleasures.' Objects strike upon the senses, sense moveth the fancy, fancy moveth the bodily spirits, the bodily spirits move the affections, and these blind the mind and lead the will captive. But a true understanding makes us more steadfast.

Now all these considerations do show us our need of understanding, and that a Christian should be prudent, not headstrong and precipitant, Like horse or mule, that have no understanding,' Ps. xxxii. 9, but wise and knowing in all principles, actions, and circumstances that belong to his duty, if he would honour his profession, and not follow the brutish motions of his own heart, but God's direction. Now, if we would have understanding, we must--

1. Attend upon the word; that will make us wise to salvation,' wiser than our enemies,' than our teachers,' than the ancients.' Than enemies: A man that consulteth not with flesh and blood, but the word and rule of his duty, will find plain honesty at length to be the best policy. Than teachers: Because he contented not himself with the naked rules delivered by them, but laboured with his conscience to make them profitable to himself. Than ancients, or men of long study and experience. That is a costly wisdom; when men have smarted often, they learn by their own harms to be circumspect. If there were no other way to be wise than by experience, miserable were man for a long time, and would be exposed to hazards and foul dangers before he could get it. But now scripture, which is not the result of men's experience, but God's wisdom, is not such a long and expensive way.

2. Use much meditation in debating matters between God and your souls: Ps. cxix. 99, I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation;' and 2 Tim. ii. 7, Consider what I say,

and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.'

3. Prayer, as David doth here ask it of God. Desire him to remove that darkness of spirit which sin hath brought upon you, that you may not govern your life by sense and passion, but by his direction: Job xxxii. 8, There is a spirit in man, but the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding.' Man hath reason, but to guide it to a spiritual use, that is above his power. The Psalmist complaineth of all natural men: There is none that understandeth, none that doeth good to no one,' Ps. xiv. 2; and Rom. iii. 11, There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.' Therefore it is God must give understanding at first conversion: Acts xvi. 14, God opened the heart of Lydia;' and Acts xxvi. 18, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins,' &c. By a fuller illumination: Eph. i. 17, 18, That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, that father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened,' &c.; otherwise we have not a heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear: Deut. xxix. 4, Yet the Lord hath not^given you a heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear unto this day.'

Secondly, The next thing that I shall observe is this--

That upon the supposition of this benefit he promiseth obedience, I shall keep thy law.

Doct. They that have understanding given by God will keep his law.

1. That it is their duty, and they ought so to do, there is no question; for all knowledge is given us in order to practice, not to satisfy curiosity or feed pride, or to get a fame and reputation with men of knowledge and understanding persons, but to order our walk: Col. i. 9, 10, For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, cease not

to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.'

2. That they will do so is also clear upon a twofold account:--

[1.] Because answerable to the discovery of good or evil in the understanding. There is a prosecution and an aversation in the will; for the will doth necessarily follow practicum dictamen, the ultimate resolution of the judgment; for it is o'rexis meta` lo'gou, not a brutish inclination, but a rational appetite. God hath appointed this course to nature; therefore when the judgment cometh to such a conclusion as is set down in the 73d Psalm, ver. 28, But it is good for me to draw near to God'--not only it is good, but it is good for me--the will yieldeth; for conviction of the judgment is the ground of practice. I know conviction and conversion differ, and the one may be where the other is not. But then it is taken for a partial conviction; the mind is not savingly enlightened and thoroughly possessed with the truth and worth of heavenly things; the most and greatest sort of men have but notions, a weak and literal knowledge about spiritual things, and that produceth nothing; they do not live up to the truth which they know. Others have besides the notion a naked approbation of things that are good. Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor--they see better things and approve them in the abstract; but this doth not come to a practicum dictamen; it is good, and good for me, all circumstances considered, thus to do. This is the fruit of spiritual evidence and demonstration, which always is accompanied with power, 1 Cor. ii. 4. Carnal men think it is better for them to keep as they are, being blinded with their passions and lusts, though they could wish things were otherwise with them. But a godly man's judgment being savingly

enlightened, determineth it is good, it is better, it is best for me; it is better to please God than men, to look after heaven than the world, &c. There is a simple approbation of good things, and a comparative approbation of them. Simple approbation is when in the abstract notion we apprehend Christ and pardon of sins and heaven good; but when compared with other things, and considered in the frame of Christian doctrine, or according to the terms upon which they may be had, they are rejected. Many approve things simply, and in the first act of judgment, but disallow them in the second, when they consider them as invested with some difficult and unpleasing terms, or compare them with pleasure and profit which they must forsake if they would obtain them; as the young man in the Gospel esteemeth salvation as a thing worthy to be inquired into, but is loath to let go his earthly possessions, Mat. xix. 21, 22. He would have these good things at an easy rate, without mortifying the flesh or renouncing the world. But a godly man, that sits down and counteth the charges, all circumstances considered, resolves, It is good for me; as Boaz, liking the woman as well as her inheritance, took them both, which his kinsman refused, Ruth iv. 9, 10; he would have the inheritance without the woman. They like Christ and his laws, as well as the benefits that he bringeth with him. He doth approve things upon good knowledge, and cometh to a well-settled resolution. Another defect in wicked men is because the judgment is superficial, and so comes to nothing. It is not full, clear, and ponderous; it is not a dictamen, a resolute decree, not ultimum dictamen, the last decree, all things considered and well weighed.

[2.] God's grace. God doth never fully and spiritually convince the judgment, but he doth also work upon the will to accept, embrace, and prosecute those good things of which it is convinced. He teacheth and

draweth; they are distinct works, but they go together; therefore the one is inferred out of the other. Drawn and taught of God, both are necessary; for as there is blindness and inadvertency in the mind, so obstinacy in the will, which is not to be cured by mere persuasion, but by a gracious quality infused, inclining the heart, which by the way freeth this doctrine from exception, as if all God's works were mere moral suasion. The will is renewed and changed, but so as God doth it, by working according to the order of nature.

Use. By all means look after this divine illumination, whereby your judgment may be convinced of the truth and worth of spiritual things. It is not enough to have some general and floating notions about them, or slightly to hear of them, or talk of them; but they must be spiritually discerned and judged of; for if our judgments were thoroughly convinced, our pursuit of true happiness would be more earnest; you would see sin to be the greatest mischief, and grace the chiefest treasure, and accordingly act.

God enlightening the soul doth--

1. Take away carnal principles. Many men can talk well, but they are leavened with carnal principles; as (1.) That he may do as most do and yet be safe: Mat. vii. 23, Many will say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?' &c.; And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity;' Prov. xi. 31, Behold the righteous shall be recompensed upon the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner;' Exod. xxxii. &c. (2.) That he may go on in ungodliness, injustice, intemperance, because grace hath abounded in the gospel: Titus ii. 11, 12, For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godlily in this present world;' and Luke i. 75, That we, being

delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life,' (3.) That he may spend his youth in pleasure, and safely put off repentance till age. But Eccles. xii. 1, we are bid to Remember our Creator in the days of our youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;' and Luke xii. 20, when the rich man said to his soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;' God said unto him, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?' Heb. iii. 7, Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,' &c. Men think it is a folly to be singular and precise; that it was better when there was less preaching and less knowledge; that small sins are not to be stood upon. But God, enlightening the soul, maketh us to see the vanity and sinfulness of such thoughts.

2. There is a bringing the understanding to attend and consider. There is much lieth upon it: Acts xvi. 14, The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, so that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul;' that is, weighed them in her heart.

SERMON XXXVIII.

Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.--Ver. 34.

I COME now to the last clause, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

The point is--

Doct. That it is not enough to keep God's law, but we must keep it with the whole heart.

Here I shall show you--

1. That God requireth the heart.

2. The whole heart.

First, God requireth the heart in his service. The heart is the Christian's sacrifice, the fountain of good and evil, and therefore should be mainly looked after. Without this--

1. External profession is nothing. Most Christians have nothing for Christ but a good opinion or some outward profession. Judas was a disciple, but Satan entered into his heart,' Luke xxii. 3. Ananias joined himself to the people of God, but Satan filled his heart,' Acts v. 3. Simon Magus was baptized, but his heart was not right with God,' Acts viii. 22. Here is the great defect.

2. External conformity is nothing worth. It is not enough that the life seem good, and many good actions be performed, unless the heart be purified; otherwise we do, with the Pharisees, wash the out side of the platter,' Mat. xxiii. 25, 26, when the inside is full of extortion and excess.' It is the heart God looketh after: 1 Sam. xvi. 7, For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart;' Prov. iv. 23, Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.' Cast salt into the spring. As Jehu said to Jonadab, so doth God say to us: 2 Kings x. 15,

Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?' We should answer, It is. Men are not for obsequious compliances if not with the heart, so neither is God. Though thou pray with the Pharisee, pay thy vows with the harlot, kiss Christ with Judas, offer sacrifice with Cain, fast with Jezebel, sell thine inheritance to give to the poor with Ananias and Sapphira, all is in vain without the heart, for it is the heart enliveneth all our duties.

3. It is the heart wherein God dwelleth, not in the tongue, the brain, unless by common gifts; till he take possession of the heart all is as nothing: Eph. iii. 17, He dwelleth in our hearts by faith.' The bodies of believers are temples of the Holy Ghost; yet the heart, will, and affections of man are the chief place of his habitation, wherein he resideth as in his strong citadel, and from whence he commandeth other faculties and members; and without his presence there he cannot have any habitation in us. The tongue cannot receive him by speaking, nor the understanding by knowing, nor the hands by external working: Prov. iv. 23, Out of it are the issues of life.' It is the forge of spirits: He dwelleth not in temples made with hands,' Acts vii. 48; and Jer. xxiii. 24, Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.' He will dwell in thine heart and remain there, if thou wilt give thy heart to him.

4. If Christ have it not, Satan will have it. The heart of man is not a waste; either God is there framing gracious operations, or the devil, who worketh in the children of disobedience,' Eph. ii. 2. Will you give them to God to be saved, or to the devil to be damned? Whose they are now they are for ever.

5. If you love any, you give them the heart; and you are wont to wish that there were windows in your bodies that they might see the sincerity of your hearts towards them. Surely if you have cause to love

any, you have much more cause to love God. No such friend as he, no such benefactor as he, if you consider what he hath done for us, what blessings he hath bestowed, internal, external, temporal, eternal. He hath given his Son, the great instance of love: John iii. 16, God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life;' his gospel, that his love might be preached to us; his Spirit, that not only sounded in our ears, but is shed abroad in our hearts, Rom. v. 5; his Christ to save us, his word to enlighten us, his Spirit to guide and direct us till we come to heaven, where he will give himself to us, an eternal inheritance. Certainly, unless void of all sense and common ingenuity, thou wilt say, as the Psalmist, Ps. cxvi. 12, What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?' What indeed wilt thou render to him? Love will tell thee; but lest thou shouldst miss, God himself hath told thee: Prov. xxiii. 26, My son, give me thine heart.' There is no need to wish for windows in thy body: He searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins;' Ps. vii. 9, The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins;' and 1 Kings viii. 39, Thou knowest the hearts of all the children of men.' The whole world is to him as a sea of glass. He knoweth how much thou esteemest and honourest him. If thou givest him the whole world, and dost not give him thy heart, thou dishonourest him, and settest something else before him.

6. This is, that all may give him. If God should require costly sacrifices, rivers of oil, thousands of rams, then none but the rich would serve him, and he would require nothing but what many hypocrites would give him. Then the poor would be ashamed and discouraged, not being able to comply with the command; yea, then God would not act like the true God, Who accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands,'

Job xxxiv. 19. Say not, Micah vi. 6-8, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' But go to God and give him thy heart, this will make thy mite more acceptable than the great treasures of the wicked: Luke xxi. 1-4, And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury; and he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites; and he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all; for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God, but of her penury she hath cast in all the living that she had.' We read in pagan story of one that, when many rich scholars gave gifts to Socrates, every one according to his birth and fortunes, a poor young man came to him and said I have nothing worthy of thee to bestow upon thee, but that which I have I give, and that is myself; others that have given to thee have left more to themselves, but I have given all that I have, and have nothing left me; I give thee myself. The philosopher answered--Thou hast given me a gift indeed, and therefore it shall be my care to return thee to thyself better than I found thee. So come to God; he needeth us not, but it is for our benefit: we should give our hearts and selves to him. He knoweth how much it is for our advantage that he should have our hearts, to make them better, to sanctify and save them.

Secondly, The whole heart. Here I shall show you--(1.) What it is to keep the law with the whole heart. (2.) Why we must keep the law with our whole heart.

1. What it is to keep the law with the whole heart. It is taken legally

or evangelically, as a man is bound, or as God will accept what is required in justice, or what is accepted in mercy.

[1.] According to the rigour of the law. The law requireth exact conformity, without the least motion to the contrary, either in thought or desire, a full obedience to the law with all the powers of the whole man. This is in force still as to our rule, but not as to the condition of our acceptance with God. This, without any defect and imperfection, like man's love to God in innocency, since the fall is nowhere found but in Christ Jesus, who alone is harmless and undefiled, and will never thus be fulfilled by us till we come to heaven; for here all is but in part, but. then that which is in part shall be done away. Then will there be light without darkness, knowledge without ignorance, faith without unbelief, hope without despair, love without defect and mixture of carnal inclinations, all good motions without distraction. Here is folly and confusion; here flesh lusteth against the spirit' in the best, Gal. v. 17. They have a double principle, though not a double heart.

[2.] In an evangelical sense, according to the moderation of the second covenant; and so God, out of his love and mercy in Christ Jesus, accepts of such a measure of love and obedience as answereth to the measure of sanctification received. When God sanctifieth a man he sanctifieth him as to all the parts and faculties of body and soul, enlighteneth the understanding with the knowledge of his will, inclineth the heart to obedience, circumciseth the affection, filleth us with the love of God himself and holy things. But being a voluntary agent, he doth not this as to perfection of degrees all at once, but successively, and by little and little. Therefore, as long as we are in the world there is somewhat of ignorance in the understanding, perversity in the will, fleshliness and impurity in the affections,

flesh and spirit in every faculty, like water and wine in the same cup; but so as the gift of grace doth more and more prevail over the corruption of nature, light upon darkness, holiness upon sin, and heavenliness upon our inclinations to worldly vanities; as the sun upon the shadow of the night till it groweth into perfect day: Prov. iv. 18, The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' Therefore, when a man doth heartily apply himself to the things of God, and, acknowledging his defects, doth go on from faith to faith.' Rom. i. 17, from love to love, and from obedience to obedience, Heb. vi. 10, and doth study to bring his heart into a further conformity to God, not looking back to Sodom or turning back to Egypt, God accepteth of these desires and constant and uniform endeavours, and will spare us as a man spareth his only son that serveth him,' Mal. iii. 17--as a son, an only son, that is obsequious for the main, though he hath his failings and escapes. There is in them integrity, but not perfection; all parts of holiness, though not degrees: as in the body every muscle and vein and artery hath its use. Thus all Israel is said to seek the Lord with their whole desire: 2 Chron. xv. 15, And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire.' It is said of Asa, that he sought the Lord with his whole heart, yet the high places were not taken away.'

2. Now, the reasons why we must keep the law with our whole heart are these following:--

[1.] He that giveth a part only to God giveth nothing to God, for that part that is reserved will in time draw the whole after it. The devil keepeth an interest in us as long as any one lust remaineth unmortified; as Pharaoh stood hucking; he would fain have a pawn of their return; first their children, then their flocks and herds, must

be left behind them. He knew this was the way to bring them back again. So Satan hath a pawn, and knoweth that all will fall to him at last: Hosea x. 2, Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty;' halting between God and idols. When men are not wholly and solely for God, but divided between him and other things, God will be jostled out at last. Grace is but a stranger, sin is a native, and therefore most likely to prevail, and by long use and custom is most strongly rooted. Herod did many things, but his Herodias drew him back into Satan's snare. A bird tied by the leg may flutter up and down and make some show of escape, but he is under command still. So may men have a conscience for God, and some affections for God, but the world and the flesh have the greater share in them. Therefore, though they do many things, yet still God hath no supreme interest in their souls; and therefore, when their darling lusts interpose, all God's interest in them signifieth nothing. As for instance, a man that is given to please the flesh, but in all other things findeth no difficulty, can worship, give alms, findeth no reluctancy to these duties, unless when they cross his living after the flesh, which in time swalloweth up his conscience and all his profession and practice. A man addicted to the world can deny his appetite, seem very serious in holy duties, but the world prevaileth, and in time maketh him weary of all other things.

[2.] The whole man is God's by every kind of right and title; and therefore, when he requireth the whole heart, he doth but require that which is his own. God gave us the whole by creation, preserveth the whole, redeemeth the whole, and promiseth to glorify the whole. If we had been mangled in creation, we would have been troubled--if born without hands or feet. If God should turn us off to ourselves to keep that part to ourselves which we reserved from him, or if he should make such a division at death, take a part to heaven, or if Christ had

bought part 1 Cor. vi. 20, Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's if you have had any good work upon you, God hath sanctified the whole in a gospel sense, that is every part: 1 Thes. v. 23, And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;; not only conscience, but will and affections, appetite and body. And you have given all to him for his use: I am my beloved's;' not a part, but the whole. He could not endure Ananias, that kept back part of the price; all is his due. When the world, pleasure, ambition, pride, desire of riches, unchaste love, desire a part in us, we may remember we have no affections to dispose of without God's leave. It is all his, and it is sacrilege to rob or detain any part from God. Shall I alienate that which is God's, to satisfy the world, the flesh, and the devil? It is his by creation, redemption, donation. When our flesh, or the world, or Satan, detain any part, this is, with Reuben, to go up unto our father's bed.

Use 1. First, to reprove those that do not give God the heart in their service; secondly, not the whole heart.

1. Not the heart, but content themselves with outward profession: Jer. xii. 2, Thou art near in their mouth, but far from their reins.' God is often in their speech, but they have no hearty affection. Never was there an age higher in notions and colder in practice of Christianity. The heart is all; it is the terminus actionum ad intra, et fons actionum ad extra. It is the bound of those actions that look inward; the senses report to the phantasy, that to the mind, and the mind counsels the heart: If wisdom enter the heart,' Prov. ii. 10. It is the well-spring of those actions that look outward to the life: Prov. iv. 23, Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of

life;' Mat. xv. 19, and Prov. iv. 4, Let thy heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live;' then other things will follow.

2. It reproves those that do not give God the whole heart, for he requireth that, and surely all is too little for so great and so good a master. God will have the heart, so that no part of it be left to others, or for ourselves to dispose of as we will: the true mother would not have the child divided, 1 Kings iii. 26. God will have all or nothing, he will not part stakes with Satan; but Satan, if he cannot have all, will be content with a part. But who are they that do not give God the whole heart?

[1.] Those that are for God in their consciences but not in their affections. Conscience many times taketh God's part. Their affections are for the world, but their consciences are for God, as convinced men that do some outward work commanded in the law, but they have no love to the work. This will not serve the turn, for whatever is done by constraint, or the mere compulsion of a natural conscience, can never hold long. Nature will return to its bias again, however men force themselves for a while to comply with something which God hath commanded. They do not take up his ways by choice, but upon compulsion and the urgings of conscience, which they no way liked.

[2.] Those that have their affections divided between God and the world, halting between two, they have some affection to spiritual things, the favour of God and holiness as the only means to make them happy, but the world and their lusts have the greater share. They are troubled a little, would have the favour of God, but upon their own conditions. The prevailing part of the soul bendeth them to carnal interests; as the person that was told that he must take up the cross and follow Christ, he is offended, Mat xi. 21; the young man turned away discontented when he heard the terms, Mat. xix. 21, 22. They like

God's offers, but not his conditions to come up fully to his mind. They are loath to enter into gospel bonds. These do not entirely give up themselves to God; they have but an affection in part to the comforts of the gospel, but not to the duties of the gospel.

[3.] Those that will do many things, but stick at one part of their duty to God. Men may suffer much for God, sacrifice some of their weaker lusts, but whilst any one sin remaineth unmodified there is possession kept for Satan; as Saul destroyed the Amalekites, but kept the fattest of the cattle, and spared Agag. Herod will not part with his Herodias: Ps. xviii. 23, David saith, I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.' Either some lust of the flesh, or of the eyes, or pride remaineth. There are some tender parts of the soul which are as the right hand and the right eye, men are loath to have them touched. They do not unfeignedly comply with God's whole will.

Use 2. To press you to give up the whole heart to God in a course of obedience.

Let us believe in God with all the heart: Acts viii. 32, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest,' &c.; and Prov. iii. 5, Trust in the Lord with all thy heart.' This is the main thing of Christianity, when there is not only a naked assent, but when we embrace Christ with the heart, and there is a full and free consent to take him to all the uses for which God hath appointed him. So for love: Deut. vi. 5, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' When we delight in God, and find full complacency in him as our all-sufficient portion, without reserving any part of our hearts for other things. So for obedience: 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for

the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts.' But now, how shall we know that we give God all the heart in an evangelical sense?

Ans. 1. When our purpose is to cleave to God alone, and to serve him with an entire obedience both of the inward and outward man, purely and sincerely, without hypocrisy: Ps. li. 6, Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom;' and Phil. iii. 3, For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.'

Ans. 2. When we do what we can by all good means to maintain our purpose, and are watchful and diligent, and serious in this purpose: 2 Kings x. 31, Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart, for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam which made Israel to sin.' See the contrary in Paul: Acts xxiv. 16, And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.' They bent all their studies and fervency of their spirit this way, with all earnestness of endeavour to come up to God's law.

Ans. 3. When we search out our defects, and bewail them with a kindly remorse, Rom. ii. 29; when we run by faith to Christ Jesus, and sue out our pardon and peace: 1 John ii. 1, My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not; and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'

SERMON XXXIX.

Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight.--Ver. 35.

DAVID in the former verses had begged for light, and now for strength to walk according to this light. We need not only light to know our way, but a heart to walk in it. Direction is necessary because of the blindness of our minds, and the effectual impulsions of grace are necessary because of the weakness of our hearts. It will not answer our duty to have a naked notion of truths, unless we embrace and pursue them. So accordingly we need a double assistance from God; the mind must be enlightened, the will moved and inclined. The work of a Christian lies not in depth of speculation, but in the height of practice. The excellency of divine grace consisteth in this, that God doth first teach what is to be done, and then make us to do what is taught, Make me to go in the path,' &c.

Here you have David's prayer, and an argument to enforce it.

1. His prayer, make me to go in the path of thy commandments.

2. His argument, for therein do I delight.

The argument is taken from his delight in the ways of God. This argument may be looked upon as the reason of making the request, or the reason of granting the request.

1. As the reason of asking. Those whose hearts are set upon obedience, they will be earnest for grace to perform it acceptably. Now, saith David, I would not be denied this request, for this is all my delight, to do thy will.

2. As the reason of granting. And there he may be supposed to lay forth his necessity and his hope. His necessity; though God had done much for

him, yet he needed more still. God had given him scire, knowledge to know his duty; velle, to delight; now he begs perficere, to practise, to bring it to an issue. Though he had grace in some measure, yet he still needed an increase; God must work in us both to will and to do, Phil. ii. 12. Sometimes God gives one where he gives not the other: Rom. vii. 18, To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.' Or else you may sup pose him here to lay forth his hope. The granting of one grace makes way for another; for God will perfect what he hath begun, and where he hath given a disposition to delight in his ways, he will give grace to walk in his precepts: John i. 16, charin anti charitos, Grace upon grace,' or grace after grace;' his giving grace to them is an argument why he will give more grace to them. Two things will be here discussed:--

[1.] The necessity of the efficacious assistance of grace, that we may walk worthy of God in all well-pleasing.

[2.] How acceptable a frame of heart it is when we are once brought to delight in the ways of God.

Doct. 1. For the first, that God from first to last doth make us to go in the path of his commandments.

David was a renewed man, a man that had gotten his heart into a good frame; for he owneth his delight in the paths of God's commandments, yet he begs for new strength and quickening, Make me to go;' Lead or walk me'--Sept.

First, That at first conversion God maketh us go in the path of his commandments; that is clear by scripture; for it is said, Eph. ii. 10, that we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' When we are renewed, we are as it were created over again; there is a power given us that we had not before to do this work. Clearly the apostle

doth not speak there of the first creation--the end of our first creation was to serve God--but he speaks of supernatural renovation; for he saith, We are created in Christ Jesus.' There was a twofold creation at first: Ex nihilo and ex inhabili materia; either that which God created out of nothing, or if out of pre-existent matter, yet such as was wholly unfit and indisposed for those things that were to be made of it. Now, this latter suits with us: We are created in Christ Jesus to good works;' that is, we were altogether indisposed before to that which is good. We have our natural powers, but they are wholly viciously inclined till the Lord worketh on us, and infuseth a principle of new life. Till then we cannot do anything that is spiritually good. But when the Lord createth us anew, he furnisheth us with an inward power and ability to do good. What David prays for, Make me to go in the way of thy commandments.' God promiseth, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' God puts his spirit, a new principle of grace. When the gospel is proposed to a man, his will must be determined by something, either by an object or a quality, not by the proposal merely of the object without; for the scripture shows there must be some work upon the heart, some divine quality infused within to incline and bend us to what is good. Well, then, first there must be an infusion of the principles of grace. In sinning, there the mischief began with an act. Adam sinned, and that infected his nature. But in grace the method is contrary; the principle must be before the action, God first sanctifieth our natures, and then we act holily; and this difference there is between acquired and infused habits: acquired habits follow action, for frequent acts beget a habit, as often swimming makes us expert in swimming, and much writing expert in writing; but gracious habits are infused, and so precede the act, as a wheel runs round, not

to make itself round, but because it is round. Indeed there is a further radiation of grace by frequent acts as the means which God blesseth. Now, by this first work of grace we have three advantages:--

1. An inclination and tendency towards what is good. As all natures imply a propensity to those things which agree to such a nature, as sparks fly upward, and a stone moves downward--it is their natural propensity--so in the new nature there is a new bent and tendency of heart, which is to live unto God, Gal. ii. 19; there is an inclination towards God and holy things; and therefore the apostle presseth them by virtue of this grace received to act according to the tendency of the new nature: Rom. vi. 13, Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead;' that is his argument. As soon as the life of grace is infused, the soul bends towards God.

2. A preparation of heart for holy actions. There is a principle that will carry them to it. These vessels are fitted and prepared for their master's use,' and are prepared unto every good work,' 2 Tim. ii. 21; they are fitted and rigged for all holy actions and employments: Eph. ii. 10, Created unto good works, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them.' He hath prepared them for us, and us to them. There is a suitableness in the new nature to what God requireth. As every creature is furnished with power and faculties suitable to those operations that belong to them, so when the Lord infuseth the principles of grace, and works upon the heart, we are suited to every good work, so that we need not new faculties, but new operations of grace to excite and move us. A ship that is rigged and fitted with sails ready for a voyage needs a pilot to guide and steer it; so we need influences of grace. Therefore, when the Spirit is shed upon us after wards, it is in another manner than upon the unregenerate. The unregenerate are objects of grace, but the renewed are instruments of grace; he works upon the one, but he

works by the other.

3. There is a power and an ability to do good works when we are renewed; if otherwise, one of God's most precious gifts would be in vain, if we were altogether without strength. That is the description of carnal nature, Rom. v. 6, We were without strength;' therefore there is a power which must be improved, not rested in: Gal. v. 25, If ye live in the spirit, walk in the spirit.' There is an operation that accompanieth every life, and if there be a life of grace there will be a walking; and Col. ii. 6, As ye have received Christ, so walk in him.' Grace received must not lie idle, but be put forth into act. Thus God creates and infuseth such divine qualities as may give us a tendency and preparation of heart, and strength to do that which may be pleasing to him.

Secondly, He vouchsafeth his quickening, actuating, assisting grace, for the improving these principles infused, that their operations may be carried forth with more success: Ezek. xxxvi. 27, I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' God gives not only life, but the constant motion of that life. Natural things do not act without his daily providential influence; and therefore it is said, Prov. xx. 12, God gives the hearing ear and the seeing eye;' not only doth give the eye and ear, the faculty, but the act of hearing and the act of seeing; he concurs to that: and therefore God concurs by his actual assistance, sometimes in a more liberal and plentiful manner, by the freer aids and assistances of his grace, and sometimes more sparingly, according to his own pleasure. He doth not only give us the habits of grace, He worketh all our works for us,' Isa. xxvi. 12.

Now this actual help is necessary--

1. Partly to direct us: Ps. lxxiii. 24, Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.' We need not only a

principle within and a rule without, but need also a guide. Though we have grace in our hearts, though we have the law of God to direct us, yet we need also a guide upon all occasions. The rule is the scripture, and the guide is the Spirit of God.

2. Partly to quicken and excite us by effectual motions. The heart of man is very changeable, and it is like the eye, easily discomposed and put out of frame. Deadness creeps upon us, and we drive on heavily in the work of God: Ps. cxix. 37, Quicken thou me in thy way.' God doth renew the vigour of the life of grace upon all occasions.

3. Partly to corroborate and strengthen that which we have received, and make it increase and grow in the soul, and more firmly rooted there, Eph. iii. 16. The apostle prays that God would strengthen you with might by his Spirit in the inner man.' The inward man, the frame of grace that we have received, needs to be strengthened, increased, and be more deeply rooted in the soul. So 1 Peter v. 10, The God of all grace make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.' Many words are used, to show how God is interested in maintaining and keeping afoot the grace he hath planted in the soul.

4. Partly in protecting and defending them against the incursion* and assaults of the devil. The regenerate are not only escaped out of his clutches, but appointed to be his judges, which an envious and proud spirit cannot endure; therefore he maligneth, assaulteth, and besiegeth them with temptations daily; therefore Christ prays, John xvii. 11, Keep through thy own name those whom thou hast given me.' When a city is besieged, fresh supplies are sent in; they are not kept to their standing provision: so it is not the ordinary power of God that doth preserve and keep us from danger; there is new relief and fresh strength: We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation,' 2 Peter i. 5. Now we experience the help we have from God,

partly by the change and frame of our heart, when we are acted by him, and when we are not. When God by the impulsions of his grace doth quicken and awaken our hearts, we are carried on with a great deal of earnestness and strength; but at other times we seem to be much bound, and have not those breathings from the Spirit of God to fill our sails, and carry us on with the same life and strength. Yea, in the same duty how is a Christian up and down! carried out sometimes with a great deal of zeal and warmth; but if God withdraw that assistance before the duty be over, how do the affections flag! So that we are like the wards of a lock, kept up while the key is turned, but fall again when the key is turned the other way. While the work of grace is powerful, we are kept in a warm and heavenly plight. Thus as to duties we need spiritual relief.

Likewise in temptations, when we are ready to fall into such a sin. with great proneness of heart, and the Lord quickens and excites us by his grace. It is often with a Christian as with David: Ps. lxxiii. 2, My feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipt;' even carried away by the violence of Satan, and importunate motions of our own lusts; then the Lord gives grace to help in a time of need,' Heb. iv. 16. In the original it is no more but this, Seasonable relief God vouchsafeth.

Object. Ay! but are we to do nothing when we are indisposed?

This case is often traversed in this psalm.

1. The precept of God falls upon us as reasonable creatures, and doth not consider whether we are disposed or indisposed; and God's influence is not our rule, but our help. We are to stir up ourselves; the Lord complains, Isa. lxiv. 7, There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of me;' and Timothy is bid to stir up the gift of God which is in him,' 2 Tim. i. 6. God's assistance will be best expected in a way of

doing; up and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee. When we stir up ourselves, and set ourselves to the work in the conscience of our duty, we can better expect God's help and assistance.

2. In great distempers there may be some pause. Elisha would not prophesy when he was under a passion of anger; therefore he calls for a minstrel to sing a psalm, 2 Kings iii. 13-15, and as he played upon an instrument, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. He was under a passion, offended with the king of Israel, therefore he would not prophesy until his spirit was composed. Certainly we are not to run headlong upon duties in the midst of these distempers. Sailing is more safely delayed in tune of an extreme storm. When the heart is put into some great disorder, in a great storm of spirit, the distemper should first be mourned for and prayed against.

The reasons why from first to last he must make us go in the way of his commandments.

1. God keeps this power in his own hands, that his grace might be all in all, and it is the glory of his actions always to set the crown upon grace's head. Not only those permanent and fixed habits which constitute the new man, but those daily supplies, without which the motions and operations of the spiritual life would be at a stand, are of grace. When the Lord reckons with his servants about the improvement of their talents, he doth not say, My industry, but, Lord, thy pound,' Luke xix. 18; he puts all the honour upon grace. So 1 Cor. xvi. 10, Not I, but the grace of God;' so Gal. ii. 20, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' So that still they are giving the glory to grace. Acts are more perfect than habits; therefore if we had only the power from God, and acts from ourselves, we should not give all to God. That acts are more perfect than the power is clear; it is more perfect to understand than to have a power to understand; power is in order to the

act, and the end is more noble than the means.

2. This is a very great encouragement to us to set upon the exercise of grace in the midst of weaknesses, and several difficulties and temptations wherewith we are encompassed. Because God will enable and assist us, he will not leave us to our standing strength, but he concurs: Phil. ii. 12, 13, Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.' Why? For it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.' When God will concur to the will and to the deed, to both, when we have wind and tide, he is very lazy that will not take his advantage and ply the oar then. And the apostle was not disheartened with the several conditions he was to run through in his passage to heaven: Phil. iv. 13, I can do all things through Christ that strengthened me.' When we have such an able second--God is at our right hand,' Ps. xvi. 8--we need not be so dismayed with temptations and difficulties we meet with in the progress of our duty; though we have many lets and hindrances, yet God will cause us to walk in his ways.

3. This keeps us humble and lowly in our own conceit, and that is very necessary for us; for pride is that sin which cleaves to us all our life, and is called pride of life,' and lasts as long as life lasts.

How doth this keep us humble and lowly? Partly thus: because we have all by gift; What hast thou that thou hast not received?' 1 Cor. iv. 7. All the strength that we have is but borrowed; and who will be proud that is more in debt than others? We would laugh at a groom that is proud of his master's horse. All grace comes from God. Shall we usurp the honour due to God? And partly because we have but from hand to mouth. Though we have all from God, yet we should soon grow proud if God did not diet us, and give out renewed evidences of his love and care over us by degrees, some now, some then, by fresh influences and

acts of grace. Look, as David prays, Ps. lix. 11, of his outward enemies, Destroy them not, O Lord, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power, and bring them down.' Oh! if all enemies were destroyed at once, the people would forget thee, the deliverance would be past, antiquated, and out of date, and would not be so freshly thought of, nor produce such warm affections in the hearts of his people. So it is true in the spiritual world, God doth not destroy all at once, but brings down our spiritual enemies, that we may acknowledge whence we have it. And partly because this is a means to make us sensible of the mutability of our nature; for when all depends upon God, his coming and going, it will make us see what poor creatures we are of ourselves. When he comes, we are able to do something; when he goes, what poor creatures are we! 2 Chron. xxxii. 31, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.' When we are renewed yet are not fully recovered, there is a great deal of tang and taste of the old leaven, and if God leave us we shall soon sin; whereas if we were carried on with an even constant tenor of grace that is in our own keeping, we should be proud.

4. It endears the heart to God, and God to the heart, by acts of friend ship and familiarity, as it extracts from us acts of prayer and dependence, and as we receive new supplies and daily influences of grace from him. God is more endeared to the soul by his multiplied free gifts. Look, as at every lifting up of the foot there are new influences of life go to that stirring and motion, so all in the spiritual life are his acts of grace. If so much rain fell in one day as would suffice for seven years, there would be no notice taken of God's acts of providence; God would not have such witness to keep up his memory to the sons of men. So here; if we had all graces in our souls, and needed not new excitement, but he dispensed all at once, God

and we should grow strangers. When the prodigal has his portion in his own hands, he leaves his father: and therefore there must be continual acts of kindness to maintain a holy friendship between God and us.

Use 1. Look after renewing grace; see whether there be a principle of life in you or no, whether you be his workmanship in Christ Jesus. Better never be his creature if not a new creature; a dog is in a better condition. You can do nothing in the spiritual life until there be a principle; in vain to expect new operation before a new creation be passed upon you. The stream cannot be maintained without the spring.

2. Let us^pray for strength upon all occasions, and beg the renewings of God's efficacious grace, that we may avoid sin, and be ready to every good work. Alas! there are many discouragements from without, and sundry baits which tickle the flesh, and would seduce us from our duty. Unless the Lord stand by us, and protect and strengthen us within, deadness will soon creep upon us, and our heart run out of order. Look after new influences of grace; this will make you ready to every good work; not only the remote preparation, but the furniture of the faculties and abilities: Lo I come to do thy will;' and this will make you fruitful, otherwise you will be as dry trees in God's garden; and this will make you lively and constant, not off and on, but fixed with God.

3. If all depends upon God, then let us not by any negligence of ours, or by presumptuous sins, provoke God to withdraw his assisting grace from us. This is the apostle's meaning when he saith, Phil. ii. 12, 13, Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,' &c. Oh! take heed; go about the business of religion with holy caution and jealousy over yourselves, and fear the Lord's displeasure, for all depends upon him. Dependence among men begets observance; where men have their meat, drink, clothing, they will be careful to please there. So work out your

salvation, &c., for it is God that worketh in you,' &c. You have all from God; the business of the spiritual life will be interrupted and be at a stand if God withhold his grace. Every sin weakens that you have already, and provokes God to withhold his hand that he will not give more. That which is the greatest ground of comfort and confidence is always the greatest ground of fear and trembling. It is a ground of great comfort and confidence in the spiritual life that he will help us in every action of ours; and it is a ground also of the greatest fear and trembling, that we should be careful not to offend him upon whom all depends.

The second point:--

Doct. 2. That they which delight in God's commandments will beg his gracious assistance, and are most likely to speed in their requests.

I make it to be both the reason of asking and the reason of granting.

First, The reason of asking.

1. What is this delight in God?' What is necessary to it?

2. What are the fruits and effects of it? First, What is necessary to it?

1. A new nature, for what we do naturally we do with complacency and delight. That which is forced and done against the grain and bent of our hearts can never be delightful, and therefore there needs a principle of grace within: Ps. cxii. 1, Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.' Where there is true grace and the fear of God, there we will delight greatly. So Rom. vii. 22, I delight in the law of God after the inward man.' Where there is an inner man, a frame of grace in the heart, that will bring delight. See the character of a blessed man: Ps. i. 2, His delight is in the law of the Lord.' Quite contrary to the hypocrite. He may act from compulsions and urgings of conscience, from legal bondage: it may

be a sin-offering, but it is not a thank-offering; he cannot do it with that delight and complacency that God hath required. Job. xxvii. 10 it is said, Will he always call upon God? will he delight himself in the Almighty?' In his pang, in his distress, when his conscience pincheth him sore, he will be calling upon God. Ay! but hath he any delight in God? He wants sincere grace. Some time he may come with his flocks and herds to seek the Lord: Hosea v. 6, And cry, Arise, Lord save us,' Jer. ii. 27. Some unwilling services he may perform upon foreign reasons, from constraint, from his affliction and anguish of soul; but these things are never done with delight; there needs then a principle of grace.

2. Peace of conscience, or a sense of our reconciliation with God, is very necessary to this delight in the ways of God: Rom. v. 11, We joy in God as those that have received the atonement.' Christ hath made the atonement. Now, when we receive the atonement, that is, are possessed of it, and look upon ourselves as involved in the reconciliation Christ hath made for us, then we joy in God. The joy of a good conscience is necessary to this delight in the ways of God.

3. A good frame of heart must be kept up, for the joy of a Christian may be impaired by his own folly and prevalency of carnal distempers. There is dullness and a damp that is apt to creep upon us; either by carnal pleasure, or worldly lusts and cares, we may abate of our cheer fulness. Christ tells us, Luke xxi. 34, that both of them overcharge the heart. Or some presumptuous sin lately committed, when the weight of it lieth upon the conscience, we lose this free spirit: Ps. li. 12, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit;' our delight is quenched, and we lose that free spirit which otherwise we should have. And therefore we must watch against carnal distempers, and also presumptuous sins, that we may not lose our

liberty and our comfortableness in God's service; for when a Christian hath a good frame of heart, he is filled as with gladness, and the joy of the Lord is as oil to the wheels, and it strengthens his affections, and he is carried on with a great deal of cheerfulness.

4. There is needful, too, some experience; for besides the joy of God, there is the inward pleasure of a good conversation. The ways of God are all ways of pleasantness to them that walk in them, Prov. iii. 17. They which will make trial will find Christ's yoke easy; yea, they will find a sweetness in God's ways beyond whatever they could think or expect. Some experience of the pleasantness in the paths of wisdom breeds great delight.

Secondly, What are the effects of this delight?

1. A cheerfulness of spirit, a ready obedience: Ps. xl. 8, I delight to do thy will, my God.' They find more solid joy in living holily than in all the pleasure of sin and vanity of the world; therefore they cheerfully practise that which God requireth of them.

2. They are full of joy and gladness in all their approaches to God: Ps. cxxii. 1, I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.' Oh! then they can go to God, and draw off from the distractions of this world, that they may unbosom themselves, that they may be in God's company, either in public or private.

3. They are weaned from earthly pleasures. When they have tasted of this hidden manna, the garlic and onions of Egypt lose their relish; and they find more sweetness, more rejoicing, in the testimony of their consciences, than ever they could find in the world. It is their meat and drink to do the will of God, to be just, holy, temperate, strict, to walk closely with God; here is their pleasure and delight of their souls: John iv. 34, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.'

Now the reasons of this. They which have their hearts set upon holiness must have delight. A man whose heart is set upon earthly things will come and howl for corn, wine, and oil, outward enjoyments, Hosea vii.; and a man that makes a loose profession of religion would fain be feasted with comforts, and eased of the smart of his conscience; he loves to hear of the privilege part of Christianity; but they come not to God with a true heart, whatever profession they make, Heb. x. 27. They embrace Christ as Judas kissed him, to betray him, or as Joab embraced Amasa, that he might smite him under the fifth rib; so these are so earnest for pardon of sin, and the privilege part of Christianity, but mind not the higher part, which is sanctification.

But now a man that is fallen in love with holiness, and whose heart is sincerely bent to God, desires grace to incline his heart to God and the ways of God, and keep exactly with him.

Secondly, As this is the reason of asking, so likewise of granting, Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight.' Take four considerations for this:--

1. God will add grace to grace. When God hath given the will, he will give the deed, further grace, to add new influences to his own seed. We tell God of the dispositions that are in our hearts, that he may perfect them, and ripen his own seed: John i. 16, Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace;' grace upon grace, or grace after grace. God's giving one grace is an argument why he will give more grace.

2. God looks after affection rather than action. Sometimes he takes the will for the deed, but never the deed for the will. Where there is a will and delight in his ways, that is it which is most acceptable to him. Look, as to love sin is more than to commit it--a man may commit it out of frailty, but he that loves and cherisheth it is exceeding

bad--so where there is delight in the ways of God, and the soul is gained to them. This is that God looks after, the affection.

3. Of all our affections delight and complacency is most acceptable. The promise is made to such: Ps. xxxvii. 4, Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desire of thine heart.' It is a slander that the hypocrite brings upon God: Job xxxiv. 9, He hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.' There is a great deal of profit, for God looks to the affection, and of all affections to the delight.

4. When this delight is not set upon privileges, but upon grace and obedience, this is more acceptable to God, I delight in thy ways.' When we set upon obedience it is a sign we mind God's interest more than our own comfort; that is our own interest, but subjection to God and holiness, that is for his glory; therefore, when the heart is set upon obedience, then he will give in supplies of grace.

Use. Oh! that we could say that we take joy and pleasure in the way of his commandments: Thou hast given me delight in thy ways, give me strength to keep them. To corrupt nature the ways of God are burdensome, but to his children the commandments of God are not grievous;' we shall not then want influences of grace.

SERMON XL.

Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness--Ver. 36.

IN the former verses David had asked understanding and direction to know the Lord's will; now he asketh an inclination of heart to do the Lord's will,

The understanding needs not only to be enlightened, but the will to be moved and changed.

Man's heart is of its own accord averse from God and holiness, even then when the wit is most refined, and the understanding is stocked and stored with high notions about it; therefore, David doth not only say, Give me understanding,' but Incline my heart.' We can be worldly of ourselves, but we cannot be holy and heavenly of ourselves; that must be asked of him who is the father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.' They that plead for the power of nature shut out the use of prayer; for if by nature we could determine ourselves to that which is good, there would be no need of grace; and if there be no need of grace, there is no use of prayer. But Austin hath said well, Natura vera confessione, non falsa defensione, opus habet--we need rather to confess our weakness than defend our strength. Thus doth David, and so will every broken-hearted Christian that hath had an experience of the inclinations of his own soul; he will come to God and say, Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.'

In which words there is something implied and something expressed. That which is implied is a confession; that which is expressed is a supplication. That which he confesseth is the natural inclination of

his heart to worldly things, and by consequence to all evil; for every sin receiveth life and strength from worldly inclinations. That which he begs is, that the full bent and consent of his heart may carry him out to God's testimonies. Or, briefly, here is--

1. The thing asked, incline my heart.

2. The object of this inclination, expressed positively, unto thy testimonies; negatively, and not unto covetousness.

Here is the object to which, and the object from which. To which, Incline me to thy testimonies,' and suffer me not to decline to worldly objects, expressed here by the lust which is most conversant about them, covetousness.'

Let me explain them more fully. Incline my heart;' the word implies--

1. Our natural obstinacy and disobedience to God's law; for if the heart of man were naturally prone, and of its own accord ready to obedience, it were in vain said to God, Incline my heart.' Ay! but till God bend us the other way we lie averse and awkward from his commandments. As God is said here to incline us, so, John vi. 44, he is said to draw us. There is a corrupt will which hangs back, and desires anything rather than that which is right. We need to be drawn and bent again like a crooked stick the other way.

2. It implies God's gracious and powerful act upon the soul, where by the heart is fixed and set to that which is good, when there is a proneness another way; this is the fruit of effectual grace.

Now let us see when the heart is inclined, and how this is brought to pass.

1. When is the heart said to be inclined? I answer--When the habitual bent of our affections is more to holiness than to worldly things; for the power of sin stands in the love of it, and so doth our aptness for grace in the love of it, or in the bent of the will, the strength of

desire and affections by which we are carried out after it. Amor meus est pondus meum, eo feror quocunque feror--our love is the weight that is upon our souls. Nothing can be done well that is not done sweetly. Then are we inclined, when our affections have a proneness and propension to that which is good. Now these affections must be more to holiness than to worldly things; for by the prevalency is grace determined, if the preponderating part of the soul be for God. It is not an equal poise; we are always standing between two parties. There is God and the world; a sensitive good drawing one way, and there is a spiritual good draws us another way. Now grace prevails when the scales are cast on grace's side. I say it is the habitual bent, not for a pang; the heart must be set to seek the Lord: 1 Chron. xxii. 19, Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God;' and the course of our endeavours, the strength and stream of our souls runs out this way; then is the heart said to be inclined to God's testimonies.

2. How is it brought to pass? or how doth God thus reduce and frame our hearts to the obedience of his will? There are two ways which God useth--by the word and by his Spirit, by persuasion and by power; they shall be taught of God,' and they are drawn of God:' John vi. 44, The Lord will allure Japheth;' so he works by persuasion, Gen. ix. 27; and then by power, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, I will cause you to walk in my ways,' &c. God tempers an irresistible strength and sweetness together, fortiler pro te, Domine, suaviter pro me. He worketh as God, therefore he works strongly and invincibly; but he persuades men as men, therefore he propounds reasons and arguments, goes to work by way of persuasion; strongly according to his own nature, sweetly according to man's, by persuasions accompanied by the secret efficacy of his own grace. First he gives weighty reasons, he casts in weight after weight till the scales be turned; then he makes all effectual by his Spirit.

Morally he works, because God will preserve man's nature and the principles thereof; therefore he doth not work by violence, but by a sweet inclination, alluring and speaking comfortably unto us: Hosea xi. 4, I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.' God knows all the wards of man's heart, and what kind of keys will fit the lock; therefore he suits such arguments as may work upon us, and take us in our month, and then really and prevailingly, so as the effect may follow. Surely God hath more hand in good than Satan hath in evil; otherwise man were as praise worthy for doing good as reprovable for doing evil. God inclines the heart to that which is good, and persuades it by his grace. God knows how to alter the course of our affections by his secret power, therefore doth not only lead, but draw, works intimately upon the heart.

Unto thy testimonies, so the word of God is called, for it testifieth of his will. There we have a clear proof and testimony how God stands affected to every man, what kind of affection God hath to him.

And not to covetousness. Mark the phrase incline,' &c. Doth God incline us to covetousness? No; but he permits us to the inclinations of our own hearts, justly denying his grace to those that do offend him, and upon the suspension of his grace nature is left to her own sway: the presence of the master or pilot saves the ship, his absence is the cause of the shipwreck. And so the schools say, God inclines to good efficienter, working it in us; and to evil deficienter, withdrawing his grace from us. A like expression you have Ps. cxli. 4, Incline not my heart to any evil thing.' God may as a lord do what he pleaseth with his own; and as a just judge may give over our hearts to their own natural wicked inclination; therefore David deprecates it as a judicial act.

Not to covetousness.' This is mentioned because our too much love to

worldly things is the special hindrance of obedience; it takes off our hearts from the love and care of it. And then, when he saith Not to covetousness,' he herein implies his own esteem and choice, as preferring God's testimonies above all riches; and possibly intimates the sincerity of his aims, that he would not serve God for temporal advantages and worldly respects. Satan accuseth Job for such a perverse respect: Job i. 9, Doth Job serve God for nought?' David, to prevent such a surmise, that he was not led by any thought of gain to desire godliness, saith, To thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.'

Two points offer themselves from these words:--

1. That it is God alone that sets our hearts right, or inclines them from their carnal bent to his own testimonies.

2. That covetousness, or the flagrant desire of worldly things, is a great let or hindrance from complying with God's testimonies.

Doct. 1. That it is God alone that sets our hearts right, or inclines them from their carnal bent to his own testimonies.

That I shall illustrate by these considerations:--

First, The heart of man must have an object unto which it is inclined or whereunto it doth cleave; for it is like a sponge, that being thirsty in itself, sucks in moisture from other things; it is a chaos of desires, seeking to be filled with something from without. We were made for another, to be happy in the enjoyment of a being without us; therefore man must have something to love; for the affections of the soul cannot lie idle and without an object: Ps. iv. 6, The many will say, who will show us any good?' We all hunt about for a match for our affections, for some good to satisfy us.

Secondly, The heart being destitute of grace, is wholly carried out to temporal things. Why? Because they are next at hand, and suit best with our fleshly natures. I say, out of a despair of meeting with better, we

take up with those objects that we are most conversant about, which are carnal contentments, the good of which we can apprehend and relish with our natural faculties. There are two reasons of the addictedness that is in man's heart to temporal things--(1.) Natural inclination; and (2.) Inveterate custom.

1. Natural inclination. That there is a greater proneness in us to evil than good is clear, not only by scripture but by plain experience. Now whence is it that we are thus viciously disposed? The soul being created by God, he infuseth no evil into it, for that would not stand with the holiness of his nature. I answer--Though the soul be created by God, yet it is created destitute of grace or original righteousness; and being destitute of the image of God, or original righteousness, can only close with things present and known, having no other light and principle to guide it. Now things known and things present, they are the pleasures of the body, as meats, drinks, natural generation, wealth, and honour. Now, these being wholly minded, avert us from the love and study of supernatural things. It is true these things are good in themselves, and that self-love which carrieth us out to them is naturally good; but though it be naturally good, it proves morally evil when the love of these things destroys the love of God, which must needs be if we be destitute of grace. The love of ourselves and outward things necessarily grows inordinate, not being guided and directed by grace. It is a rule among divines, Si non inest quod inesse deberet, necessario inerit quod non inesse deberet--a privation falling upon an active subject (such as the soul of man is) doth necessarily infer disorder and irregularity in its operations. Take away light from the air, it must be dark, and when the sun is down it must be night. So it is if grace be taken away. The great work of grace is to make God our last end and our chiefest good. Now, this last end being changed, all

things must needs run into disorder with man. Why? For the last end is principium universalissimum, the most universal principle upon which all moral perfections depend. Look, as Adam and Eve, after they had eaten the forbidden fruit, forfeited the image of God, and were polluted, so we. Why? Did God infuse pollution and filthiness in them? or had the fruit any such poisonous quality? No; their last end was changed, which is the great principle that runs through all our actions; and when our end is changed, then all runs to disorder. They fell from God, whom be fore they made their chiefest good, and their last end. I say, they fell from God as envious, false, and wishing ill to them; and by the devil's instigation turned to the creature to find happiness in them, against the express will and command of God. As the first man was infected, so are all men wholly perverted, for sin still consists in a conversion from God to the creature, Jer. ii. 13; 2 Tim. iii. 4. By the change of our end all moral goodness is lost, for all means are subordinate to the last end, and are determined by it. Now necessarily thus it will be without grace; there will be a conversion of a man to the creature and the body, with the conveniences and comforts thereof; the interest and concernments of the body are set up instead of God. For though the soul cometh down from the superior world, yet it soon forgets its divine original, and being put into the body, it conforms itself to the body, and only adheres to objects visible and corporeal. As water, being put into a square vessel, hath a square form, into a round vessel, hath a round form, so the soul, being infused into the body, is led by it, and accommodates all its faculties and operations to the welfare of the body. And thence comes our ignorance, averseness of soul from holiness, unruliness of appetite, and inclination to sensual things. In short, without grace, a man's mind is carried headlong after worldly vanities. As water runs where it

finds a passage, so the soul of man, being destitute of the image of God, finds a passage towards temporal things, and so runs out that way.

2. As man is thus corrupted and prone to worldly objects by natural inclination, so by inveterate custom. As soon as we are born we follow our sensual appetite, and the first years of man's life are merely governed by sense; and the pleasures thereof are born and bred up with us, and deeply engraven in our natures; and by constant living in the world, conversing with corporeal objects, the taint increaseth upon us, and so we are more deeply dyed and settled in a worldly frame, and we live in the pursuit of honour, gain, and pleasure, according as the particular temper of our bodies and course of our interest do determine us: Jer. xiii. 23, Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.' Custom is as another nature, and hardly left. We find by experience, the more we are accustomed to any course of life, the more we delight in it, and are weaned from it with a very great difficulty. Every act disposeth the soul to the habit, and after the habit or custom is produced, then every new deliberate act adds a stiffness of bent or sway unto the faculty into which the custom is seated; and the longer this evil custom is continued the more easily are we carried away with temptations that suit it, and more hardly swayed to the contrary. Now this stiffness of will in a carnal course is that which the scripture calls hardness of heart and a heart of stone, for a man is ensnared by these customs; and of all customs, covetousness or worldliness is the most dangerous. Why? Because this is a sin of more credit and less infamy in the world, and this will multiply its acts in the soul most, and works incessantly: Having hearts exercised with covetous practices,' 2 Peter ii. 14.

Well, then, these lusts being born and bred up with us from our

infancy, they plead prescription. Religion, that comes afterward, and finds us biassed and prepossessed with other inclinations, which by reason of long use is not easily broken and shaken off; as upon trial, whenever we are called upon, or begin to apply ourselves to the ways of life, we shall be easily sensible of this stiffness of heart and obstinacy that bends us another way.

Thirdly, The heart being thus deeply engaged to temporal things, or things base and earthly, it cannot be set upon that which is spiritual and heavenly; for David propounds these things here as inconsistent, To thy testimonies Lord, and not to covetousness.' If the heart be addicted to worldly things, it is necessarily averse from God and his testimonies; for the habitual bent of the heart to any one sin is inconsistent with grace or a thorough obedience to God's will. That which the heart is inclined to hath the throne. Now, when we inquire after grace, Have I grace or no? have I the work of God upon my heart? the question is not what there is of God in the heart, but whether that of God hath the throne. Something of God is in the heart of the wickedest man that is, and something of sin in the best heart that is; therefore which way is the sway, the bent, the habitual and prevailing inclination of the soul? what hath the dominion? Sin hath not the dominion, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' Rom. vi. 14. What hath the prevalency of the heart? Though the conscience takes part with God, as it may strongly in a wicked man, yet which way is the bent of our souls? And as all sin in its reign is inconsistent with grace, so much more worldly affections: Mat. vi, 24, No man can serve two masters,' &c. It is as inconsistent as for a man to look two ways at once. And the Chaldee on this very text, Incline my heart to thy testimonies,' reads it, and not unto mammon.' You cannot be inclined to God and mammon: 1 John ii. 15, If any man love the world, the love of

the Father is not in him.' The world draws men from the love of God and from his service, and labour after temporal things deadens and hindereth us from looking after things which are eternal, and we lose the relish of things to come and things spiritual, the more the love of worldly things doth increase upon us. The schoolmen say of worldliness, it is that which most of all draws us off from God as our last end and chief good, and makes us cleave to the creature; therefore it is called adultery' and idolatry:' adultery, James iv. 4, as it draws away our love, delight, and complacency from God; and idolatry, Col. iii. 5, as it diverts our trust, and placeth it in wealth and sublunary things.

The glutton or sensualist's love is withdrawn from God, and therefore his belly is said to be his god, Phil. iii. 19. Interpretatively that is a man's God which is the last end of his actions, and upon which all his thoughts, affections, and endeavours run most. But now covetousness is not only a spiritual fornication, and adultery which draws off our affections from God, but idolatry. Considering our relation in the covenant, it is spiritual adultery; and above this, it is idolatry, because men think they can never be happy, nor have any comfortable being, un less they have a great portion of these outward things.

Fourthly, This frame of heart cannot be altered until we be changed by God's grace. Why? For there is no principle remaining in us that can alter this frame, or make us so far unsatisfied with our present state as to look after other things, that can break the force of our natural and customary inclinations. There are three things which lie against the change of the heart towards God.

1. There is nature, which wholly carrieth us to please the flesh, and inordinately to seek the good of the body. Now nature cannot rise higher than itself, and determine itself to things above its sphere and compass; as the philosopher saith of water, it cannot be forced to rise

higher than its fountain. Our actions cannot exceed their principle, which is self-love. But besides this--

2. There is custom added to nature, which makes it more stiff and obstinate; so that if it may be supposed that conscience is sensible of our mistake and ill choice, and some weighty considerations should be propounded to us, as it is easy to show that eternal things are far better than temporal, and spiritual things than carnal;--if conscience, I say, should come in, and represent the ill state wherein we are, yet because the poise of our hearts doth customarily carry us another way, we are not inclined to God, or to the concernments of eternal life; for it is not argument merely will do it. In a pair of scales, though the weights be equal, yet if the scales be not equal there may be wrong done; so though the argument be never so powerful, yet if the heart that weighs them be customarily engaged and carried away with the momentary and cursory delights of the flesh, alas! these will sway us, and affect us more than all those pure, everlasting delights we may enjoy by communion with God. In all reason a lesser good should not be preferred before a greater; and worldly delights, which are not only base and dreggy, but also short and vanishing, and the occasion of much evil to us, these should not be preferred before eternal happiness. But here lies our misery, though the pleasures which affect us be less in themselves, yet our habitual propension and customary inclination to them is greater. Look, as in a pair of balances, though the weight of the one side be less, yet if the scales be not even and equally pendant, if the beam be longer on the side than the other, the lesser weight on the longer side of the beam will overpoise the greater weight on the shorter side; so while the soul is perverted by evil customs, and the heart doth hang more to temporal things than to spiritual and eternal, certainly there must be something from above that must

determine us. Man's heart can never be swayed until the Lord joins the assistance of his grace.

3. There is God's curse, or penal hardness. For as nature groweth into custom, so by our sinful customs God is provoked, and doth with draw those common influences of grace by which our condition might be bettered, and in justice he gives up our hearts to their own sway; Hosea iv. 17, Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone;' Ps. lxxxi. 12, So I gave them up unto their own heart's lusts, and they walked in their own counsels.' So that we have not those frequent checks and gripes of conscience, those warnings and good thoughts as before. Let him alone;' providence, let him alone; conscience, let him alone; and the sinner is left to his own will. Therefore, out of all the work remaineth to be God's alone, who only hath authority to pardon, and power to cure the distempers of our hearts; he hath authority to take off that judicial hardness which he as a judge may continue upon us, and which the saints deprecate in these forms of speech, Incline my heart to thy testimonies,' &c. And so he hath power to take off the natural and customary hardness which is in us, For the heart of man is in his hand as the rivers of water,' Prov. xxi. 1, and can as easily draw us out to good as water followeth when the trench is cut. But what needeth more arguing in the case? David saith here, Lord, incline mine heart; and 1 Kings viii. 58, The Lord be with us, that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and keep his commandment.' It is God's work alone to bend the crooked stick the other way. But you will say, this work sometimes is ascribed to man; for instance, ver. 112 of this psalm, I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end;' and Josh. xxiv. 23, Incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.'

I answer--These places do only note our subordinate operation, or the

voluntary motion and resolution on our part. When God hath bent us and inclined us to do his will, when God hath made our love to act, and poised us to that which is spiritual and good, then we do incline, we bend our hearts this way. So that all these expressions do not imply a co-ordinate but subordinate operation on man's part.

Fifthly, In this change there is a weakening of the old inclination to carnal vanities, and there is a new bent and frame of heart bestowed upon us. The heart is taken off from the love of base objects, and then fixed upon that which is good: Deut. xxx. 6, The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart,' &c. First, there is a circumcising, a paring away of the fleshliness of the heart; then an unfeigned love to God. So Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' First the untowardness of the will and affections is removed, and then a heart is given to us, which is tract able and pliable for gracious purposes. First the weeds are plucked up, then we are planted wholly with a right seed. Or first we cast off the old man,' then put on the new,' Eph. iv. 22, 23. The natural inbred corruption, which daily grows worse and worse, is more and more done away, as we cast off the old rotten garment when we put on the new.

Sixthly, When our hearts are thus changed, they are ever and anon apt to return to the old bent and bias again. For David, a renewed man, he doth thus speak to God, O Lord, incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness.' He found his heart bowing and warping back again, and being sensible of the distemper, complains of it to God. The inclination that is in them to evil is not so lost to the best of God's children, but it will return unless God still draw us after him. The spouse saith, Cant. i. 4, Draw me, and we will run after thee.' The

spouse of Christ, those that were already taken into communion with him, they say, Draw me.' This is not a work to be done once and no more, but often to be renewed and repeated in the soul; for there are some relics of our natural averseness from God, and enmity to the yoke of his word, yet left in the heart: Gal. v. 17, The flesh lusteth against the spirit.' There are two active principles within us, and they are always warring one upon another. Therefore there is need not only to be inclined at first, and drawn towards God, but we must go to him again and again, and pray to him daily that he would continue the bent of our hearts right, and weaken carnal affections, that we may mind better things.

Use 1. The use is to set you right in point of doctrine as to the necessity of grace, to bring us into a state of doing God's will; because some do grant the necessity of grace in words, but in deed they make it void.

Pelagius at first gave all to nature, acknowledged no necessity of divine grace; but when this proud doctrine found little countenance, he called nature by the name of grace; and when that deceit was discovered, he acknowledged no other grace but outward instruction, or the benefit of external revelation, that a man might by the word of God know and be put in mind of his duty. Being yet driven further, he acknowledged the grace of pardon, and before a man could do anything acceptably there was a necessity of the remission of sin, and then he might obey God perfectly. But that not sufficing, he acknowledged another grace, the example of Christ, which doth both secure our rule and encourage our practice; and so made the grace of Christ consist, not in the secret efficacy of his Spirit, but only in the example of Christ. But being driven further to acknowledge the same internal grace (I mean, his followers), they made it to consist in some illumination

of the understanding, or some moral persuasion, by probable argument to excite the will; and this not absolutely necessary, but only for facilitation, as a horse to a journey, which otherwise a man might go on foot. Ay! but the law was impossible through our flesh.' Rom. viii.

3. But all this is short of that divine grace that is necessary.

Now, there are others grant the secret influences of God's grace, but make the will of man be to a co-ordinate cause with God; namely, that God doth propound the object, hold forth inducing considerations, give some remote power and assistance; but still there is an indifferency in the will of man to accept and refuse as liketh him best. Be sides all this, there is a prevailing efficacy, or a real influence from the Spirit of God on the will, whereby it is moved infallibly and certainly to close with those things which God propounds unto him. God worketh efficaciously and determinately, not leaving it to the liberty of man's will to choose or refuse it, but man is determined, inclined, and actually poised by the grace of God to that which is good.

Use 2. To press you to lay to heart these things.--(1.) Be sensible of the strength and sway of thy affections to temporal objects; there the work begins. And till we have a sight of the disease, we are not careful after a remedy. David, though regenerate, took notice of some worldly tendencies in his heart; and if we observe our hearts, we shall find so. Paul groaned under the relics of the flesh, and so should we under our bondage by sin. (2.) And then bewail it to the Lord, I am as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke,' Jer. xxxi. 18, to bewail this stiffness of heart, and the treachery of sin, whereby we are enchanted, wholly bent to that which is evil. (3.) And observe the abating of this strength of affection, and weaning of thy soul from such desires; for then the work of grace goes on when we begin to savour other things, and have-inclinations of soul towards that which is heavenly and

spiritual: They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit,'

(4.) And then to press you to perpetual watchfulness over your own hearts, that you do not return to your old bent and bias again; for certainly thus they will do if we do not keep a severe hand over them, and be lifting up our affections to things that are above, where God is, and Christ at the right hand of God.

SERMON XLI.

And not unto covetousness.--Ver. 36.

Doct. 2. That covetousness, or an inordinate desire of worldly things, is the great let or hindrance to complying with God's testimonies.

By way of proof, I need to produce but that scripture, 1 John v. 3, 4, For this is |the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous; for whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.' The reason implies that if We had a greater conquest over worldly affections, it would not be so grievous to us to keep God's commandments; for the apostle's argument is built upon this supposition, that God's commands are only burdensome to them that lie under the power of carnal affections. All the difficulty in obedience cometh from our temptations to the contrary. Now all or most temptations from Satan and our own flesh have their strength from the world, and its suitableness to our affections. Master your love to the world, and temptations lose their strength.

To make this more clear, let us--

1. What is covetousness.

2. How it hindereth from complying with God's testimonies.

First, What is covetousness? I shall give the nature, the causes, the discoveries of it.

First, the nature of it. It is an inordinate desire of having more wealth than the Lord alloweth in the fair course of his providence, and a delight in worldly things as our chiefest good.

1. There is an unsatisfied desire of having more. We may desire temporal good things for necessity and service. We carry about earthly tabernacles, that must be supported with earthly things, and therefore

God alloweth us to seek them in a moderate way. But now when these desires grow vehement and impatient of check, and by an immodest importunity are still craving for more, it is an evil disease, and it must be looked unto in time, or it will prove baneful to the soul. There is a vital heat necessary to our preservation, and there are un natural predatorious heats which argue a distemper. See how this desire is expressed in scripture: 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, He that will be rich falls into temptation and a snare,' &c. He doth not say, He that is rich, but, He that will be rich; he that hath fixed that as his scope, and makes that his business; for the will is known by fixedness of intention, and earnestness of prosecution: he that makes it his work to grow great in the world. So Prov. xv. 27, He that is greedy of gain troubles his own house.' Desires are the vigorous motions of the will; when they are eager, impatient, and immoderate, then they discover this evil inclination of soul. So Eccles. v. 10, He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase. This is also vanity.' There is a spiritual dropsy, when our desires grow the more the more we receive and enjoy; as fire by the addition of new fuel grows more fierce the more the flame increaseth. The contrary to this is expressed by Agur, and should be the temper of every gracious heart: Prov. xxx. 8, Give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me.' As to worldly things we should be indifferent, and refer ourselves to the fair allowance of God's providence, that he might carve out our portion, and do by us according to his own pleasure.

2. Not only this greedy thirst discovereth covetousness, but a complacency, delight, and acquiescency of soul in worldly enjoyments. So Christ Jesus in his parable against covetousness brings in a carnal wretch singing lullabys to his soul: Luke xii. 19, Soul, thou hast much

goods laid up for many years; take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' He doth not wish for more, but pleaseth himself with what he had already, and yet in his language would Christ impersonate and set forth the dispositions of a covetous heart. So we are cautioned, Ps. lxii. 10, If riches increase, set not your hearts upon them.' When we set up our rest here, and look no further, we are guilty of this sin.

But now, because we may delight in our portion, and take comfort in what God hath given us; let us see when our delight in temporal things is a branch of covetousness. I answer--When we delight in them to the neglect of God, and the lessening of our joy in his service, and our hopes of eternal life are abated and grow less lively; when we so delight in them as to neglect God and the sweet intercourse we should have in him. Therefore covetousness is called idolatry, Eph. v. 5; Col. iii. 5, as it robs God of our trust, while we build upon un certain riches as a stable happiness, and the best assurance of our felicity: Mark x. 23, 24, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' And when the disciples wondered, our Saviour answered, How hard is it for them that trust in riches!' &c.; that is, that set their confidence in them in that degree and mea sure as is only due to God. Then it is called adultery, James iv. 4, because out of love to worldly things we can dispense with our love to God and delight in him, as the harlot draws away the affection from the lawful wife. In short, when we seek them and prize them, with the neglect of better, as spiritual and heavenly things are, Luke xii. 21; Mat. vi. 19-21, 33.

Next to the love of God we must love ourselves, and there first our souls. Now we are besotted and enchanted with the love of the world, so as to slight the favour of God and the hopes of blessedness to come, this is adultery spiritual, and sets up another chief good.

Secondly, Let us come to the causes of it, and they are two--distrust

of God's providence, and discontent with God's allowance. You have both in one place: Heb. xiii. 5, Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have.' These two, distrust and discontent, have a mutual influence upon one another. Distrust breeds discontent with our present portion, and discontent breeds ravenous desires, and ravenous desires breed distrust; for when we set God a task to provide for our lusts, certainly he will never do it. I say, we can never depend upon him that he should provide for our lusts.

1. For the first of these, that is, distrust, or a fear of want, together with a low esteem of God's providence, which maketh us so unreasonably solicitous about outward provisions; therefore when Christ would cure our covetousness he seeks to cure our distrust: Luke xii. 29, And seek ye not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.' Do not hover like meteors in the air, antedating your cares, making yourselves more miserable by your own suspicions, and your own fears what shall become of you and yours. So Mat. vi. 34, Take no thought for to-morrow; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' I say, this carking about future things makes us so impatient and earnest after present satisfaction. God trained up his people to a waiting upon his providence. Manna fell from heaven every day, so* sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' Every day we need look no further: Give us this day our daily bread.' But men fear future need and poverty, and so would help themselves by their own carking. So then diffidence of God's promises is the latent evil which lodgeth in the heart. Sordid sparing and greedy getting, that is on the top; but that which lies near the heart is distrust. We incline to sensible things, and cannot tell how to be well without them, and so resolve to shift for ourselves.

2. Discontent. Men have not so much as their rapacious desire* crave, though they are allowed moderate supplies to keep them till they go to heaven; and therefore everything that they get serves but as a bait to draw them on further, so they are always joining house to house, and laying field to field,' Isa. v. 8. When once men transgress the bounds of contentment prescribed by God, there is no stop or stay. Look, as the channel wears wider and deeper the more water falls into it, the water frets more and more; so the more outward things increase upon us, the more are our desires increased upon us. No man hath vast and unlimited thoughts at first. Men would be a little higher in the world, and a little better accommodated, and when they have that they must have a little more, then a little more; so they seize upon all things within their grasp and reach. Whereas if we had been content with our estate at first, we might have saved many a troublesome care, many a sin, many needless desires, and many a foolish and hurtful lust that proves our bane and torment. Be content with such things as you have now, or you will not be content hereafter; the lust will increase with the possession. As in some diseases of the stomach, purging doth better than repletion, not to feed the humour but to purge away the distemper; so here, it is not more that will satisfy us, but our lusts must be abated; if we were better satisfied with God's fair allowance we might be happy men much sooner than ever we shall be by great wealth.

Thirdly, For the discoveries of this sin. Aristotle, as it is a moral vice, placeth it in two things--in a defect in giving, and an excess in taking. We may better express both in scripture phrase, by greedy getting, and unmeet withholding.

1. Greedy getting, manifested either--

[1.] By sinful means of acquisition; as lying, cozening, oppression, profaning the Lord's day, grinding the faces of the poor, carnal

compliances, or any other such unjust or evil arts of gain. Men stick not at the means when their desires are so strongly carried out after the end: Prov. xxviii. 20, He that maketh haste to be rich cannot be innocent.' They leap over hedge and ditch, and all restraints of honesty and conscience, to compass their ends, all their endeavours are suited to their profit, and therefore consult not with conscience but with interest; and so prove treacherous to God, unthankful to parents, disobedient to magistrates, unfaithful to equals, unmerciful to inferiors, and care not whom they wrong, so they may thrive in the world.

[2.] Though it go not so high as injustice, yet it appeareth by excessive labours, when endeavours are unreasonably multiplied, to the wrong both of the body and the soul. To the wrong of the body; see how they are described in scripture: Ps. cxxvii. 2, They rise early, they sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows;' and Ps. xxxix. 6, He disquieteth himself in vain.' By biting cares: Eccles. ii. 23, All his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night;' Eccles. iv. 8, There is no end of his labours, neither is his eye satisfied with riches.' Men are full of biting cares, cruciating unquiet thoughts, and so pierce themselves through with many sorrows,' 1 Tim. vi. 10. Riches are compared to thorns, not only for choking the good seed, but as piercing us through with many sorrows, as they prove troublesome comforts to a covetous man. And they wrong the soul when the heart is dead and oppressed by them: Luke^xxi. 34, Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life.' The heart is burdened and oppressed, so as it hath no life and vigour for spiritual things, but is unbelieving and hard-hearted. The following the world brings a deadness upon us, and these preposterous and eager pursuits spend the strength of our

affections, so that God and religion is jostled out and hath no due respect; the lean kine devour the fat, and Sarah is thrust out of doors instead of Hagar. Thus is greedy getting seen by unjust means, and the immoderate use of lawful means to the oppression of the body and soul.

2. The other discovery is an unworthy detention: Prov. xi. 24, 4 There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.' This covetousness in keeping is seen partly--

[1.] By a sordid dispensing of our estate, or a denying of ourselves and others that relief which they should have. Ourselves: Eccles. iv. 8, He bereaveth his own soul of good;' that is, of the comforts of the present life. But chiefly denying of others that relief they should have, a duty which our religion often presseth us to: Luke xii. 33, Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth,. nor moth corrupteth.' We should rather scatter than hoard. The only means to discover we are not covetous, and to keep ourselves from the filth of this and other sins, is to be much in charity and distributing to those that have need: Luke xi. 41, Give alms of such things as you have, and behold all things are clean unto you.' It bringeth a blessing, purgeth the soul from that stain which it secretly contracteth by possessing worldly things, as our fingers are defiled by telling of money. But now, when men are backward this way, part with a drop of blood as soon as anything for God's use, when they shut up their bowels against the miseries of others, then is there this unmeet withholding.

[2.] By our loathness to part with these things for the testimony of a good conscience. When we are put to trial, as Joseph was, to lose our coat that we may keep our consciences, I mean, to part with these outward things, or to defile ourselves by compliance with men; when we

are put to this trial, those that will withhold and can dispense with the conscience of their duty to God, they are guilty of this sin: 2 Tim. iv. 10, Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world.' Oh! it is a mighty insinuating thing that gets into the hearts of those that profess religion many times, so that they cannot deny any small conveniences for God. But the contrary is in those saints that take joy fully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance,' Heb. x. 34.

[3]. It appears again when we are loath to part with them in a way of submission to God's providence. Grief at worldly losses shows that these things have gained too much of our love. If we did rejoice in them' when we have them as if we rejoiced not,' then we would weep' for the loss of them as though we wept not,' 1 Cor. vii. 31. They are both coupled together, for one makes way for the other. So we find the other couple: 2 Peter i. 6, Add to temperance patience.' Where there is temperance and moderation in the use of worldly things, there will be patience, a submission to God in the loss of them. He lost them without grief, because he possessed them without love. The greatness of our affliction comes from our affection to these things. Did we sit more loose from our earthly comforts, it would not be so irksome to part with them. Grief is always a sign of affection: John xi. 34, and Jesus wept;' and then they said, Behold how he loved him!' When we are surprised with so great sorrow and trouble at the parting of outward things, it may be said, Behold how we loved them.' Our hearts are not at so great an indifferency as they should be. The root of all trouble of spirit lieth in our inordinate affection. Get off that, and then what comfortable lives might we live!

Secondly, I am to show how it hindereth us from complying with God's testimonies. I shall do it by these arguments.

1. It disposeth and inclineth the soul to all evil, to break every command and law of God: 1 Tim. vi. 10, The love of money is the root of all evil.' Let that once get into the heart and reign there, and then a man will stick at no sin, he becomes, as Chrysostom speaks, a ready prey to the devil; such a man doth but stand watching for a temptation, that Satan may draw him to one sin or other: Micah ii. 2, They covet fields, and take them by violence.' First they covet; suffer that to possess the heart, and a man will stop at nothing, but break out into all that is unseemly. Let Judas be but inured to the bag, and enchant his thoughts with this pleasing supposition that he may make a gain of his master, and he will soon come to a quid dabitis: What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? he will soon betray him. Gehazi, let him but affect a reward, and he will dishonour God, and lay a stumbling-block in the way of that noble Syrian, that new convert: Is this a time to take bribes?' &c. Let Achan's heart be but tickled and pleased a little with the sight, and he will be purloining the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment. Tell Balaam but of gold and silver, and he will curse Israel against his conscience, he will venture, though there be an angel in the way to stop him. Let Ahab but have a mind to Naboth's vineyard, and he will soon consent to Naboth's blood. Ananias and Sapphira, let them but look upon what they part withal, let but covetousness prevail upon their hearts, and they will keep back part of that which is dedicated to God. Simon Magus will deny religion, and return to his old sorceries again, that he may be some great one. So that there is no sin, be it never so foul, but covetousness will make it plausible, and reconcile it to the consciences of men.

2. As it doth dispose and incline the soul to evil, so it incapacitates us for God's service, both in our general and particular calling.

In our general calling, it makes us incapable of serving God. Why? It

destroys the principle of obedience, is contrary to the matter of obedience, and it slights the rewards of obedience.

[1.] It destroys the principle of obedience, which is the love of God. This is that which constrains us, which carrieth us out with life and sweetness in God's service. Now, 1 John ii. 5, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' It destroys the principle that should act us in obedience.

[2.] It is contrary to the matter of obedience, which are the commands of God. The commands of God and mammon are contrary, Mat. vi. 24. What are his commands? God saith, Pity the afflicted, relieve the miserable, venture all for a good conscience, seek heaven in the first place, seek it with your choicest affection, your earnest diligence. What saith mammon? Be sparing of your substance, follow the world as hard as you can, stick at nothing, lie, steal, swear, for swear, comply with the lusts of men, then you shall be rich. Well, now you see he that is ruled by mammon, or swayed by the inordinate love of worldly good, can never serve God; he is enslaved to another master; he loves wealth above all, he trusts it more than God's providence, he serves it more than God himself. Though his tongue dares not say that the earth is better than heaven, that the things of this life are better than the favour of God, yet his life saith it; for more of his heart and care runs out upon these matters. In short, it unfits you not only for one duty, but for all duties required of us. God's laws you know require respect to God, your neighbour, and to yourselves. Now he that is a slave to mammon, overcome by the love of worldly things, denies that which is due to God, his trust, his love, his choice affection. He denies what is necessary for his neighbour, and he denies what is comfortable for himself. He is unthankful to God, unmerciful to his neighbour, and cruel to himself.

[3.] It slights the encouragements of obedience, which are the rewards of God, as it weakens our future hopes, and depresseth the heart from looking after spiritual and heavenly things. They despise their birth right for a mess of pottage; and when they are invited to the wedding, the choice things God hath provided for us in the gospel, they prefer their farm, oxen, merchandise before it. As it unfits us for the duty of our general, so for our particular. callings and relations.' The love of the world will make him altogether unfit for magistracy, ministry, the master of a family, or any such relation. In magistracy, who are the men that are qualified for that office? Exod. xviii. 21, Such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.' Let covetousness possess the heart a little, and it will make a man act unworthily, timorously, with a base heart. Nay, for a piece of bread will that man transgress. Take a minister, and what a poor meal-mouthed minister will he make if his heart be carried out with love to worldly things? Therefore it is the qualification of his person: 1 Tim. iii. 3, Not greedy of filthy lucre.' Let a minister be greedy of gain, it makes him sordid, low-spirited, flattering and daubing, to curry favour with men, more intent upon his gain and profit than the saving of souls. So for his work: 1 Peter v. 2, Feed the flock of God which is among you; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.' What a low flat ministry will that be, that is inspired with no other aim and impulsion but the sense of his own profit! If that be his great inducement to undertake that calling, and his great encouragement in discharging the duty of that calling, how will men strain themselves to please men, especially great ones, and writhe themselves into all postures and shapes that they may soothe the humours and lusts of others! He will curse where God hath blessed, if he be such as Balaam, who loved the wages of un righteousness.' It is a powerful imperious lust, saith God, Will you

pollute me for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live?' Then you shall have them declaiming against the good, hardening the evil, complying with the fashions of the world. So in other callings. If a man be called to be a master of a family: Prov. xv. 27, He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house.' What a trouble and burden will this man be to his servants and all about him! and how little will he glorify God in that relation! Nay, in all other stations this will make him an oppressing landlord, a false tradesman, an ill neighbour; and therefore it is the very pest and bane of human societies. Thus you see how it unfits us for the service of God, both in our general and particular calling.

3. It hinders the receiving of good, and those means of reformation that should make us better. It fills us with prejudice against what ever shall be spoken for God and for the concernments of another world: Luke xvi. 14, And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and derided him.' Come with any strict and holy doctrine that shall carry out men to the interest of another life, and they will make a scoff at it. If the word stir us a little, and make us anxious and thoughtful about our eternal condition, the thorns, which are the cares of this world, choke the good seed, Mat. xiii.; it stifles our conviction, while it distracts our head with cares, and puts us out of all thought about things to come. If a man begins to do some outward thing, it makes him soon weary of religion and attendance upon the duties thereof: Amos viii. 5, When will the Sabbath be gone, that we may set forth wheat?' They think all lost that is bestowed upon God. As Seneca said of the Jews, they were a foolish people, they lost the full seventh of their lives because of the Sabbath; so they think all Sabbath time lost. Nay, it distracts in duty: Ezek. xxxiii. 31, With

their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.' It interlines our prayers, and the world will still be creeping; and when we are offering incense to God, we shall be mingling sulphur and brimstone of worldly thoughts with it; our minds will be taken up with worldly projects; and then it perverts the good we do, as they followed Christ for the loaves, John vi. It turneth religion into venale artificium, a trade to live by. If they do good things, it is for worldly ends; they make a market of their devotion, as the Shechemites would be circumcised, for then their substance and their cattle will be ours.

Use 1. It informs us of the evil of covetousness. Most will stroke it with a gentle censure, and say, Such an one is a good man, but a little worldly, as if it were no great matter to be so. Nay, they are apt to applaud those that are tainted with it: Ps. x. 3, He blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.' He that getteth honour and riches by hook and crook is the only prudent and serious man in their account. It is a foul sin, though the men of the world will not believe it.

Surely we have too mild thoughts of it, therefore do not watch, and strive against it. The sensualist shames himself before others; but covetousness is worse than prodigality in many respects, as being not occasioned by the distemper of the body, as excess of drinking and lust is, but by the depravation of the mind; and when other sins decay, this grows with them; it is an incurable dropsy, Luke xii. 15. The words are doubled for the more vehemency. Christ doth not only say, Take heed,' but Take heed and beware of covetousness.' Sins that are more gross and sensual are more easily discovered, and a sinner sooner reclaimed; but this is a secret sin, that turns away the heart from God, and is incessantly working in the soul. Look, as the scripture tells you, to make you careful against rash anger, that it is murder, 1 John iii. 15;

so to make you careful to avoid covetousness, the scripture tells you it is idolatry; and is that a small crime? What, to set up another God? Who are you that dare to harbour so great an evil in your bosom, and make no great matter of it? Will you dethrone that God which made you, and set up another in his stead? How can you hope he will be good to you any longer when you offer him so vile an abuse? It is adultery; it is a breach of your conjugal vow. You promised to renounce the world in your baptism, and gave up yourselves to his service, and will you cherish your whorish and disloyal affections that will carry you to the world in God's stead? We cannot think badly enough of such a sin.

Use 2. If covetousness be the great let and hindrance from keeping God's testimonies, then let us examine ourselves, Are we guilty of it? Doting upon the creature, and an inordinate affection to sensible things, is a natural, a hereditary disease, more general than we are aware of: Jer. vi. 13, From the least to the greatest every one is given to covetousness.' It is a relic of original sin, and it is in part in the godly man, though it do not bear sway in him; there is too much of this worldly wretched inclination in a godly man's heart. Nay, those that seem most remote from it may be tainted with it. A prodigal, that is lavish enough upon his lusts, yet he may be sparing to good uses; so he is covetous; as the rich man that fared deliciously every day yet denied a crum to Lazarus, Luke xvi. 19-21. Those that aim at no great matter for themselves, that have not ravenous impatient desires, yet may be full of envy at the increase of others, and vexed to see them flourish; it may be they have no ability or opportunity to do anything for themselves, but have an evil eye at the increase of others. Most men are more industrious for the world, whereas they are overly and slight in heavenly matters; and that is evidence enough. Some are not greedy, but they are too sparing. They seek not, it may

be, a higher estate, but they are too much delighted with present comforts. The gallant that pampers himself, and wastes freely upon his pride and lusts, may laugh in his sleeve, and say, I am free from this evil; yet his heart desires wherewith to feed his excess and bravery and pride. Covetousness may be entertained as a servant where it is not entertained as a master; entertained as a servant to provide oil and fuel to make other sins burn. Therefore let us see indeed whether we be not guilty of this sin?

1. It may be discovered by frequent thoughts, which are the genuine issue of the soul, and discover the temper of the mind; thoughts either by way of contemplation or contrivance. By way of contemplation, when our minds only run upon earthly things, and that with a savour and sweetness: Phil. iii. 19, Minding earthly things.' What a man doth muse upon, most think of when he is alone, and speak of in company, that will show him the temper of his heart. When men think of the world, and speak of the world, their heart is where their treasure is, Mat. vi. 21. Nay, when they cannot disengage themselves from these thoughts in God's worship; their hearts go away in covetousness, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. Or else thoughts by way of contrivance: Isa. xxxii. 7, 8, The liberal man deviseth liberal things, and the wicked man deviseth wicked devices.' The deliberations and debates of the soul discover the temper of it. A carnal heart is altogether exercised in carnal projects, as the rich fool discoursed and dialogised with himself. When men are framing endless projects, carking and caring, not how to grow good and gracious, but great and high in the world, they discover the spirit of the world.

2. And as by thoughts, so by burning and urgent desires; they are the pulses of the soul. As physicians judge by appetite, so may you by desires. A spiritual dropsy or an unsatisfied thirst argues a

distempered soul, when, like the horseleech's daughter, you still cry, Give, give, and you are never contented, but must have more.

3. By the course of your lives and actions, and the uniformity of your endeavours. How shall we know who is the covetous man whom the Lord abhors? Luke xii. 21, So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God,' a man that is always growing in estate, and never looks to his soul, and to be rich in grace, spiritual experiences, and rich in good works, which is chiefly meant there by being rich towards God, a man that seeks not the kingdom of God in the first place, for that which you love best you will seek for, you will be most careful and diligent to obtain. Well, then, when you mind heavenly things by the by, and are very slight in seeking and inquiring after God, furnishing your souls with grace, and getting assured hopes of heaven, and do not spy out advantages for the inward man, this evil disposition of the soul hath mightily invaded you, and then you can never do God any service.

Use 3. To press you to take heed of this great sin; and if you would mortify it, mortify the roots of it, which are distrust and discontent.

1. Distrust of God's providence. You that think you cannot do well unless you have a greater portion of worldly things, and that sets you upon carking, and if you have not this you cannot see how you and yours can be provided for; cure this. How? By God's promises: 1 Peter v. 7, Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you.' Cannot you trust God upon the security of a promise? Cannot you go on in well-doing when the Lord hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee'? Cure it by observing the usual course of God's providence. God provides for the young ravens, he clothes the lilies. It is Christ's argument, Will he be more kind to a raven than a child? will he take more care of a flower than of a son, one that is in covenant with him? Cure it by holy

maxims and considerations. Remember all dependeth upon God's blessing: Luke xii. 15, Take heed and beware of covetousness.' How should we do so? For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' Alas! all is in God's hand, both being and well-being, life and estate, and all things else. God can soon blast abundance, and can relieve us in the deepest wants; he can give you a sufficiency in your deep poverty, 2 Cor. viii. 2. If you should go on carking and caring and feathering your nests, God may take you off, or set your nests on fire. A little serves the turn to bring us to heaven; and when our desires are moderate, God will not fail: Prov. xvi. 8, Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.'

2. For discontent with your portion, that you may not always be craving more, meditate upon the baseness and vanity of worldly things. They do but deceive us with a vain show; they cannot give us any true joy of heart, or peace of conscience, or security against future evil; they cannot give you health of body, nor add one cubit to your stature, nor one day to your lives. Now, should we disquiet ourselves for a vain show? Shall there be such toil in getting, such fear of losing, when they are of no more use to us in the hour of death? When you need strength and comfort most, all these things will leave you shiftless, helpless, if they continue with you so long. Nay, reason thus: the more estate the more danger, the greater charge lieth upon you. Larger gates do but open to larger cares. There is more duty, more danger, more snares, more temptations. When you have more, you will be more difficultly saved. It is a truth pronounced by the Lord of truth, that it is a hard matter for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.' It will be more hard to keep the flesh in order, to guide our spirits aright in the ways of God. If you must needs be coveting,

labouring, and carking, you are called to better things: John vi. 27, Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life;' Covet the best gifts,' 1 Cor. xii. 31. Be as passionate for grace as others are for the world. If once you were acquainted with these better things, it would be so with you; you would never leave the fair and fresh pastures of grace for the barren heath of the world. If you did once taste the sweet of heavenly things, then let dogs scramble for bones and scraps; you have hidden manna to feed upon, the sense of God's love to look after, hopes of everlasting glory wherewith to solace your souls. If once you did taste of these everlasting riches you would do so: 1 Tim. vi. 10, 11, there are many that through the love of money have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.' Let the men of the world, whose portion and happiness lieth here, scramble for these things; but you, that profess yourselves children of God, follow after all the gifts and graces of the Spirit; let that be your holy covetousness, to increase in these things.

SERMON XLII.

Turn thou away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.--Ver. 37.

DAVID still continueth his requests to God for grace, and entituleth him to the whole work. He had prayed before that God would incline his heart, now that he would Turn away his eyes from beholding worldly vanities.' In this prayer there are two branches--the one concerneth mortification, the other vivification.

First. Turn away, then quicken, &c. The first request is for the removing the impediments to obedience, the other for addition of new degrees of grace. These two are fitly joined, for they have a natural influence upon one another; unless we turn way our eyes from vanity, we shall soon contract a deadness of heart. Nothing causeth it so much as an inordinate liberty in carnal vanities. When our affections are alive to other things, they are dead to God; therefore the less we let loose our hearts to these things the more lively and cheerful in the work of obedience. On the other side, the more the vigour of grace is renewed, and the habits of it quickened into actual exercise, the more is sin mortified and subdued. Sin dieth, and our senses are restored to their proper use. These two requests are fitly joined. Let us consider them asunder.

1. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' There observe--(1.) The object, vanity; (2.) The faculty, mine eyes; (3.) The act of grace desired, the removing of this faculty from this object.

[1.] The object, vanity.' Thereby is meant carnal and worldly things, worldly pleasures, worldly honour, worldly profits; all these are called vanity, because they have no solid happiness in them, and do so

easily fade and perish. Thus it is said, Prov. xxxi. 30, Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain.' The same is true of any other transporting objects: Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' Eccles. i. 2; and Job xv. 31, Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity, for vanity shall be his recompense;' Rom. viii. 20, The creature is made vanity.' By vanity there is understood the vain things of the world, which do so often deceive us as to the happiness they promise.

[2.] The faculty is mentioned, the eye. It is employed and commanded by the heart. But this enkindleth new flames there; and as it is set awork by it, so it sets the heart awork again. It is the instrument of increasing sin in us.

[3.] The act, turn away.' Our evil delight is too apt to fix it, and become a snare to us, till God cure both heart and sense by grace. He prayeth not from beholding it altogether, but from beholding as a snare.

Doct. It concerneth those that would walk with God to have their eyes turned away from worldly things. I shall give you the meaning in these propositions.

1. He that would be quickened, carried out with life and vigour in the ways of God, must first be mortified, die unto sin. The apostle there speaks of the fruit of Christ's death, being dead unto sin before he can live to God, 1 Peter ii. 24. David first maketh it his request, Turn away mine eyes,' then Quicken.' Many would fain live with Christ, but first they must learn to die unto sin. It is impossible for sin and grace to live in the same subject.

2. One great means of mortification is guarding the senses, eyes, and ears, and taste, and touch, that they may not betray the heart. I put it so general, because the man of God that is so solicitous about his eyes would not be careless of his ears and other senses. We must watch

on all sides. When an assault is made on all sides, if one gate be open, it is as good as all were. The senses are the cinque ports by which sin is let out and taken in. The ingress and egress of sin is by the senses, and much of our danger lieth there; partly because there are so many objects that suit with our distempers, that do by them insinuate themselves into the soul, and therefore things long since seemingly dead will soon revive again, and recover life and strength. There are no means to keep the heart unless we keep the eye. And partly because in every creature Satan hath laid a snare for us, to steal away our hearts and affections from God. Partly because the senses are so ready to receive these objects from without to wound the heart, for they are as the heart is. If the heart be poisoned with sin, and be come a servant to it, so are the senses of our bodies weapons of unrighteousness.' Rom. vi. 13. Objects have an impression upon them answerable to the temper and the affections of the soul, and what it desireth they pitch upon; and therefore if we let the senses wander, the heart will take fire presently; and if we do not stop evil at the beginning, but let it alone to take head, we cannot stop it when we would, nor repress the motions of it from flying abroad.

3. Above all senses the eye must be guarded.

[1.] Because it is the noblest sense, given us for high uses. There is not only a natural use to inform us of things profitable and hurtful for the outward man, but a spiritual use to set before us those objects that may stir us and raise our minds to heavenly thoughts and meditations. For by beholding the perfection of the creatures we may admire the more eminent perfection of him that made them: Ps. xix. 1, The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork;' and Ps. viii. 3, When I considered thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained.' David,

when he walked abroad in a moon-shining night, admired the glory of the moon and stars; the moon and stars are mentioned because it was a night meditation; his heart was set awork by his eyes: Rom. i. 20, 21, For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead,' &c. The perfections of the creatures are to draw us to God, and their imperfections and defects to drive us from themselves. The eye, as it is used, will either be a help or a snare; either it will let in the sparks of temptation, or enkindle the fire of true devotion. These are the windows which God hath placed in the top of the building, that man from thence may contemplate God's works, and take a prospect of heaven, the place of our eternal residence. Os homini sublime dedit--God made man with an erect countenance, not grovelling on the earth, but looking up to heaven, and viewing the glorious mansions above.

[2.] Because they have a great influence upon the heart either as to good or evil, but chiefly to evil. In this corrupt state of man, orein gi'netai to` oran [13] --by looking we come to liking, and are brought inordinately to affect what we do behold: Num. xv. 39, That ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring;' Job xxxi. 7, If my step hath turned out of the way, and my heart walked after mine eyes.' These are the spies of the heart--brokers to bring it and the temptation together; the eye seeth, and then by gazing the heart lusteth, and the body acteth the transgression. It is more dangerous to see evil than to hear it; the impression is greater; ^the relation of anything doth not affect us so much as the sight of it. Those that hear of the fury of wars, firing of houses, ravishing of virgins, killing and wounding of men, and the like, can not have so deep a sense of those things as they that see it.

The sight of heaven works more than the report of it; as Paul, when he had a sight of these things, was in an ecstasy: the look doth immediately work on the heart. Well, then, it is dangerous to fix the eye on enticing objects, for it exciteth more than hearsay.

[3.] The eye must be looked to, because it hath been the window by which Satan hath crept in, and all manner of poison conveyed to the soul. I shall prove it--(1.) Doctrinally; (2.) Historically.

(1.) I shall give you doctrinal assertions. The eye hath been the inlet of ail sin; as uncleanness: 2 Peter ii. 14, Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls,' &c. In the original, it is eyes full of the adulteress;' and the eye enkindles impure flames in the heart: Prov. vi. 25, Lust not after her beauty in thy heart, neither let her take thee with her eyelids.' Gazing on the beauty of women enkindleth foul flames within the breast, and we feel strange transports of soul when we give way to it. The evil heart is in its element when it is thus. Then covetousness gets into the heart by the eye: 1 John ii. 15, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' And therefore the apostle, when he maketh a division of sin, he saith, For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world;' because the mind is so secretly enchanted with the love of those things it beholds, and are represented to it by the external senses. And Eccles. iv. 8, There is no end of all his labour, neither is his eye satisfied with riches;' that insatiable thirst is enkindled in the soul by beholding the splendour of outward things; it is born and bred and fed by it, and the heart is secretly enchanted with a love to it, and therefore we must have more of it. Again drunkenness: Prov. xxiii. 31, Look not thou upon the wine when it

is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright;' that is so as to entice the heart to crave more and more till it cometh to excess. So envy: Mat. xx. 15, Is thine eye evil because mine is good?' The more they see and behold the flourishing of others, the more is their evil disposition nourished.

(2.) Historical instances. Let me begin with the first transgression. It is said, Gen. iii. 6, And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof,' &c. She was first corrupted in her sense; gazing on the fruit with delight, that was the first sin, before eating. The devil tempted Christ when he sought to corrupt the second Adam: Mat. iv. 8, He taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.' He knew the best way to work was by sight, and though he could not prevail against Christ, he took that way that was most accommodate^ his purpose. And afterwards what an account have we in scripture, how many were wounded by their eyes: The devil knoweth that is the next way to work upon the heart. So Potiphar's wife: Gen. xxxix. 7, And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph, and she said, Lie with me.' There the mischief began; she pleased herself with looking on the Hebrew servant. So Achan: Josh. vii. 21, When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels' weight, then I coveted them and took them,' &c. First saw, then coveted, then took, and then hid; and then Israel falls before the Philistines, and he is attached by lots and brought to judgment. So Shechem and Dinah: Gen. xxxiv. 2, And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.' Seeing always cometh between the sense

and the heart. So of Samson: Judges xvi. 1, Samson went to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her.' So David was ensnared by looking on Bathsheba: 2 Sam. xi. 2, And it came to pass in an evening tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house; and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.' That fired his heart, and brought such mischiefs upon him. Naboth's vineyard was hard by Ahab's palace, 1 Kings xxi. 1. It was ever in his eye, and therefore he is troubled and falls sick for it. So how many may thus complain that their souls have been by their eyes betrayed! As Jacob's sheep, by looking on the rods, brought forth young ones coloured by the rods, so our actions receive that from the objects we take in by the senses.

Use is to reprove those that are so careless of their senses. When they are left at random they soon prove the ruin of the soul. Solomon giveth us the reason of his folly and warping from God: Eccles. iv. 10, Whatsoever mine eye desired I kept not from them.' I kept not mine eyes from any toy. Those men lie under the power of sin that let the boat run with the stream and never use any restraint; they are wafted down apace into the gulf of destruction. Those open the gates to the enemy, and give them free entertainment. A man that is care less of his senses is like a city without walls,' that lies open to all comers. The heart is a thoroughfare for sin and temptations. But because most men, yea, good men, have and may miscarry this way, whereby great mischiefs may come upon them, let me produce some considerations that they may see their folly that let their hearts run at random.

1. Foul sinners [14] are awakened which we thought long since laid asleep, when we let the object strike too freely upon the soul. Who would have thought that David's heart should have been fired by a look? It is dangerous to dally with temptations, and to think no great harm

will come of it. Stones running down hill are not easily stopped. So here; when we yield a little to Satan's temptations, he carries us away by force; we cannot stop when we please.

2. Evil thoughts will be begotten in us, and they make us culpable before God, though they break not out into sinful acts. Looking causeth lusting, and that is adultery before God: Mat. v. 28, But I say unto you, Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' Christ came to restore the law to its spiritual sense. The Pharisees did not think the law broken but by outward gross acts and actual defilement; but Christ showeth that a wanton look is adultery; an envious look murders; the heart consenteth to sin though the body acts it not.

3. By leaving the senses without a guard, evil dispositions are impressed upon us secretly. Though we are not aware of any sensible disorder for the present, the heart groweth vain and carnal by letting loose the eye to vanity. Job doth not only take notice of his eyes when they did stir up carnal thoughts for the present, Job xxxi. 7, but saith, If my eyes have walked after my heart, and if my steps have turned out of the way;' he speaks twice of the disorders of his eyes. The heart may be corrupted by the eye, and therefore it concerns you to set a guard upon the senses: Prov. iv. 25, Let thine eyelids look on, and thine eye straight before thee.' Let us mind our business, which is to go to heaven; whereas by gazing and wandering the heart comes to be enchanted with earthly things.

4. By wandering and letting loose the eye the heart is distracted in duty. Distraction in duty is a great and usual evil, and one cause of it is the curiosity of the senses. How often do we mingle sulphur with our incense, and come to worship God having our hearts to the ends of the earth! Men let loose their eyes, and then away go their hearts; and

therefore, as Solomon saith, Take heed to thy foot when thou enterest into the house of God,' Eccles. v. Many come hither merely to see and to be seen, and to display their vanity by their vain attire. How many are there that let loose their eyes to vanity, when they should give up their ears to the counsel of God! Some dress up themselves in such vain attire and indecent fashions to draw the eyes of others to gaze upon them; this is a great affront to God's worship; Solomon saith, Prov. xvii. 24, The fool's eyes are to the ends of the earth.' One cause of distraction is the curiosity of the senses; our eyes run to and fro, and then our hearts wander and rove from the business we are about. It is a strange constancy and fixedness that is spoken of the priests at Jerusalem, that when Faustus, Cornelius, and Furius, and Fabius broke into the city with their troops, and rushed into the temple ready to kill them, yet they went on with the rites of the temple, as if there had been no such thing. And strange is that other instance of the Spartan youth, that held the censer to Alexander while he offered sacrifice. A coal lighting upon his arm, he suffered it to burn there rather than by any crying out of his disturb that worship. These instances are a shame to Christians, that we do not more fix our hearts when we are in the service of God.

Use 2. The second use is to press us to this piece of mortification, even to turn away your eyes from beholding vanity.' To help you in it you must--

1. Take Job's course: Job xxxi. 1, I made a covenant with my eyes,' Job and his eyes were in covenant; there was a covenant between heart and eyes. Eyes, be you faithful to my soul, that there be nothing that may stir up carnal and impure thoughts, that there be no unclean objects that may fire my heart. Oh, the fool-hardiness of this age! Some will smile at this kind of discipline, to be so strict and precise. Why, is

sin grown less dangerous, or is man's nature more wise and strong, or are we better fortified against temptations? Are our hearts in a better posture than the servants of God of old? Surely not; and therefore set a watch upon your eyes, that sin break not in upon your heart.

2. Consider the vanity of the things we dote upon and take in by the eyes. So saith David, Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' They are poor vain perishing things, yet they suit too well with our senses. And consider what Solomon saith of these things, Wilt thou set thine heart upon that which is not?' We inflame our hearts with these things, and lust putteth a lovely face upon the object that suiteth with it; but alas! what are they? Whatever they seem to the beholder, it is but vanity: Ps. xxxix. 6, Man flattereth himself in a vain show.' All the splendour and beauty of it is but vain: 1 Cor. vii. 31, The fashion of this world passeth away;' it is but an empty thing, flying bubbles. Though the world is of some use to us in our pilgrimage, yet poor things they are, as that for them we should neglect our duty to God, and grow less lively therein, or have our hearts withdrawn from God. It is the temptation that maketh them seem comely. When these alluring vanities are before our eyes, lust puts a gloss upon them. But consider what they are indeed, and in comparison of those things from which they tempt you, namely, heaven and eternal blessedness.

3. Consider the cursed issue of these things, of letting loose thy eye and heart to vanity. When you please the eye you wound the heart, and make you unfit for your great account: Eccles. xi. 9, Rejoice, young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: yet know that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.' Go, drench and steep thy soul in carnal delights; when thy wandering and wanton eye doth influence the lusts of thy heart, and

they begin to boil up, when thou hast not denied thyself anything thy heart can wish and thine eye look upon, put in a little cool water to stop the boiling and raging of thy lust; remember that God will bring thee to judgment; though thou dost now smother thy convictions, and drown thy reason in these sensual delights, yet God will call thee to an account for all thy time, and parts, and strength, and wit, and talents intrusted with thee.

4. Pray, as David doth here, Turn away mine eyes.' He calleth upon God for the assistance of his grace; and Ps. cxli. 3, Set a watch upon the door of my lips.' He that bendeth and inclineth the heart by his grace to look after better things, must also bridle the senses. It is lust sets the eye awork, and causeth a deep complacency and delight in carnal things, and that is cured only by God's grace, Mark x. 27; therefore go and beg this mercy of him.

5. Constant watchfulness. Alas! we cannot open our eyes but we meet with a temptation, a door open for Satan to enter by; therefore we had need diligently and constantly to watch, especially when lusts are like to be stirred. Lot's wife might not look towards Sodom, but Abraham was bidden to look upon it. It was no temptation to him, but it was to her; she had her heart hankering after it, Gen. xix. 17, compared with ver. 28. When we are in danger of a temptation, we should keep a severe and strict hand upon the senses, that they may not dwell unnecessarily upon alluring objects.

6. We have renounced the pomps and vanities of the world in baptism, and shall our eyes and hearts run after them? This is implied in our baptism, for baptism is called the answer of a good conscience towards God,' 1 Peter iii. 21. It is an answer to God's demand in the covenant. God puts us to the question whether we will renounce the world and the vanities and pleasures thereof. Now, when we have renounced these

things, shall our eyes and our hearts run after them? shall we turn the senses against God who gave us the use of them? yea, against our souls? To shame you that have been no more faithful to your baptismal vow, consider what heathens have done. Basil relateth that Alexander, a young man, in the heat of blood and in the flower of his age, refused to see Darius's daughter. It is a shame, saith he, for him that hath conquered so many men to be conquered by a woman. It is said of some heathen that he put out his eyes that they might not be a snare to him. We have grace that we may not use such violence to our nature, but certainly the eyes of our lusts should be put out; you see our baptism engageth us. If heathens, those that never came under such an engagement to God, if they by the light of nature saw that the guarding of the senses was a help to the soul, it concerns us much more to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world.

Secondly, We come to the request, Quicken thou me in thy way.' By quickening is meant the actuation of the spiritual life; he beggeth grace to perform his duty to God with cheerfulness, liveliness, and zeal.

Doct. Quickening is very necessary for them that would walk in God's ways.

I shall not consider it here as a prayer to God, or as it is a blessing to be asked of God, but as it is necessary to obedience; and here I shall inquire--

1. What quickening is.

2. Show the necessity of it.

First, What quickening is. It is put for two things (1.) It is put for regeneration or the infusion of grace; (2.) For the renewing the vigour of the life of grace, the renewed influence of God, whereby this grace is stirred up in our hearts. First, for regeneration or the in fusion

of grace: Eph. ii. 1, 2, When we were dead in trespasses and sins, yet now hath he quickened us.' Then we are quickened or made alive to God when we are new born, when there is a habitual principle of grace put into our hearts. Secondly, Quickening is put for the renewed excitation of grace, when the life that we have received is carried on to some further increase; and so it is twofold, either by way of comfort in our afflictions, or enlivening in a way of holiness.

1. Comfort in afflictions; and so it is opposed to fainting, which is occasioned by too deep a sense of present troubles, and distrust of God and the supplies of his grace. When the affliction is heavy upon us, we are like birds dead in the nest, and are so overcome that we have no spirit or courage in the service of God: Ps. cxix. 50, This is my comfort in affliction, for thy word hath quickened me.' Then we are said to be quickened when he raiseth up our hearts above the trouble, by refining our suffering graces, as faith, hope, and patience. Thus he is said to revive the contrite one,' Isa. lvii. 15; to restore comfort to us, and to refresh us with the sense of his love.

2. There is a quickening in duty, which is opposed to deadness of spirit, which is apt to creep upon us, that is occasioned by negligence and slothfulness in the business of the spiritual life. Now, to quicken us, God exciteth his grace in us. An instrument, though never so well in tune, soon grows out of order. A key seldom turned rusts in the lock; so graces that are not kept awork lose their exercise and grow lukewarm, or else it is occasioned by carnal liberty or intermeddling with worldly things. These bring a brawn and deadness upon the heart, and the soul is depressed by the cares of this world: Luke xxi. 34, Now, when you are under this temper of soul, desire the Lord to quicken you by new influences of grace.

Secondly, Let me show the necessity of this quickening, how needful it

is.

1. It is needful, for without it our general standing is questionable, whether we belong to God or no: 1 Peter ii. 5, Ye are living stones built up into a spiritual house.' It is not enough to be a stone in Christ's building, but we must be living stones; not only members of his body, but living members. I cannot say such a one hath no grace; but when they have it not it renders their condition very questionable; a man may be living when he is not lively.

2. Without it we cannot perform our duties aright. Religion to a dead heart is a very irksome thing. When we are dead-hearted we do our duties as if we did them not in our general course of obedience. We must go to God: Ps. cxix. 88, Quicken me after thy lovingkindness, so shall I keep the testimonies of thy mouth.' Then we do good to good purpose indeed. It is not enough for us to pray, but we must pray with life and vigour: Ps. lxxx. 18, Quicken me, and I will call upon thy name.' So we should hear with life, not in a dull, careless fashion, Mat. xiii. 15.

3. All the graces that are planted in us tend to beget quickening; as faith, hope, and love; these are the graces that set us awork, and make us lively in the exercise of the spiritual life: Faith that works by love,' Gal. v. 6. It sets the soul awork by apprehending the sense of God's love; whereas otherwise it is but a dead faith, 1 James ii. 16. Then for love, what is the influence of that? It constrains the soul, it takes the soul along with it, 2 Cor. v. 14, and Rom. xii. 1. And then hope; it is called a lively hope,' 1 Peter i. 3. All grace is put into us to make us lively; not only the grace of sanctification, but the grace of justification is bestowed upon us for this end, that we may be cheerful in God's service: Heb. ix. 14, How much more shall the blood of Christ purge our consciences from dead works, that we may

serve the living God?' Sin and guilt make us dead and heavyhearted; but now the blood of Christ is sprinkled upon the conscience, and the sentence of death taken away, then we are made cheerful to serve the living God. Attributes are suited to the case in hand; he is called the living God, because he must be served in a living manner.

4. All the ordinances which God hath appointed are to get and in crease this liveliness in us. Wherefore hath God appointed the word? Isa. lv. 3, Hear and your souls shall live.' It is to promote the life of grace, and that we may have new encouragement to go on in the ways of God. Moses, when he received the law, is said to receive the lively oracles of God,' Acts vii. 38. So the doctrine of Christ; they are all spirit and life, and serve to beget life in us. As the redemption of the world by Christ, the joys of heaven, the torments of hell, they are all quickening truths, and propounded to us to keep us in life and vigour. The Lord's Supper, why was that ap pointed? There we come to taste the flesh of Christ, who was given for the life of the world, John vi.; that we might sensibly exercise our faith upon Christ, that we might be more sensible of our obligations to him, that we might be the more excited in the diligent pursuit of things to come.

Use 1. Is reproof. David considereth the dulness and deadness of his spirit, which many do not, but go on in a cold track of duties, and never regard the frame of their hearts. It is a good sign to observe our spiritual temper, and accordingly go to God. Most observe their bodies, but very few their souls. If the body be ill at ease or out of order, they complain presently; but love waxeth cold, and their zeal for God and delight in him is abated, yet they never lay it to heart.

Use 2. To exhort us to get and keep this lively frame of heart.

1. Get it, pray for it. Liveliness in obedience doth depend upon God's blessing; unless he put life and keep life in our souls, all cometh to

nothing. Come to God upon the account of his glory: Ps. cxliii. 11, Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake; for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.' His tender mercies: Ps. cxix. 156, Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord; quicken me according to thy judgments.' Come to him upon the account of Christ: John x. 10, I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly;' and John vii. 38, He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' Every new act of faith draweth from Christ some in crease of spiritual life.

2. Stir up yourselves: Isa. lxiv. 7, There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee;' 2 Tim. i. 6, Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands;' Ps. xlii. 5, Why art thou cast down, my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the helps of his countenance.' We have liveliness enough in all businesses of secular concernment. Consider what the business is that we are about. It is about our everlasting estate, whether we shall live for ever in heaven or hell; and shall we trifle here? You had life in a way of sin; worldly men are lively. How dishonourable a thing is it to serve the living God with a dead heart? A lukewarm frame is hateful to God: Rev. iii. 16, Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.' Take heed you do not lose quickening, and that--

[1.] By our corruption, by any heinous sin: Ps. li. 10-12 Create in me a clean heart, God, and renew a right spirit within me; cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me: restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.' The spirit is a tender thing. A wound in the body lets out the

life-blood.

[2.] By an inordinate liberty in worldly pleasures: 1 Tim. v. 6, But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' Vain company, vain speeches, and the like, these things shun and avoid, but, Heb. x. 24, Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works;' let us follow good examples. We grow formal and slight by imitation. Others profess religion, and yet are dead-hearted and vain, and so are we. The idolaters encouraged one another: Isa. xli. 6, 7, They helped every one his neighbour, and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage; so the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smoothed with the hammer him that smote the anvil.' We should encourage one another in the way of godliness, and keep up a lively frame of heart towards God, and pray with the Psalmist in the text, Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.'

[13] Qu. "ek tou oran gi'netai to` eran"?--ED.

[14] :Qu. sins'?--ED.

SERMON XLIII.

Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.--Ver. 38.

IN these words observe--

1. A request, stablish thy word unto thy servant.

2. A motive to enforce it, who is devoted to thy fear. The motive is taken from the qualifications and disposition of the person who makes the request.

In the request you have--

1. The matter prayed for, stablish thy word.

2. The person for whom, unto thy servant, that is, unto me who am so.

I shall begin with the first of these, the benefit asked, Stablish thy word.' David, that had prayed before, Stablish me according to thy word,' ver. 28, now saith, Stablish thy word unto me.'

By the word is meant the word of promise. Now the promise of God is established when it is confirmed and made good: 2 Cor. xiii. 1, In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established,' that is, accounted valid and firm; and 2 Sam. vii. 25, when he speaks of God's promises he prays, Stablish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.' Look, as on the one side we are said to establish the law of God when we observe it; for so it runs, Deut. xxvii. 26, Cursed be he that confirmeth,' or establisheth not all the words of this law to do them.' The law is then confirmed when it hath its force and effect upon us; whereas otherwise, when they observe it not, it is said to be void. That sentence is repeated by the apostle thus: Gal. iii. 10, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Well, then, the promise is established

when it is made good.

Quest. But why doth David pray thus, Stablish thy word to me,' since God's word is most certain and stable in itself, so as it cannot be more? 2 Peter i. 19, We have a more sure,' or a more stable word of prophecy,' as the word signifies. How can the word be more stable than it is?

Ans. I answer--It is sure in regard of God, from whom it comes, and in itself. In regard of the things propounded, it cannot be more or less stable, it cannot be fast and loose; but in regard of us, it may be more or less established. And that two ways--

1. By the inward assurance of the Spirit increasing our faith.

2. By the outward performance of what is promised.

1. By the inward assurance of the Spirit, by which our faith is increased. Great is the weakness of our faith, as appears by our fears, doubts, distrusts; so that we need to be assured more and more. We need say with tears, as he doth in the Gospel, Mark ix. 24, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief,' and to cry out with the apostles, Lord, increase our faith,' Luke xvii. 5. There is none believeth so but he may yet believe more. And in this sense the word is more established when we are confirmed in the belief of it, and look upon it as a sure ground for faith to rest upon.

2. By actual performance, when the promise is made good to us. Every event which falls out according to the word is a notable testimony of the truth of it, and a seal to confirm and strengthen our faith. Three ways may this be made good:

[1.] The making good of some promises at one time strengthens our faith in expecting the like favour at another. Christ was angry with his disciples for not remembering the miracle of the loaves, when they fell into a like strait again: Mat. xvi. 9, Do ye not yet understand,

neither remember the five loaves?' &c. We are to seek upon every difficulty; whereas former experience in the same kind should be a means of establishment to us: 2 Cor. i. 10, He hath delivered, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.' In teaching a child to spell, we are angry if, when we have showed him a letter once, twice, and a third time, yet when he meets with it again still he misseth; so God is angry with us when we have had experience of his word in this, that, and the other providence, yet still our doubts return upon us.

[2.] The accomplishment of one promise confirms another; for God, that keepeth touch at one time, will do so at another: 2 Tim. iv. 17, I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion; and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me blameless unto his heavenly kingdom.' In such a strait God failed not, and surely he that hath been true hitherto will not fail at last.

[3.] When the word is performed in part, it assureth us of the performance of the whole; it is an earnest given us of all the rest: 2 Cor. i. 10, For all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen.' A Christian hath a great many promises, and they are a-performing daily. God is delivering, comforting, protecting him, speaking peace to his conscience; but the greater part are yet to be performed. Present experiences do assure us of what is to come. Thus, stablish thy word,' that is, make it good by the event, that I may learn to trust another time, either for the same or other promises, or accomplishment of thy whole word.

Doct. That it is a matter of great consequence to have the word of God established to us, or to be confirmed in a certain belief of his promises.

David asketh it here as a very necessary thing, Stablish thy word unto

thy servant.' Give me, Lord, to look upon it as a stable and firm thing. This will appear if you consider the conveniency, necessity, utility, and profit of this establishment.

1. The conveniency and suitableness of it. It is very convenient that we should build strongly upon a strong foundation, that sure truths shall be entertained with a certain faith, and things taken as they are uttered. There is certitudo objecti, a certainty of the object itself; and certitudo subjecti, the certainty of the subject, our being persuaded of the certainty of it. The one warrants the other, and both are necessary to our comfort; that is, as the word is certain in itself, so it should be certain to us. No matter how strong the foundation be, if the building upon that foundation be weak, down it falleth. The word of God is stable in itself, but if we are not persuaded it is so, we are soon shaken with temptations. To stay a ship from being tossed upon the rocks, it is necessary the anchor-hold be good itself, and be fastened upon somewhat that is firm; therefore, Heb. vi. 18-20, the apostle speaks first of the stability of the ground, and then of the strength of the anchor. There is a firm rocky ground to build upon, the immutable promises of God; and a solid strong anchor, which is our faith and affiance. As faith without the promises is nothing but groundless and fruitless conceit, so the promises yield us no comfort without faith. The promises are Yea and Amen in Christ,' 2 Cor. i. 20; and then presently, Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ is God.' It is not sufficient that the promises be established, but we must be established upon them. They are Yea and Amen in Christ; but what is that to us? God may lose the glory of his truth, and we the comfort, if we be not established.

2. The necessity of it will appear if we consider--(1.) How natural unbelief is to us all; and (2.) How weak the faith of most is.

[1.] If we consider how natural unbelief is to us; it is a sin we suck in with our milk. When our first parents sinned against God, his word was not believed, and thereupon the sin was committed, Gen. iii. 4. The devil contradicted that which God delivered with his own mouth; his Nay prevails above God's Yea. Ye shall not surely die,' that was that which let in the first sin, and ever since it is very natural to us: Heb. iii. 12, Take heed lest there be an evil heart of unbelief in you, in departing from the living God.' Unbelief is the special part of the heart's wickedness; partly because we have wronged God, therefore are apt to suspect him; for men are always jealous of those whom they have wronged, and that they cannot mean well to them from whom they have received ill. We have wronged God, and therefore are suspicious of him and of his good-will to sinners. And partly because the truths of God lie cross to our lusts and carnal interest, which maketh us so ready to pick quarrels with him. Ahab would not hear Micaiah, not because he prophesied false, but evil: John iii. 20, They will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved.' I say, such strict rules, such close and quickening truths, as God hath published in the gospel, men could wish they were not true; that there were no heaven, nor hell, nor world to come; and therefore, because it lies so cross to our lusts, our wishes gain upon our understanding and blind us, and we are not apt to believe these things. Who will close with that which makes against him? Men, that are loath the word of God should prove true, are therefore slow of heart to believe it, Luke xxiv. And partly, because ever since we were born we have been trained up to live by sense; and are affected only with the things we see, hear, and feel; and therefore are little skilled in faith, which is the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1, which carrieth us to things above sense to the concernments of another world. In short, then, for these reasons, because it is

natural to us to live by sense, to indulge our own lusts, and to suspect those whom we have wronged, therefore unbelief of God is so rife in the world.

[2.] The necessity of establishment in the word of God will appear if we consider how weak the faith of most is. There are few that entertain the word as a sure and certain truth. There are several degrees of assent; there is conjecture, opinion, weak faith, and faith that is stronger, and that which comes up to an assurance of understanding, as the apostle calls it. There is conjecture, or a lighter inclination of the mind to the word of God, as possibly or probably true; a suspicious knowledge of things, or bare guess at them, when we go no higher than It may be so, that all this is true which God hath spoken concerning Christ and salvation. There is beyond this opinion, when the mind is more inclined to think it true, when we are so convinced of the truth of it that we are not able reasonably to contradict it; we think it true; but there is still a fear of the contrary, that it is not true, which prevails over us, and taints our practice, and weakens our affections, and withdraws them from things to come. Then beyond this there is faith, or a firm and undoubted persuasion of the truth of God's word, which also hath its latitude. There is weak faith, which hath its incident doubts. And there is beyond this, receiving the word in much assurance,' as the expression is, 1 Thes. i. 5. Still we may increase higher in the degree of our assent; for in this life there is never so much but there may be more, there is not so much faith but there may be more. There is something lacking to our faith, and it is not easy to grow up to the riches of the full assurance of understanding. The best have but a fluctuating doubting knowledge of spiritual truths, not a full assurance and persuasion of them. Therefore we need to ask establishment.

3. Consider the utility and profit of it. When once the word is established to us, we shall know how to live and how to die, and upon what terms to maintain comfort and holiness; whereas otherwise men live loosely and carelessly: Heb. iv. 2, The word profited not, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' Until the word of God be owned as a divine and infallible truth, it hath no efficacy upon us. When it is received merely by conjecture, as a possible truth, it works but weakly. Ay! but then it profits when we receive the word of God as the word of God, as a certain truth; when the soul comes to determine, Surely these are truths in which I am deeply concerned, upon which my eternal life or death doth depend. Without this God can have no service, and we no comfort, but are at a great uncertainty of spirit.

On the other side, let me tell you that all our coldness in duty, and ail our boldness in sinning, it comes from unbelief.

[1.] Our coldness in duty. What is the reason, when God offereth such great things to us as the eternal enjoyment of himself, glory, comfort, and happiness as much as heart can wish, that men are so dead-hearted, lifeless, and careless in the ways of God? when our work is so good, our ways so excellent, what is the reason of all our coldness and carelessness in the profession of religion? We have not a lively sense of eternity; we do not believe God upon his word. If we did, it would put life into us. Saith the apostle, Phil. iii. 14, This one thing I mind, and I press towards the mark.' Why? For the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.' When we mind our work, seriously and above all other things, not superficially and by the by, when we can see the prize of our high calling, as to run and hold the eye upon the mark, then he presseth onward that he may not lose the garland. So when we feel the rewards of grace, when we are persuaded of them, this puts spirit into us, and encourageth us against all deadness and faintness.

Ay! press onward then with a great deal of vehemency and earnestly. So 1 Cor. xv. 58, Be ye steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.' Here is the description of a godly man. How shall we do to keep the heart in such an earnest frame? By a sound belief of the promises; for so it follows, Forasmuch as you know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.' If holiness doth not flourish, there is a worm at the root, atheism and unbelief lies at the heart, and the want of such an assent to those great and glorious promises which God hath made known to us in Christ.

[2.] Our boldness in sinning. Why do men go on securely in ways of disobedience against God? Because they do not know whether the word be true, yea or nay. If a man had heaven and hell in his eye, if he were soundly persuaded of these things, certainly he would not venture the loss of heaven for a trifle; and would not upon such small temptations run the hazard of everlasting torments. You cannot drive an ass, the most stupid creature, into the fire which is burning before his eyes. So if these things were before our eyes we would not be so bold with God and so daring as we are. Temptation to sin must needs prevail with us when we have not faith; for when the temptation is strong and faith weak, where are we? A man will yield to his base lusts; for there is present profit, present pleasure, and we have no undoubted certainty of the rewards of obedience, and of the promises which are to be set against the temptation. But now, when we consider we have so great and precious promises, this will make us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; we will not easily sin against God, kick against the pricks, and run upon danger laid before our eyes: In vain is the snare laid in the sight of a bird.'

Use 1. To reprove us for looking so little after the establishment of the word. There are many that content themselves with a loose

profession of the name of Christ, but are not established in a sound belief of the scriptures. Ask them why they are of this and that religion. They have been taught so, been brought up in it; and so they might have been Mahometans upon the same account that they are Christians, if they had been bred there where the name of Mahomet is of more request than the name of Christ. But then there are others that live by guess, and carry on some natural devotion; but their souls were never acquainted with the mystery of grace, never soundly established in it; they have a conjecture. There are others that can dispute for their religion, that see a reasonableness in the Christian faith, and why they should be of this opinion rather than that. Ay! but their hearts were never subdued to God. Hath the Spirit established divine truths upon thy soul, and wrought these things upon thy heart? hath it convinced thy judgment, awakened thy conscience, changed thy heart, given thee any taste of God's love in Christ, drawn thee out of the world into near and sweet communion with God? Truths are by him established to us, and represented with evidence and power, 1 Cor. ii. 4. Alas! all else we can attain to is but cold and fruitless notion, which will not warm the heart; some cursory opinions, that will not hold thy heart under the awe of God, and guide thee in the paths of holiness to eternal life; and therefore rest not in this, that you have some knowledge concerning Christ and privileges by him. But are your hearts established? have you a sense of these truths wrought in you by the Holy Ghost?

Use 2. It exhorteth us to use the means whereby the word may be established.

1. Chiefly observe experiences, how it is accomplished in the course of God's providence, and inward feeling of thy own heart. What answers of prayer have you when you have been wrestling with God and putting his

promises in suit at the throne of grace? Every day God is fulfilling one promise or another, to train us up-to look for more at his hands. That we may trust him for our inheritance and our final blessing, he first giveth us a proof of his truth in lesser matters. The more you observe the dealings of God with your own souls, and the fulfilling his word to you, the more will your heart be confirmed against atheism, and established in the belief of the divine authority of the scripture. It concerns us much to look to this, that our hearts be firmly settled against atheism, especially when such errors are abroad, and divisions in the church, and the name of God is blasphemed. Now, by these daily mercies doth God stablish his word, make it good to your souls: Ps. xviii. 30, The word of the Lord is a tried word.' There is more than letters and syllables; God standeth to it, it is a tried word.' When you have challenged him you have found the scripture fulfilled upon appeals to God and applications to the throne of grace. When you have been pleading with God; Lord, is not this thy handwriting, the promises thou hast made to thy people? the Lord hath answered this from heaven, and said, Yea, this is my promise. He hath given in an answerable promise.

2. It engageth you to dependence and assurance of faith: Ps. ix. 10, They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.' Whosoever hath observed God's dealings will see God is to be trusted, he may be depended upon if he hath said anything in his word--they that know thy name,' they that have acquainted themselves with God and the course of his dispensations. The promises will not lie by as a dead stock: Ps. cxvi. 1, 2, God hath heard my voice and my supplications, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.' This is that which will quicken you to rejoice in God and to a holy thankfulness, when you compare his word

with the effects of it, when you see how it is made good: Ps. lvi. 10, In God will I praise his word; in the Lord will I praise his word.' A single mercy is not so much, nor so engaging upon our hearts to thankfulness, as when observing the mercy hath been the fruit of a promise. This hath been the practice of God's saints; Joshua takes notice of it: Josh. xxiii. 14, Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning yon;' 1 Kings viii. 56, There hath not failed one word of all his good promises, which he hath promised by the hand of Moses his servant.' You will often find the very letter of the promise made good in the course of God's dealings, and if you would but observe his daily providence, you would be trained up in more waiting upon God for your final blessings.

Secondly, Let us come to the person for whom he prays, Stablish thy word;' but to whom? To thy servant.' Here note

Doct. That particular application of general promises is necessary.

This word which he would have to be established was most likely to be a promise of sanctification; for in the former verse he had prayed for mortification and vivification, and now for sanctification. But be it any other promise, certainly that word which was made to others was likewise made to me, as if he had been specified therein by name. Thus must general truths be taken home by particular application, that they may lie the closer to our hearts. Ps. xxvii. 8, the offer of God's favour is general, Seek ye my face;' but the application is particular to himself, Lord, I will seek thy face;' David takes it as spoken to him in particular. So Ps. cxvi. 15, f Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints;' and then, Truly, Lord, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid.' The comfort concerned all God's children. The life and death of the saints is very precious in the eyes of God; he hath a particular care over them, and tells all their bones. Now,

Lord, saith David, let me have the comfort of this promise; I am thy servant. So 1 Tim. i. 15, This is a faithful saying,' &c., whereof I am chief.' This holy art should we learn of creeping under the covert of a promise, and working ourselves by faith into the comfort of it.

But rather, secondly, you may observe the character that he puts upon himself, Thy servant. David was a king, but at the throne of grace he styles himself God's servant, the fittest title that he could use when he prays for grace.' Hence note--

Doct. He that is a servant of God may seek and expect grace from him.

Here I shall show--

1. Who is God's servant.

2. Why we must use this plea when we come to have promises accomplished.

1. Who is God's servant? I answer--He that dedicates himself to God's use, and he that lives under a sense and conscience of his dedication.

[1.] He that dedicates himself to God's use. We are God's servants by covenant and voluntary contract. It is true our service is due to him upon other accounts, but we enter into it by contract. It is due by virtue of creation, for he made us out of nothing; therefore we owe him all that we have, and thus all creatures were made for God's service: Ps. cxix. 91, They continue this day according to thine ordinances; for all are thy servants.' Heaven and earth, and sun and moon, and stars, and beasts, and every creeping thing, and every plant and herb, they all serve God according to the ends for which they were made. But especially men and angels; they were made for God's use immediately. Other things were made ultimately and terminately for God; man immediately for God, Ps. ciii. 21. The angels are his ministers, and so is man God's servant. And then by the right of redemption; we are bound to serve him as the captive was to serve the buyer; he that bought

another out of slavery, all his time and strength belonged to him: 1 Cor. vi. 20, Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your souls and bodies.' But this shows only de jure what we ought to be; we ought all to be God's servants, as he created us, and redeemed us by the blood of Christ. But de facto none are his servants but those who resign and yield up themselves to his use: Rom. vi. 13, Yield up yourselves to the Lord.' God will have his right and title confirmed by our consent, and therefore he that is a servant of God one time or other hath entered into covenant with God, he hath consented to yield up himself to walk with God in a strict obedience. All that thus yield up themselves to be God's servants they do it with shame; they are ashamed they did no sooner think of their creator, in their youth, at their first coming to the use of reason, and think of him that bought them by his blood: 1 Peter iv. 3, For the time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles,' &c. They have too long dishonoured God, destroyed their own souls, and kept their creator out of his right. And they do it too with a sense of God's love, in the new title he hath by redemption: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, For the love of Christ constrains us,' &c.

[2.] He is one liveth under a sense and conscience of his dedication, not as his own, but God's. When you have given up yourselves to God's service, you must not walk as you list, but as your master pleaseth. Aristotle makes it the property of a servant to be one that can not live as he would, that hath no will of his own, but hath given up himself to be commanded and directed by another, and sometimes contrary to his own inclination. They are rebels and not servants that said Our tongues are our own,' Ps. xii. 3. Your tongues are not your own to speak what you please, nor your hearts your own to think what you please, nor your hands your own to do what you please. You are God's

servants, therefore must be wholly at his will. The angels, that are God's ministers, when they are described, they do his pleasure,' Ps. ciii. 21. So your business is to do the will of God; not to please yourself, men or the flesh, but to please God, to do the will of God, without any respect to your own inclinations and worldly interests; and therefore your hearts will rise against sin upon this account, when you are tempted to do anything that is contrary to the will of God: Oh! I am not my own; these members are Christ's. You look upon every thing as God's, to be employed to his service.

2. Those that would have the word to be established, why must they be servants of the Lord?

[1.] God doth not look to the work, but to the qualification of the person. God will not accept a man for one good work, one prayer; but he looks to the qualification of his person. The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,' Prov. xxviii. 9. How is that? Not only when it is managed in a careless fashion, when a wicked man prays wickedly. No; let him do his best; for it is said, Prov. xxi. 27, The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?' At best it is an abomination; God will not accept of a sacrifice at his hands; and therefore the qualification of the person is to be regarded when we pray for a blessing promised, James v. 16. There is the qualification of the prayer; it must be fervent, effectual;' a prayer driven with life and motion, that hath spirit and life. Ay! but it must be of a righteous person.' As naturalists speak of a jewel which, if put into a dead man's mouth, loseth all its virtue and efficacy, so prayer in the mouth of a wicked carnal man loseth its efficacy with God. When one that had revolted from the Romans sent gifts to the Roman general, he made him this answer, He should first return to his obedience to the state of Rome.

So God saith to wicked men, first let them be God's servants, and then they shall have the blessing of his promises.

[2] It is agreeable to the covenant, for the covenant is mutual: I will be your God, and you shall be my people.' All promises relate to a covenant. Now, in every covenant there is ratio dati et accepti--something required as well as something given, for it binds mutually; therefore if we would have God give us grace, we must yield obedience. Precepts and promises go hand in hand; and therefore they that would have promises performed, they must observe precepts, and mingle resolutions of duty with expectations of mercy. That is the covenant way of dealing with God; there must be a sincere purpose and endeavour to serve God. I am thy servant, therefore stablish thy word to me.

Use. To press you to become God's servants. I might bring motives both from the time past, present, and to come. (1.) From the time past. You are obliged to be so. You are his creatures; you have life, being, and all things from him. We cannot receive a small kindness from man but it doth produce respect; I am your servant. Shall a kindness from God less effect us, who made us, and gives us life, breath, and all things? We take no notice of w r hat comes from an invisible hand. Here is the wonder, that the great God, who hath no need of us, so often provoked by us, that is of such excellent majesty, so far above us, should take notice of us. Therefore, if God made us, keeps us, and maintains us from day to day, and abaseth himself to behold us, to look after us, this should engage us. (2.) And then from what is present. The honour that is put upon you; it is a great advancement to be God's servant. The meanest offices about princes are accounted honourable. Jesus Christ himself as mediator he hath this title put upon him, My righteous servant,' Isa. liii. 11; and the angels they are your

fellow-servants, Ps. ciii. 21; they are called ministers of God.'

Likewise for the present you have free access to God: God's servants may stand in his presence, and they have liberty to ask anything they need of. The Queen of Sheba said concerning Solomon in 1 Kings x. 8, Happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom.' Much more may it be said concerning God's servants, blessed are those that stand in. his presence, that have such free leave to hold communion with God; to come, and have assurance of welcome whenever they come. (3.) And for the time to come. God's service will issue itself into everlasting blessedness; God's servants have excellent wages: John xii. 26, If any man serve me, he shall be there where I am, and my Father will honour him.' Christ and his Father will study what honour they can put upon him. Therefore be God's servants that you may please him for the present, and comfortably wait for his everlasting blessing. Thus I have gone over the first thing, namely the request, Stablish thy word unto thy servant.'

Secondly, The motive and argument, Who is devoted to thy fear.' The word may be rendered either which, or who, as relating either to thy word or thy servant.

1. Thy word; for in the original Hebrew the posture of the verse is thus, Stablish to thy servant thy word, which is to the fearing of thee;' that is, given that thou mayest be feared, there being in the word of God the greatest arguments and inducements to fear and reverence and obey him. The word of God was appointed to this use, to plant the fear of God in our hearts, and to increase our reverence of God. Not that we may play the wanton with promises, and feed our lusts with them. I rather take our own translation as more accommodate, and it hath such a sense as that, Ps. cix. 4, But I give myself unto prayer.' In the original it is, But I prayer;' and Stablish thy word to

thy servant, who is to thy fear.' Our translators add, to make the sense more full, addicted,' devoted to thy fear,' that is, that makes it his business, care, and desire to stand in the fear of God.

2. Now this is added as a true note and description of God's servants, as being a main thing in religion: Ps. cxi. 10, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,' the first in point of order, and it is the first thing when we begin to be wise, to think of God, to have awful thoughts of God; it is a chief point of wisdom, the great thing that makes us wise to salvation. And it is added as an argument of prayer: Neh. i. 11, O Lord, let thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name.' The more any is given to the fear of God, the more assurance they have of God's love, and readiness to hear them at the throne of grace. The point is this--

Doct. That man is indeed God's servant who is devoted to his fear. There may be weaknesses and failings, but for the main he is swayed by the fear of God.

1. What it is to fear God.

2. Why this is a sure note of God's servant, because it removes all the lets of obedience.

1. What it is to fear God. There is a servile and a filial fear; a fear of wrath, which the worst may have: James ii. 19, The devils believe and tremble;' and a fear of offending, which the best must have: Prov. xxviii. 14, Blessed is he that feareth alway;' a reverent disposition of heart towards God as our sovereign lord and master, yea, as our father in Jesus Christ.

For the first of these:--

[1.] A fear of wrath. Every fear of wrath is not sinful; it is a duty rather than a sin. All God's children are bound to have a tender sense of God's wrath or displeasure against sin, to make them awful and

serious in the spiritual life; as in Heb. xii. 27, Let us serve God with reverence and godly fear.' Mark, upon that account and consideration, as he is a consuming fire;' that should have an influence upon our godly fear; and Mat. x. 28, Fear not them that can but kill the body, but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.' The words do not only contain a description of the person who ought to be feared, but the ground and reason why he is to be feared; and therefore it is not simply the fear of wrath that is sinful, but it is the servility and slavishness of it. Now, what is the servility and slavishness of the fear of wrath? Partly when our own smart and terror is feared more than the displeasing of God; and they have a mind to sin but are afraid of hell; and it is fear accompanied with hatred. Servile fear, though it keep us from some sins, as a wolf may be scared from the prey, yet keeps its devouring nature. It is accompanied with hatred of God: all that fear God they hate him; and indeed they could wish there were no God, none to call them to account; they could wish he were not so just and holy as he is. And so here lies the evil of it, not so much fear of wrath, for that is a grace rightly conversant about its object, but as it tends to this hatred of God. And partly too servility lies in this, as it makes us shy of God, and run away from him rather than draw near to him, as Adam ran into the bushes to hide himself. Holy fear is an awe of God upon the soul, but that keeps us in a holy communion with him: I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me;' but that fear which makes us fly from God is slavish. And partly as it hath torment and perplexity in it, and so hindereth us in God's service: Fear hath torment in it.' The fear of wrath, that is a duty; but slavish fear is such a fear of wrath which makes us hate God and shun his presence, and afraid more of wronging ourselves than wronging of God; and such a fear

that hath torment and perplexity in it, that cannot serve God so cheerfully.

[2.] There is a filial fear, a fear of reverence. This fear of God was in Christ as mediator, Isa. xi. 1, 2. Among other graces there reckoned up which do belong to Jehovah the branch,' to Christ Jesus, this is one, The fear of the Lord.' Christ as man had a reverent affection to his Father whom he served, and this fear it continueth to all eternity in the blessed spirits that are in heaven. The saints and angels have this kind of fear, a dread of the holy God, and a reverent and awful respect to his majesty. It is an essential respect which passeth between the creature and the creator, and can never be abolished. Now, this fear of reverence consisteth in a high esteem of God, of his majesty, glory, power, and in the sense and continual thoughts of his presence; and then a loathness to sin against God, or to offend in his sight, to do anything that is unseemly when God is a looker-on. What! can a man sin freely that lives in the sight of the holy God, when he hath a deep sense of his excellency imprinted on his heart? This is that fear which is the note of God's servants.

2. This must needs be the note of God's servants, because it is the great principle that both hindereth us from sin and quickeneth us to duty. The fear of God is one of the radical and essential graces which belong to a Christian; it is a mighty restraint from sin. The beasts were made to serve man, and how are they held in subjection and obedience to man? The dread of you,' saith God, shall be upon every beast of the earth,' Gen. ix. 2. So we are made for the service of God. Now, how are we kept in subjection to God? When the fear of God is upon our heart, that will not suffer us freely to do any thing that is displeasing to God: Exod. xx. 20, God is come to prove you, that his fear may be before your faces, that you sin not.' It is a great remedy

against all temptation of gain, and worldly profit, and temporal convenience. Look, as that man that had a fear of the king upon his heart: 2 Sam. xviii. 12, Why didst thou not smite him to the ground?' saith Joab; and the man answered, Though I should receive a thousand shekels, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son;' just such a fear hath a child of God of his heavenly king: No; though I should have never so much offered me to tempt me from my duty; no, I dare not, the Lord hath charged me to the contrary. Or, as when the Rechabites were tempted to drink wine, pots were brought before them to inflame their appetite: No; we dare not. These passages express the workings of heart in one that fears God; though temptation be present, and never so much convenience thereby, yet how can they do this wickedness and sin against God?

Use. It informeth us who are God's servants; those that have most of this fear of God planted in their hearts: Neh. vii. 2, He was a faithful man, and feared God above many.' And then that they express it in their conversation. God will not take it planted in our hearts, if we do not obey him in those things that are contrary to our interests and natural affections. When God tried Abraham that was to offer his Isaac, Gen. xxii., Now I know that thou fearest me, since thou hast not withheld thine only son,' &c. Why? was Abraham un known to God before that time? As Peter told Christ, Lord, thou knowest all things.' Cannot God see the inward springs and motions of our souls, and what affections are there? Could not God tell what was in Abraham? But now, I acknowledge. For God will not acknowledge it in this sense until we express it. They are the true servants of God that have his fear planted in their hearts, and express it upon all occasions.

SERMON XLIV.

Turn away my reproach which I fear; for thy judgments are good.--Ver. 39.

IN these words you have--

1. A request, take away my reproach.

2. A reason to enforce it, for thy judgments are good.

First, For the request, Turn away,' roll from upon me; so it signifies. He was clothed with reproach; now roll from me my reproach. Some think he means God's condemnatory sentence, which would turn to his reproach, or some remarkable rebuke from God because of his sin. Rather, I think, the calumnies of his enemies; and he calls it my reproach,' either as deserved by himself, or as personally lighted upon him, the reproach which was like to be his lot and portion in the world through the malice of his enemies: The reproach which I fear,' that is, which I have cause to expect, and am sensible of the sad consequences of. Secondly, For the reason by which this is enforced, For thy judgments are good.' There are different opinions about the formality of this argument. Some take the reason thus: Let me not suffer reproach for adhering to thy word, thy word which is so good. But David doth not speak here of suffering reproach for righteousness' sake, but such reproach as was likely to befall him because of his own infirmities and failings. Reproaches for righteousness' sake are to be rejoiced in. But he saith, This I fear;' and therefore I suppose this doth not hit the reason, neither the other sense, Why should I be looked upon as an evil-doer as long as I keep thy law and observe thy statutes? others judge badly of me, but I appeal to thy good judgment. Others, by judgments, understand God's dealings: Thou dost not deal with men

according to their desert; thy dispensations are kind and gracious.

Rather thus: by judgments are meant the ways, statutes, and ordinances of God, called judgments, because all our words, works, thoughts, are to be judged according to the sentence of the word. Now these, it is pity they should suffer in my reproach and Ignominy; this is that I fear more than anything else that can happen to me. I think the reason will better run thus: Lord, there is in thy law, word, covenant, many promises to encourage thy people, and therefore rules to provide for the due honour and credit of thy people. Take it so.

I shall, with respect to the necessities of the people of God, insist a little upon the former clause, and observe this point:--

That reproaches are a usual, but yet a great and grievous, affliction to the children of God. They are usual, for David saith, my reproach.' Even this holy man could not escape the censures of his enemies; and they are grievous, for he saith, which I fear.'

First, That they are usual. David often complains of it in this psalm, and mentions it as one great evil to God, ver. 22, Remove from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept thy testimonies;' and again, ver. 42, So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me, for I trust in thy word;' and ver. 69, The proud have forged a lie against me.' God may let loose a barking Shimei upon a holy David, and therefore doth he so often complain of reproaches. So elsewhere: Ps. xxxi. 13, For I have heard the slander of many.' Sundry sorts of persons made him their butt, upon which they spent and let fly the arrows of censure and reproach: Ps. xxxv. 15, The objects gathered themselves together against me, they did tear me, and ceased not.' Tear me, meaning in his name; that was rent and torn pieces with their reproaches; the abjects gathered themselves, &c. Base dust will many times be flying in the faces of the children of God; and Jeremiah tells

us, I have heard the defaming of many;' and Job and other servants of God, yea, our Lord himself was reviled; he endured the contradiction of sinners,' many a bitter reproach, even of the highest crimes against either table. There were objected to him blasphemy and sedition, the highest crime against the first, and the highest crime against the second table. The Son of God, that was so meek, innocent, just, and did so much good in every place, yet he met with odious aspersions; therefore we cannot say that they are faulty because they are aspersed, since this hath been the portion of the most eminent godly persons. And after that we are told, Ps. lxiv. 3, 4, They whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect.' Perfection meets with envy, and envy vents itself by detraction; and when men cannot reach the height of others by a holy imitation, then by odious imputations they seek to make them as vile, low, and base as themselves. Thus it is a usual affliction.

Secondly, It is a grievous affliction; for the man of God, that was after God's own heart, he saith, The reproach which I so feared.' It is called persecution, Gal. iv. 29; compare with Gen. xxi. 9, and you shall see it was mocking and reproach. The scourge of the tongue is one of the basest persecutions that the children of God are tried withal; and they are called cruel mockings,' Heb. xi. 36. There is as much cruelty and as deep a wound many times made by the tongue of reproach as by the fist of wickedness.

To confirm it by reasons. Reproach must needs be grievous, because it is against nature, and against grace.

1. It is against nature. Contempt is a heavy thing to bear, and as honour is more grateful to some persons, so reproach is more grievous than many ordinary crosses. Many would lose their goods cheerfully, yet

are grieved with the loss of their names. According to the constitution and frame of men's spirits so they are affected, some with shame more than with fear. There seems to be excellency and gallantry in sufferings which are honourable, and many can bear that; but the best spirits are deeply affected with shame, and disgraceful punishment is more dreadful than a painful one. Jesus Christ, that had all the innocent affections of human nature, and upon occasion showed them, he took notice of mockings and reproaches: Ps. xxii. 7, All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head.' A good name is more precious to some than life; and possibly that may be the reason why these two are coupled together, Eccles. vii. 1, A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.' The coupling of these two sentences together seems to intimate this, that men had rather die than lose their names. If a man die, his memory may be fragrant, he may leave his name behind him; but it is more hateful to have their names and credit mangled than their flesh with sharp swords. Now it is grievous to nature; there is somewhat of corruption in it. Now God knows how to strike in the right vein. The godly are not so mortified to their credit in the world many times, when they are mortified to other interests. And therefore God would try them in this way, and exercise them, that he may humble them, and fit them more for his own use. All that I have spoken is but to show it is a thing grievous to nature.

2. It must needs be grievous because grace concurs; as the flood was the more violent, and did overspread the world, when not only the mouth of the great deep was opened below, but the windows of heaven above; then the floods did swell, and overspread the whole world. I bring it to this purpose; when the windows of heaven are opened above, when grace looks upon it as an affliction as well as nature, then the

afflictions must needs be the more grievous. Now certainly grace concurs to the sense of our affliction, for next to a good conscience there is not a greater blessing than a good name holily got. You may observe, usually he that is prodigal of his credit certainly will not be very tender of his conscience. Grace teacheth us to value a good name, partly because it is God's gift, a blessing adopted and taken into the covenant, as other such like blessings are. Promises are frequent, especially in the Old Testament, where heaven is sparingly mentioned. A good name is promised as the reward of the righteous, and the name of the wicked shall rot;' it is threatened as a punishment of the wicked; for a good name is a shadow of eternity. When a man dies, his name he leaves behind him, which is a pledge of our living after death. Therefore the Old Testament abounds with promises of this kind: he leaves a good name behind him, as spices when broken and dissolved leave an excellent scent. And partly too because grace gives us a right judgment of all things. Now, it is represented in scripture as better than riches, Prov. xxii. 1. It is better, as in other respects, so in this; it is a motive more pure and sublime than wealth, and in the operations of it it comes next to grace. A dreggy soul is for that which is more base, but grace teacheth us to value things. So Eccles. vii. 1, A good name is better than precious ointment.' Aromatical ointments are things of great use and esteem among the Jews; they are counted a chief part of their treasures: and so a good name is better than precious ointment; that is, it is better than other riches, for this was a great part of their riches. And partly too another reason why grace teacheth us to prize it, be cause of the great inconveniences which attend the loss of a good name, and the misrepresentation of the people of God to the world. The glory of God is much interested in the credit of his servants. When they pollute and shame themselves, the

Lord is polluted in them: Ezek. xiii. 19, Will they pollute me among my people;' and Jer. xxxiv. 16, Ye have polluted my name.' Christ, that will here after be admired in his saints, will now be glorified in them. The shame of our miscarriages, real or supposed, redounds to God and religion itself. And therefore, when people are possessed and filled with prejudices against religious persons, they are possessed and filled with prejudices against the will of God and the unquestionable interests of Christ Jesus; and the world, that hates God, Christ, and religion, will presently say, These are your professors, and this is your profession! Therefore, since the credit of religion lieth much in it, grace teacheth us to value it. Besides, too, their safety lies in it; for by defaming the worshippers of Christ they make way for greater persecutions; and Satan is Usually first a liar, and then a murderer, John viii. 44; and when their slanders abound, troubles will not long be kept out. As heretofore they invested the primitive Christians with bears' skins, and then baited them as bears, so they represent them to the world as a vile and infamous sort of men, and then the persecution is the better countenanced. First they smite with the tongue, and then with the fist of wickedness; and therefore their safety lies very much in this. And as their safety, so grace teacheth us to value it upon other accounts--their usefulness. Nature desires a good name, but it is for their own conveniences. But the children of God, if they desire a good name, it is to honour God; and that is the difference between vainglory or a desire of the good opinion of others. If it terminate in self-respects, it is vainglory; but if the heart be pure and right in order to God, then it comes from grace. A blemished instrument will be of little use. Most would refuse to take their meat from a leprous hand. It is Satan's policy, when he cannot discourage instruments from the work of God, then he seeks to

blemish them and blast them. The apostle tells us that those which are called to public office, they should be very careful of their credit, that they may promote their work; for he puts down this as one of their qualifications: 1 Tim. iii. 7, He must have a good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.' Interpreters differ a little how diabo'los, which we translate devil, is to be interpreted. Either it signifies devil or slanderer; both senses are good; lest he fall into the snare of the devil, or the snare of the slanderer. The devil hath his spies that watch over us, and they have set their snares, and watch for your halting, that so the service may be blemished, and the gospel obstructed and hindered. Well, then, grace prizeth a good name because of the consequences, and because the Lord's honour and our safety and service are concerned in it.

Use 1. First, Here is advice to the person reproached. O Christians! acknowledge God in the affliction, if this be your lot and portion. David goes to God to stop it there; it is best stopped with God: Turn away my reproach.' It is a great and grievous affliction, but in all things God hath an aim. Look, what is said of afflictions in general may be applied to this particular of reproaches. Now what is God's aim and end in afflictions? In general, to try, purge, and make white,' Dan. xi. 35; or, as it is Deut. viii. 16, To humble thee, and prove thee, and do thee good at the latter end.' Let us take that method; here is God's end:--

First, To humble thee. Carnal men may shoot at rovers, but many times we find ourselves pricked at heart. Slanders may revive the sense of guilt. They may intend harm, but you should receive good by this as by every affliction. Plutarch, in his excellent treatise of profiting by a man's enemies, illustrates it by this comparison of Jason, who had an imposthume let out by the dart of his enemy. They may fling darts at

random, and intend harm, but you shall get good by it. Surely there is some special cause when the Lord permits this, when volleys of reproaches shall follow one after another j therefore he suffers others to judge you, to awaken you to self-judging. Mind this, and you will be no losers by reproaches. Well, enter into your own hearts, search them thoroughly; see what it is God aims at, whether there be any way of wickedness in you that hitherto you have not discovered; and when you come to see this sink of sin, then your enemies do but help to humble you. Many times the voice of a slanderer may do that which the voice of a preacher cannot do. And the truth is, there is such a wantonness, such a presumptuous headiness in the professors of religion, that the word cannot reclaim them, they are so radicated in certain sins; and therefore God will follow you with sharp reproaches of his enemies, and doth at this time, to call you to a more serious judging yourselves, to see your factious headiness, which certainly doth predominate among God's professing people.

There are many sins to which this sharp kind of affliction is proper, and therefore God gives out this grievous dispensation to lay open his people to bitter reproaches and slanders. I will tell you some of the sins. My business is not now to state what is the great sin that God is judging among his people, but to help every one in particular to look to ourselves, for that I do not conceive to be so fit to be spoken here.

1. Pride. There is a twofold pride--pride in mind, which is called self-conceit, and pride in affections, which is called vainglory. Now there is no such effectual cure as reproaches for either of these.

[1.] To speak of the pride in mind, self-conceit. We are very apt to be puffed up for our doing and suffering for God poor empty bladders are soon puffed up--and think ourselves somebody, if there be but a little

self-denial; as Peter said, Master, we have left all and followed thee.' He was conceited of what he had left for Christ. What had he left? A net, a fisher-boat; it was a great all indeed! Mat. xix. 27. We are easily puffed up if we suffer a little for God, and the Lord intrencheth us in our worldly conveniences, for self-conceit may grow out of self-denial. Too often we find it so. Pride is a sin that grows out of mortification of other sins; it lives in us while we live in the body; therefore, 1 John ii. 16, it is called pride of life.' And some compare it to a shirt; that garment is last put off. It is the most inward and nearest to the soul, and out of the conquest of other sins there ariseth pride. Now, if we have been too self-conceited, the Lord will humble us, either by permitting us to fall into such scandals as may remember us of our frailty, and what unworthy weak creatures we are in ourselves; sometimes by taking off the restraints of his grace and of his Spirit, and permitting us to fall. Austin is bold in saying it is profitable for proud men to fall some times into open sin, that they may know and understand themselves. He speaks it upon the occasion of Peter, when he was boasting of his own strength, Though all men leave thee, yet will not I.' How foully did he fall! Ay! but at other times God useth a more merciful dispensation, for he doth not let his people fall into those grievous falls but upon great provocation. But usually at other times he lets loose the tongues of virulent men to lessen us in our own opinion and in the opinion of the world. Now, how innocent soever we be of the crimes charged upon us, yet in all these cases we must look upward and inward. Upward; this is not without God; he is at the end of causes; he could blast these tongues, and stay and stop them at his pleasure; the Lord can keep us from the strife of tongues,' Ps. xxxi. 20. But now, when he permits this, his hand must be owned; look upward: Micah vii. 9, I will bear the indignation of the Lord, be cause

I have sinned against him.' At such a time God spits in the faces of his people, and puts us to shame; and therefore we should look upward and see the hand of God in all this. And look inward; there you will see such a sink of sin as deserves this and much more; and therefore a sense of our sinfulness in other things should make us more submissive to the Lord's correcting hand. We must see the hand of God; for if we do not look to that we will be drawn to sin, into reviling for reviling, and exasperation for exasperation. Many times our graces do us as much hurt as our sins. Self-conceit the Lord will mortify one way or other.

[2.] For vainglory, the other sort of pride, valuing esteem too much, our credit in the world, and pleasing ourselves in the opinion others have of us. We would usurp God's throne and reign in the hearts of men, therefore we are so touchy. Having set a high value upon ourselves, we are troubled when others will not come up to our price. Pride is one of the oldest enemies that ever God had; it was born in heaven in the breasts of the fallen angels, but God tumbled them presently out of heaven, as soon as pride got into the heart. Now, when his children harbour it, the Lord hath a quarrel with them; and therefore, for giving entertainment to pride, he will lay us low enough: 2 Cor. xii. 7, Lest I should be exalted above measure, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.' There is a great deal of do what this thorn in the flesh is. Some will have it to be some trouble or sickness. Most probably so, but it takes in many afflictive evils; for, ver. 10, he mentioneth reproaches. Paul was too apt to be proud. The Lord made him an eminent instrument; by his faith he had abundance of revelations. But God will prick the bladder; he doth it with thorns; and he calls it his infirmity, necessity, reproach. Infirmity, by that I mean some reigning sickness. But

reproach was one ingredient. Now, lest we should fee puffed up by vain conceit, the Lord humbles us with infirmities, necessities, reproaches.

2. Another sin for which God humbles us is careless walking. When we are negligent, and do not take notice of the carnality that grows upon us, and the fleshly frame and temper of heart which breaks out into our lives, the Lord suffers others to reproach; then they gather up our filth, that we may see what cause we have to take our ways to heart. Every man that would live strictly had need either of faithful friends or watchful enemies; either faithful friends to admonish him, or watchful enemies to censure him; they show us the spots in our garments that are to be washed off. Many times a friend is blinded with love, and grows as partial to us as we are to ourselves, will suffer sin upon us and not tell us of it; then the Lord sets spies upon us to watch for our halting, Jer. xx. 10; and therefore we need go to God and pray: Ps. xxvii. 11, Lord, lead me in a plain path because of my observers.' They lie in wait and seek to take us tripping in aught they can. We can no more be without watchful enemies than without faithful friends. How ignorant should a man be of himself if others did not put him in mind sometimes of his failings! Therefore God makes use of virulent persons in the world as a rod to thrash the dust out of our garments.

3. To humble us for our censuring. For if we have not been so tender of others' credit, the Lord makes us see the bitterness of the affliction in our own case, by giving us the like measure that we have meted unto others, Mat. vii. 1, 2, that is, we shall find others as hardly think of us as we have of them. Good thoughts and speeches of other men are the best preservative of our own good names. God will take care of them that are careful not to judge and censure. And therefore it is no great matter whether the report be true or false; but a Christian is to examine, Have not we drawn it upon ourselves by slandering others? for

God usually payeth us home in our own coin. He that is much given to censuring seldom or never escapes great censures himself. It is said in the Psalms, Let his own words grieve him,' that is, fall upon him. How do our own words fall upon us? Why, the Lord punisheth us for our censuring of others. Oh! then, humble thyself before God for the reproaches thou hast cast upon others: Eccles. vii. 21, Take no heed to all the words spoken against thee, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee,' that is, speaking evil against thee. Hard sayings and speeches of others against us may put us in mind of God's just hand, of measuring to us as we have measured unto others; and therefore we should be the more patient if they wrong us; it is but in the like kind that we have wronged others. God will humble us for our censuring, which is so natural and rife, especially with younger, weak, and more unmodified persons.

Secondly, The Lord doth it, as to humble us, so to try us.

1. The first thing he will try in you by such a grievous affliction and such volleys of reproaches is your faith, when all the world is set to condemn you. What faith?

[1.] Our faith in the great day of accounts, that is one great object of faith; and when the world is set to condemn us, our faith is tried, to see if we can rest with the vindication we shall have in the day of our Lord. So much you may see, 1 Cor. iv. 3-5, But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness; and then shall every man have praise of God.' Every man that deserves it, and is qualified for it, shall have praise with God. Ela'chiston, it was a very small thing to be judged of man's day, because he expected God's day for the clearing of all things here in the world. Sin and error often get the

major vote. Tollite impios was the cry of the rabble against Christians. If there was any trouble it was for the Christians' sake. Take away the ungodly, meaning the Christians, because they denied the heathen gods. Now, what was their comfort? The day of the manifestation of all things. So when we are looked upon as the pests of mankind, yet when we can comfort ourselves, there will come a day of the manifestation of the sons of God, that is enough, the great day of judgment is at hand, so this will set all things right again.

[2.] To try our faith in more particular promises. The Lord hath promised to provide for the health and credit of his people; so far he hath promised for their safety, and their daily bread for their maintenance, and any earthly blessing that is good for us. Now the Lord will see if we can trust him with our credit as well as for other things: Ps. cxix. 42, So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me; for I trust in thy word.' I say, the Lord hath in his covenant undertaken to preserve a Christian in all his interests and concernments, so far as shall be for his glory and our good, and so far we receive it. And a Christian, when he gives up himself to God, gives up everything he hath to God in a way of consecration to God's use. God is the guardian of my body and soul; I give up my estate and life that he may watch over me night and day, and I give up my name and credit: Ps. xxxi. 20, Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues;' that the Lord may take a charge of our names as well as our persons and estates. Now, the Lord requires a trust in us according to the extent of the covenant, that is to say, a waiting, a confidence, that our lives are not in man's power, that he can turn the hearts of men, and give you favour in their eyes, when it is for his glory and your good: Ps. xxxvii. 5-7, Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and

he shall bring it to pass.' There is the trust that is required. Oh! many times we seem to lose our estimation amongst men, and to be buried under calumnies and reproaches; but it will not be long. Your person and cause may be obscured, it may have a winter night of trouble; but a morning of resurrection, both of persons and names, will come; it will be brought forth as the noon-day. The Lord is able to do this; the integrity of your hearts will be made known, and you will be absolved by God. Our Lord Jesus was a pattern to us of this. Christ, when foul crimes were laid to his charge by his slanderers--they had charged him with compliance with Satan, with blasphemy and sedition--what doth he do? The apostle will tell you: 1 Peter ii. 23, He committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.' There is the faith of Christ; and therefore God will try this faith, whether we can with confidence and willingness deliver ourselves to the will of our heavenly Father and righteous Judge; whether we can resign up ourselves to him, to be disgraced or honoured as he shall think fit. When we commit and submit, perfectly resign up ourselves to the will of God, in confidence of his righteousness and faithfulness in Christ, then we behave ourselves as Christians.

[3.] God will try our faith in the eternal recompenses, whether we do so believe the glory of heaven, the glory which shall be revealed in us in the other world, that we can be contented to be humbled and prepared for it by the reproaches of the present world: Mat. v. 11, 12, Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.' Why? Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' Oh! it is enough we shall have glory hereafter. Your time is now to be tried with dishonour, reproach, contempt, but hereafter to be honoured. And the heirs of promise are described to be those who, by patient continuance

in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.' A Christian is not destitute of natural affections; he prizeth honour, but he prizeth it at the lowest rate; he looks for the glory, honour, and immortality that is in the other world, not in the fleshly vain respects of this world; and therefore now we are tried whether it be enough to us that we shall have glory hereafter, and here we are willing to take what the world will afford us. Thus God will try our faith.

2. God will try our mortification and deadness to worldly credit. The heart is never sincere with God until it be so. Hypocrites are proud, self-conceited, they must be honoured among men. Now this is such an evil spirit, that Christ makes it incapable of faith; for, John v. 44, How can ye believe, that seek for glory one of another?' when we must have glory one from another, else our hearts are exceedingly troubled. Oh! it shows we are not so dead, at least as we ought to be, to credit in the world, to have the glory that conies from God only, his image implanted in us, the testimony of his love to our souls all clear between God and our souls; and he is not upright whose peace and tranquillity of spirit doth depend upon man's speeches and judgment rather than God's, For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth,' 2 Cor. x. 18. Men can not defend thee if God will condemn thee; they cannot condemn thee if God acquits thee. They that run a race regard not what the standers-by say, but the agonothetes, the great judge of the sports, he that was to give them the garland, what he would determine and decide in the case. So it is in your running, working, and striving; no matter what the world saith; their applause will not shelter you from God's judgment, nor will their condemnations or reproach expose you to God's wrath. Look to the Judge of all things; and we should be content with that, He is approved whom

the Lord approves;' 2 Cor. i. 12, For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.' What is the great matter of joy to him? The good word of men? No; he hath studied to approve himself to God, therefore should not be troubled overmuch. Peace of conscience is better than the applause of the world; certainly a man is not fit to have so divine a plant grow in his soul till he come to live in his privilege. He lives not to opinion, but lives to God's approbation.

3. Another thing God will try is our patience. We should prevent reproaches as much as we can, but by a holy conversation may bear them when we cannot avoid them: Ps. cix. 4, For my love they are my adversaries, but I give myself unto prayer.' That was David's exercise, the revenge he took upon them, to pray to God for them. The Lord will try whether we have this meek humble patience, 2 Sam. xvi. 7. When Shimei went about railing to the peril of his life, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial,' and reproached him for being treacherous to the house of Saul, and Abishai would have taken away his head;' No,' saith David, let him alone; God hath bid him curse.' A mad dog that biteth another makes him as mad as himself. Now it should not be so with Christians; if they bark or bite at us, yet we should possess our souls with patience. It is a time of reproach and rebuke, a time wherein God will humble his people; therefore we should expostulate the case with the Lord, and humble ourselves before him, and see what is the matter; God hath disposed this by his providence. We would revenge ourselves of those that reproach us if it were in our power; but David had meekness and patience that would not permit it. God will discover the patience of his servants, say the apostles: 1 Cor. iv. 13, Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; though we are set forth as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day;' the word

is, the sweepings of the city, that are fit to be carried out of the city, to be swept away, unfit to live among men in civil societies.

Christians, there must be a season for the trial of our graces. Now God makes this season for the trial of patience. Such a time as this discovers the strength of grace.

4. Another thing God would have to be tried is our uprightness, whether we can hold on our way, through good report and bad report, in honour and dishonour,' as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. vi. 8; still approve ourselves faithful servants of Christ. If you search into the records of time, you shall find many have been discouraged in Christianity because of reproaches that have been cast upon them, for the devil works much upon stomach and spleen. When Tertullian was reproached by certain priests at Rome, he turned Montanist. Now God will try our uprightness. Look, as the moon shines and holds on her course though the dogs bark, so we should hold on our course. Let men talk their pleasure, yet we should abide faithful with God: Ps. cxix. 22, Remove from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept thy testimonies.' David was not unsettled by contempt and reproach, but still kept God's testimonies and adhered to his ways. Some can be religious no longer than they can be so with honour. When reproaches come, when their secular interests are in danger, then they fall off, questioning the ways of God, and unsettling their hearts; that is, to take a revenge upon God himself. Hypocrites take pet, like servants that run away when their master strikes them; but a good servant will take a buffet patiently, and go about his work still. So when the Lord buffets us by wicked men, still we must follow our work, and go on with God.

Thirdly, The Lord doth it to do you good, to make you better. Reproaches are like soap, that seems to defile the linen, it cleanseth. There is nothing so bad but we may make a good use of it, and a

Christian may gain some advantage by it. Or as dung, which seems to stain the grass, but it makes the ground fruitful, and the grass spring up with a fresher verdure. So reproaches are a necessary help to make us more humble, heavenly--to make us walk with a holy awe This holy revenge we should take upon our enemies, to make us more strict and watchful. The way is, not to contend for esteem, but to grow better, more serious, more faithful in our lives; for this is the way, phimoun, to muzzle the mouths of adversaries, as the mouth of a dog or wild beast is, 1 Peter ii. 15. Passionate returns do but increase sin, but a holy conversation will silence all; and therefore you should confute calumnies, you bind up their mouths thereby. In short, an innocent, meek, unblamable, profitable life will certainly have its due esteem in the consciences of men, do what men can. Therefore, do you go on, and be you the more strict, and then these reproaches will do you good.

This is the first use: advice to us what to do in case we be reproached.

Use 2. To those that either devise or receive the reproach: both are very faulty and sinful.

1. First, You that devise reproaches.

[1.] You hazard the repute of your own sincerity: James i. 16, If a man seems to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, that man's religion is in vain.' Such men, that are seldom at home, seldom look to the state of their own hearts. Alas! if they were acquainted with themselves, or their own failings, they would see themselves the worst people in the world. Paul can see himself worse than Judas I am the chief of sinners'--because he hath a greater feeling of his own case. Now, he that is much in judging is seldom within. If a man had a catalogue of his own faults, he would not be so ready to blast others, but say, I am the chief of sinners.' Hypocrites have nothing in them

but empty shows and appearances. It is a cheap zeal to let fly (and yet this is the religion of a great many) at the miscarriages and faults of others. No; you should rather study your own.

[2.] You rob them of a most precious treasure; for if that of Solomon be true, Prov. xxii. 1, A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches;' they are the worst thieves that rob a man of his good name. A thief that pilfers and steals anything from you, he is ashamed when found; and should not you be ashamed, that rob a man of a more excellent treasure?

[3.] You offend God, and draw public hatred upon yourselves; for censurers are always looked upon as the pests of the world. It is the devil's business, his proper work; he is called the accuser of the brethren,' Rev. xii. 10. The devil doth not commit adultery, break the Sabbath, dishonour parents; but he will slander, and accuse, and speak evil. The other are not commandments suited to his nature, but this is a commandment that may suit with angelical nature. We are not to accuse another wrongfully.

Object. But must we in no case, you will say, speak evil of others? I answer--

Sol. 1. Be sure that it be not a downright slander. Now, it is hard to avoid that. If the evil you speak be without cause, then it is against truth; if it be for a light and slender cause, then it is against charity; if it be for things indifferent, or for lesser failings, the indiscretions and weaknesses of Christians, all this is against that charity that should pass especially between the disciples of Christ: James iv. 11, Speak not evil of one another, brethren.' It is worse in Christians always to be whispering and speaking evil one of another; you gratify the triumphs of hell. In things doubtful, you should judge the best: in things hidden and secret, we cannot take cognisance of

them, and we know not the aims and intents of the heart; that is God's work, 1 Cor. iv. 5; and it is the devil's work, when the practice be good and fair, to suspect them of hypocrisy. Besides, too, if there be some grievous fault, you do not know what were their temptations, how it may be alleviated by the temptation; still you must consider yourselves, lest you also be tempted,' Gal. vi. 1; and you do not know whether they have repented of it. The devil is a slanderer. Why? He doth accuse the children of God of what they are guilty of, and they give him too much cause to accuse them. Ay! but after repentance, after they are justified by God, and quitted by the grace of God; so he is a slanderer. So after they have repented, you are insisting on those faults; it is a great evil.

Sol. 2. Speak not of him, but to him. When men are absent it is not fit they should be judged, for then they are not able to make a defence; then it is backbiting. When you thus speak of them, you exchange a duty for a sin, admonition for reproach. It is an un questionable duty to admonish one another, but it is an unquestionable sin to speak evil one of another.

Sol. 3. If of him, it should be done with tenderness and grief; when they are incorrigible, when they are like to pervert others and dishonour the gospel, or for the manifest glory of God. Oh! if we would but lay restraints upon ourselves in this kind, and never speak of others, but when manifestly the glory of God calls for it. And then it should be with grief: Phil. iii. 19, Of whom I have told you often, and now weeping,' saith the apostle. There are a crew of heretics--it is supposed he means the Gnostics--filthy and impure persons, that had debauched the gospel to a licentious life; yet the apostle speaks of them weeping; and therefore we should be very tender of speaking of them. Not out of idleness and for want of other talk; that is tattle,

forbidden in many places of scripture; not out of hatred and revenge, for that is malice; there may be malice where the thing you speak is truth; not to please others, that is flattery. But if ever you speak of them (and it should be with these cautions), out of zeal for the glory of God and the good of the church. If men did consider what restraints are laid upon them, they would not so easily fall upon censuring, reproaching, and speaking evil of others. This to those that devise slanders and reproaches.

2. Secondly, To those that receive them. He is a slanderer that wrongs his neighbour's credit, by upholding an evil report against a man. It is hard to say which is worse, railing or receiving: Ps. xv. 3, a citizen of Sion is described to be one that taketh not up a reproach against his neighbour;' and you shall see, on the contrary, Prov. xvii. 4, A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips, and a liar giveth heed to a naughty tongue.' He is a liar that receives a lie when brought to him, as well as he that brought it; if you love the lie, though you do not devise it. The Lord will curse all them that love lies, as if you did imagine them. All that are acquainted with the matter are accountable to God; you are responsible for your ear, as they for their tongue. It is good to have a healing tongue, to heal that which others wound: Prov. xii. 18, The tongue of the wise is health,' it is healing; and therefore we should labour to show forth this Christian meekness; as not to devise slanders against others, so not to cherish them, and uphold them against others.

Use 3. If this be a usual and grievous evil, it puts us upon seeking comforts against reproaches. Now, what are the comforts we should seek against reproaches?

1. The witness of a good conscience, for then this will be matter of great joy and great peace to you: 2 Cor. i. 12, This is my rejoicing,

the testimony of my conscience,' &c. If men reproach you, yet let not your hearts reproach you, Job xxvii. 6. The heart hath a reproaching, condemning power. Conscience is register, witness, and judge; and that which troubles our quiet are these heart-smitings and heart-reproaches. Let any other man in the world be your enemy rather than your own conscience be an enemy. Certainly, where conscience is a friend, if you be innocent, you need not care for the reproaches of others. If they speak against you as faulty, they do but speak against another, whom the slanderer takes to be thee, and in time you will out-wrestle the reproach. Look, as the hair will grow again as long as the roots remain, so though the razor of censure and reproach brings on baldness, the hair will grow again.

2. Another comfort against reproaches is the approbation of God; that should satisfy against all the censures of the world. You have the greatest, best, and wisest on your side, if you have God on your side. The world decries those that profess strictness to God's ways as hypocrites; but you are hypocrites indeed that are troubled at this, if you value man's approbation rather than God's. No; you should be of that temper: Rom. viii. 33, 34, Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.' If the Lord will acquit you, no matter what men say. The world's filth may be God's jewels. Many times a contempt doth but manifest God's esteem, and give us a further sense of it. They cannot impose upon God; they cannot burden their cause before the Lord; and therefore, if the Lord hath covered your filth, it is no matter though they rake in it: Ps. xxxii. 1, Blessed is the man whose sin is covered,' &c. The Lord will not ask their opinion, their vote and suffrage, whether he shall condemn or acquit you; but he will go according to the laws of his own covenant, and therefore the approbation of God should be enough to you.

3. The consideration of those promises that concern the vindicating our name from contempt. God is wont to scatter the reproaches of his servants as the sun gets from within the cloud, to bring forth their righteousness as the noon-day.

4. Heaven will make amends for all the dishonour that men put upon you. Though the proud scorn you, yet if you keep God's statutes, and go on waiting upon him for eternal life, great will be your glory in heaven.

SERMON XLV.

Behold, I have longed after thy precepts; quicken me in thy righteousness.--Ver. 40.

IN the close of the former verse David had given this commendation of the statutes of God, that they were good. Now, to show that he did indeed account them so, he allegeth his desires after them, Behold I have longed,' &c. In the words you have--(1.) A narrative; (2.) A request. The one is used as the reason of the other.

First, In the narrative he expresseth his sincere desire of conforming his heart and ways to the laws of God. Where--(1.) The matter of his plea, { I have longed after thy precepts.' Not to know them only, but to do them; not to satisfy curiosity, but to understand and obey the will of God, and to make it the rule of his life and actions. Then (2.) The sincerity of it; that is intimated in the word behold. There is ecce admirantis, the behold of admiration, and ecce demonstrantis, the behold of demonstration. This last is here to be understood. We must look upon David as appealing to God, as offering himself unto his trial and approbation, who is the best witness and judge of the hearts of men, who knows all things, and cannot be put off with shows, O Lord, he speaks thus to God, Behold I have longed after thy precepts.' Now this is spoken here, either as a reason of his own asking, Behold, I seek it not out of custom, or to speak words of course, my soul is in this matter; or as a reason of God's granting; he urgeth his sincere affection to obedience as an argument likely to prevail with God: Lord, I have an ardent desire to serve thee; and certainly this is a great argument with God, for he delights to crown his own work; when he hath given the affection, he will give the deed, and give the performance.

Look, as Paul urgeth others to pray for him, Pray for me, for I have a good conscience, willing to live honestly,' Heb. xiii. 18, so David here speaks of himself to God, Lord, I have longed after thy precepts;' it is my desire that I may be put into the readiest, fullest way of compliance with thy will.

Secondly, Here is his request. There we have--(1.) The thing prayed for, quicken me; he prays for renewing, exciting grace. (2.) The ground of confidence, In thy righteousness. He had argued before from the disposition of the subject, now he argues from the quality of the donor, In thy righteousness.' The law of God is sometimes called righteousness, and so some expound it in that sense, Quicken me in thy righteousness;' that is, in the way wherein thou wouldest have me to walk. I think rather it is to be applied not to the righteousness he hath required, but the righteousness that is in God himself. So Ps. v. 8, Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness.' Now the righteousness of God is put for the whole perfection of the divine essence; for his justice, in rendering every one their due, according to his covenant; or for his holiness, for his requiring, approving, delighting in the obedience of the creature; and for his mercy, for giving out grace to men; and for his veracity and faithfulness, in making good his promise, which is a branch of his gospel justice or righteousness; as thou art faithful in making good thy promises, and never wanting to those that make use of thy word, so, Lord, quicken me.

Three points:--

1. To love and long for a holy and perfect and entire subjection to the will of God is a good frame of heart.

2. Those that do indeed long for holiness will see a need of new quickening.

3. Those that would have quickening must seek to God, who hath promised

to satisfy them that desire grace to walk with him.

Doct. 1. To love and long for a holy and perfect and entire subjection to the will of God is a good frame of heart.

This may be confirmed by these considerations:--

1. All natures have a propension unto their perfect estate; as fire to go upward, where its place is; and heavy bodies to move downward, where is their seat and rest. Plants have a virtue in their seed which is ever working to produce their flower; beasts have an appetite by which their nature is nourished and preserved; and man hath a desire to prepare and fit him for that which is good and proper for him. The Psalmist tells us that God openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing,' Ps. cxlv. 16. There is an instinct in every living thing which leads them towards the sustaining and perfecting of that nature which they have. That which is called inclination in the creatures without life, attraction of nourishment in plants, and appetite in the beasts, is in man desire. And so now proportionably the new creature, the saints, they have an appetite suitable to their nature: 1 Peter ii. 2, As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.' Appetite still followeth life, and prepares men for receiving things good for them: Ps. x. 17, Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou hast prepared their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.' A desire of relief vented in prayer prepares and fits us to receive those blessings which are good for us. And therefore, as all natures have a propension to their perfect estate, so those that are new creatures long and vehemently tend towards holiness.

2. Desires set upon holiness are an affection properly exercised, and upon its due object. Desire it is an earnest reaching forth of the soul after good absent and not yet attained. The object of it is something

good, and the more truly good it is the more is our desire justified. There are certain bastard goods of a base and transitory nature, a pleasure, profit: we may easily overlash and exceed in these things. But on holiness, which is more high and noble, and is truly good, and of greater vicinity and nearness to our chiefest good than those other things are, we cannot exceed; there the faculty is rightly placed. When we are hasty and passionate for these other things, the heart is corrupted, it is hard to escape sin: Prov. xxviii. 20, He that makes haste to be rich cannot be innocent;' and he that loves pleasure is in. danger of not loving God, or loving it more than God, 2 Tim. iii. 4. But now in holiness there is no such snare: a man cannot be holy enough, nor like enough to God; and therefore here we may freely let out our affections to the full. When our desires are freely let out to other things, they are like a member out of joint, as when the arms hang backward; but here they are in their proper place; this is that which cannot be loved beyond what it doth deserve. A Christian should set no manner of bounds to himself in holiness, for he is to be holy in all manner of conversation,' 1 Peter i. 15, and to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect,' Mat. v. 48. And then desire is not only after that which is good, but after a good absent. Desire ariseth from a sense of vacuity and emptiness. Emptiness is the cause of appetite, and therefore it is compared to hunger and thirst: Mat. v. 6, Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.' So it is in desiring holiness we have not yet attained, Phil. iii. 13 There is an indigence and emptiness; we are not already perfect; we want more than we have, and our enjoyments are little in comparison of our expectations; and therefore we should make a swifter progress towards the mark, and with more earnestness of soul should press after that sinless estate we expect. That little we have doth but quicken us to

inquire after more, not cloy but provoke the appetite. As a man hath a better stomach sometimes when he doth begin to eat, so when we begin with God, and have tasted of holiness, and tasted of comfort, being brought into a sense of obedience and subjection to God, we should desire more; for certainly he is not good that doth not desire to be better. So that David might well say, I have longed after thy precepts.'

3. Consider the nature of these desires; they are the genuine birth and offspring of the soul, motions of the heart, freest from constraint, and so do best discover the temper of it, and show that it is not tainted and biassed with secular and worldly delights. No man can be constrained to will that which he doth not love. Practices may be over ruled. Ill men dare not act so much evil as they desire, for fear of shame, punishment, and other by-ends; and good men do not act so much good as they do desire, because of that weak and imperfect state wherein they are. Paul was better at willing than at doing: Rom. vii. 18, To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.' And other of the saints of God, though they could not plead their exact performance, and their full and effectual compliance with the will of God, yet have pleaded their desires: Isa. xxvi. 8, The desire of our soul is to thy name;' Neh. i. 11, We desire to fear thy name.' And Peter appeals to Christ's omnisciency,. Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,' John xxi. 17. The temper and constitution of their hearts, and the strength of grace, is seen more in desiring many times than in doing. These are the pulses by which you may feel the state of your souls, when there are longing and vehement desires of your souls after God's precepts.

4. Consider the use and necessity of these desires, still the point will be justified. The natural use of desire is to engage us to act,

and to keep us up in an earnest prosecution of that which is good for us, not withstanding the oppositions and discouragements which come between desire and fruition. For all good being hard to come by, unless desires be strongly fixed, men are soon put out of the humour, and so nothing would be done to any purpose in the world. Surely holiness, that is so difficult and distasteful to flesh and blood, would be but little looked after, if there were not strength of desires to keep it up. Therefore is this affection, that we may encounter difficulties and oppositions. As Neh. iv. 6, when there were difficulties and straits, it is said, They built the wall, for the people had a mind to work;' that is, their hearts were set upon it. So if we had a mind to any excellent thing, it is this mind that keeps us up in the midst of all difficulties and labours. All excellent things are hard to come by; it is so in earthly matters, much more in spiritual. The Lord will have it so, to make us prize them more, for things soon got are little esteemed; as riotous heirs, which know not how to get an estate, lavishly spend it. A man is chary of what is hardly gotten. Jacob prized Rachel the more because he was forced to serve for her so long. So we shall prize heavenly things the more when they cost us a great deal of diligence and labour to get them. Now, sluggish desires soon fail, but vehement longings keep the heart awork.

5. Consider the issue of these desires. As they come from a good cause, which is the new nature and a new life, for appetite follows life, so they tend to a good effect, are sure of a good accomplishment and satisfaction. God is wont to give spiritual things to those that desire them; there the rule is, Ask and have.' It is not so in carnal things: many that seek and hunt after them with all the strength and labour of their souls, at length are miserably disappointed; but all the promises run for satisfaction to a hungry, thirsty, earnest and longing soul,

Mat. v. 6. Those that are hungry, and have a strong desire upon them, he will fill, Luke i. 51; and open thy mouth wide and I will fill it,' Ps. lxxxi. 10; they that open unto him as the thirsty land for the rain. God, that gives velle, to will, will give posse, to do; first the desire, and then the satisfaction; and therefore, where there is this strength of desire, though there may be some failing in other things in our endeavours and performances, yet the Lord will accept it.

6. It argues some nearness to complete fruition, or to full satisfaction in heaven, when we begin to be more earnest after holiness than we were before, and after more of God and his grace and image to be set up in our souls. The more we desire holiness, the more ripe for heaven. This is a rule. The nearer we are to any good thing our hearts are set upon, the more impatient in the want of it; as natural motions are swifter in the end than in the beginning, though violent motions are swifter in the beginning; while the impression of the stone lasts it is swift, but afterwards it abates. So when the soul beats so strongly after God and holiness and larger measures of grace, it is a sign we are ripening apace for heaven. Paul, when he was grown aged in Christianity, then he saith, Rom. vii. 24, Who shall deliver me from this body of death?' As what we translate in the Psalms, Oh that salvation were come out of Sion!' It is in the Hebrew, Who shall give salvation?' So here; it is an Hebraism, Who shall? that is, Oh, that I were delivered! He had many afflictions; he was in perils often, scourged, whipped, persecuted; but he doth not say, Oh, that I could get rid of this troublesome life of affliction! but it was the body of death, the remainders of corruption, was most burdensome to him. The children of God their pulses beat strongly when they are upon the confines of eternity and their full and final consummation. These men begin to ripen for their heavenly state into which God will translate

them.

Use 1. For conviction of several sorts of persons that are far from this temper and frame of heart. To begin with the most notorious.

1. Some desire sin with a passionate earnestness: Job xv. 16, He drinketh iniquity like water.' As a thirsty beast in those hot countries would drink in water, so did they drink in sin. Most wicked men are mad when their lusts are set a-working; and there are some whose constant frame of heart it is, who make haste, who march furiously, as if they were afraid of coming to hell too late; bear down conscience, word, and all before them; that set themselves to do evil with both hands earnestly; that have a strong desire after sin, and are carried out with as impatient longing after sin as the children of God, such eminent ones of God, after holiness.

2. Some have no desire to the ways of God at all: Job xxi. 14, They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' The hearts of many say so, though their tongues do not. They are those which shut out the light, that cannot endure a searching ministry, lest it should trouble their lusts, disturb the devil's kingdom; that banish the thoughts of God out of their hearts, lest it revive the sense of their obligation to duty; that set conscience a-challenging God's right in their souls; that keep off from the light.

3. There are some that are insatiable in worldly things, but have no savour of these heavenly and holy things; they are thirsty for the earth, but God is not in all their thoughts,' Ps. x. 4; a little grace will serve their turn, and think there is more ado than needs about heaven and heavenly things. Alas! the very contrary is true; a little of the world will serve their turn here below. If men had not a mind to increase their temptations and snares about a frail and temporal life, why do they make so much ado, when many times they are taken away

before they have roasted what they have got in hunting? God takes them away, but their eternal estate is little looked after. Riches qualify us not, but holiness doth qualify us for heaven, and it is our ornament before God and his holy angels. And woe be to us if our poor souls be thrust out naked and unclothed in the other world! Can we hunger and hanker after these lying vanities, and have no hungering and thirsting after grace? A little time will wear out the distinction of rich and poor, high and low; but the distinction of holy and good will continue to eternity. Think of that time when not only the world, but the lust, will pass away. The lust of the world may be gone before we are out of the world, as in sickness and pains; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever. When we are sick and dying we have some kind of notions and apprehensions of these things; then we can long and wish we had served God more strictly, loved him more strongly, obeyed him more faithfully. We must have these thoughts while we are living.

4. Many desire happiness, but not holiness; comfort, without grace; they would be eased of their present smart, and freed from sin, but not subdued to God. David saith, Behold I have longed after thy precepts;' not merely after the comfort of the promises, without regard to duty. The prophet tells us, Hosea x. 11, that Ephraim was like a heifer that was taught, that would tread out the corn, but would not endure the yoke, and break the clods.' In ploughing and harrowing there was very hard work, but no profit; but in treading out the corn (for as we thresh out our corn, so they trode it out by the feet of oxen), the mouth of the ox was not to be muzzled, that there might be a great deal of privilege and profit with it. So Ephraim is like a heifer that is taught. They taught the oxen to tread out the corn; but we will not endure the yoke; that is, we are all for privileges, but neglect obedience. There is so such great difficulty about the end; indeed, we

are careless about it; all the business is, we stick at the means: Mat. vi. 33, Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.' By the kingdom of God' is meant, the royal privileges and immunities of the gospel state; and by his righteousness' is meant the subjection, the service God requires of us. Now it is good when we seek both, but we must not seek one without the other; God and the world would sooner agree. If God would bestow the privileges of his kingdom, and dispense with the duties, God might have customers enough for comfort, pardon, heaven, happiness. No man is so senseless as not to desire these things in some measure; but they will not come to God's price, they do not desire these things upon God's terms. The hearts of the saints are as earnestly after sanctification when they are acquainted with God, and brought under the power of grace, that holiness may be increased in them; as Rom. vii. 24, Oh, that I were delivered from sin! Ps. cxix. 5, Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!' Not only for the happy part of religion, but they are longing how they may please God, and comply with their manifold obligations to God, and brought to a more perfect conformity to God. Thus the hearts of the saints work.

5. There are many pretenders to a fair respect to God's precepts; they are as much for holiness as for pardon and grace, when it is nothing so.

[1.] They say they desire to obey God in all things; but can they seriously and sincerely appeal to God for the sincerity and truth of what they say; for so doth David here when he comes to God, Behold, I have longed for thy precepts;' or as Peter appeals to Christ, John xxi. 17, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;' that is to say, when they have revived the sense of the nature of God, and of his all-seeing eye upon their hearts, when they have a due sense of God upon their souls; otherwise they deal deceitfully. Alas! an evil conscience is afraid; it

cannot offer itself thus to God when they are serious and think of what they say; they cannot endure to think of his trial, as an eye hurt seeks for a cover to hide it from the light. So when a sense of God is lessened; they may talk presumptuous expressions of their own sincerity; but when they are most serious, and have revived the sense of God upon their hearts, and look upon him as an all-seeing God that searcheth the heart, they cannot say then, I have longed after thy precepts.'

[2.] They not only say so, but they think so, that they desire holiness as much as others, when indeed it is no such matter. The deceit lies in this, because they take a wish for a desire, a velleity for a volition.

Quest. What is the difference between a wish and a desire?

Ans. Very great.

1. They that have only a wish for holiness, they love holiness in the abstract and in the general notion, which they hate in the effect; they do not know what is included in holiness and close-walking with God; as John vi. 34, Evermore give us of this bread of life.' But when Christ told them what it was to have this bread of life, then they were offended. So the Israelites, when they considered holiness and the service of God in the abstract, Oh! we will serve the Lord, say they, saith Joshua, You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a jealous God,' Josh. xxiv. 18, 19. Holiness in the abstract and notion is amiable, and is apprehended as a necessary thing; but now, when it comes to the point of entering in at the strait gate, walking in the narrow way of watching and striving against sin, of rowing against the stream of flesh and blood, of constant communion with God, and diligent attendance upon his holy worship, then they will do nothing. When they take up their duty by the lump, they are well pleased with it, and it is easy to give up to God in the general, but particulars we stick at.

Therefore here is the fault in these wishes and velleities, that they do not sufficiently poise their duty.

2. These wishes are hasty and not serious. The commendation of spiritual things, and the representation of their absolute necessity, may produce strange motions for the present; but there is a ground of suspicion, because people all of a sudden become so vehement. The seed that fell into the stony ground forthwith sprang up, Mat. xiii. 5. Oh! but it needs much wrestling and care to cherish and raise up these serious and fixed desires, and this constant bent of heart towards God. Free-will pangs of natural devotion are soon spent; they are like the morning dew, it suddenly falls, and suddenly dries up. Deut. v. 29, when the people were frightened into a sense of religion, say they, All that the Lord hath spoken will we do.' They have well said,' saith God, it is a good resolution;' But oh! that there were such a heart in them that they would fear me always.' Many times there are certain desires and resolutions that have a mortal sincerity in them--that is, we do not dissemble for the present--but they have not a, bottom of grace, supernatural sincerity to bear them up.

3. They are not constant desires, but as they are soon up, so soon down. Our Lord Jesus saith, Mat. v. 6, Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness;' not only shall be, but are blessed for the present. Mark, it is in the Greek, They that are hungering and thirsting;' these participles, as all grammarians know, note a continued act. The fire on the altar was never to go out, Lev. vi. 12. There are certain unfixed desires and inconstant motions which for a time are very passionate; as water, seething hot over the fire; take it off, it returns to its natural temper, and it is colder afterwards; so the soul returns to its bias and old bent again towards worldly things. Therefore there must be a constant desire kept up. Such as enjoy the

grace of God will still need and desire more. This is the constant temper of their souls; they are always desiring and longing after God's precepts, and more grace to keep his will.

4. In those desires which they seem to have after holiness, here is the defect, they are not laborious. He that longs for God's precepts will do his utmost endeavour that he may yield uniform obedience to God. The scripture placeth much upon the will. Macarius, an ancient practical writer, puts this question, Who are those that have a will to God and heavenly things, and a will to the waters of life? What demonstrations can there be of a will? Nothing but constant labour. If there be such a will as to set you awork, and a desire which makes you diligent. Lazy prayers and feeble endeavours, they do not argue any great strength of desire. Alas! when a man asketh grace indifferently and coldly, and is almost at an even point whether God hears him or no, and doth not seek after that grace, and excite his soul, this man hath not a desire, because it is not laborious. If it be not an operative desire, it is but a velleity; a will it is not. All their prayers are but the ejaculations of speculative fancy, not the products of true affection, for that would be industrious: Prov. xxi. 25, The desire of the slothful killeth, for his hands refuse to labour.' They do not manifest the life and strength of love in their endeavours that they seem to have in their prayers. Cold prayer they may put up for grace that God may make them better; and they wish it were better with them, and that the Lord would bring them to a greater conformity; but these are not laborious desires. Volens sed nolens, they would, but they will not; that is to say, Oh, that I were at such a place! and never travel the way to get there. So, Would I had learned such a lesson I yet like a lazy boy they set not themselves in good earnest to do it. They seem to will or wish; therefore they are but wouldings, not willings. They do

not in good earnest set themselves to get that grace. There is not such an invincible resolution to get through, and a serious industry that they may attain those things they seem to long for.

5. These wishes and desires which are in carnal men are not permanent, that overcome the desire of other things; they will not absolutely set about it to be done whatever it cost them: but such desires as are sincere overcome all earthly desires and delights whatever. They would have grace, but yet would live as they do. It is not such a desire as to control other things, but is controlled by them. The desire of grace is an underling, and mastered by the desire of pleasures or profits of the world, and other delights. Many have a desire, but it is easily subdued, it is not prevalent. Alas! there may a faint desire be stirred up by enlightened conscience, and not by a fruit of a renewed will. A dictate of conscience must be distinguished from a desire of the heart. Illuminated conscience tells them they must grow more holy and heavenly, and wish they were so; but the heart is not perfectly subdued to God. They are directed by their interest; they make not this the main and great interest of their lives. David, when he expresseth his desires, mentions it thus: Ps. xxvii. 4, One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life;' that is, 1 will make this my business, the chiefest matter of my care. But now, they that care not whether they have it, yea or nay, this cannot be a desire: Phil. ii. 12, we are bid to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.' We must carry on the business of godliness with a great deal of solicitude; but their affections sway them more to other things.

SERMON XLVI.

Behold I have longed after thy precepts, &c.--Ver. 40.

I COME now to a second use, and that is--

Use 2. To press us to long after holiness and subjection to God.

Two motives:--

First, You shall have these desires granted. For a man to have his will, and whatsoever he desires, what a happiness is that! If his soul be set upon holy things, he shall have what he desires, the Lord will not be wanting: Prov. x. 24, The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him; but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.' The desires of the righteous are suitable to the constitution and frame of their heart. He will grant the desires of their souls, Ps. x. 17. A man that makes God his heart's delight shall have his heart's desire: Ps. xxxvii. 4, Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart;' his business is to maintain communion with God, and his desires will not miscarry.

Secondly, When they are granted it shall do you no hurt: Prov. xi. 23, The desire of the righteous is only good, but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.' It is the greatest judgment to wicked men when God gives them a heart to desire a full affluence of earthly comforts. Better to be denied in mercy, than to have our requests granted in anger. But grace will do us no hurt; it will not increase our snares and temptations, as other things do; and therefore can never be given in anger, but always in love. Well, then--(1.) Fix your desires; (2.) See they do not abate in you.

1. Fix your desires and enlarge them to the full. A carnal man may be a shame to a godly man, because he is carried out so earnestly, and with

such uniform respect to earthly things: 1 Cor. xii. 31, Covet earnestly the best gifts;' this is a holy covetousness, and a good diversion from that great sin. As the covetous learn all the arts of thriving, are always joining house to house, and field to field,' Isa. v. 8, so should we add faith to faith, and obedience to obedience. Our enjoyments are better, and therefore it should not be followed with a slacker hand. The more a covetous man hath in the world, the more he desires still. Should not we forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to the things that are before us'? Still here the taste increaseth the appetite, like sea-water, that wets the palate, but inflames the appetite. Now, shall not we be carried out with a holy covetousness thus to God? See what help and methods of increase they use, how their desire carrieth them on in unwearied diligence: They rise early, sit up late, eat the bread of sorrows,' Ps. cxxvii. 2; and all to heap up a little pelf to themselves; neglect no occasion of gain: and shall not we make it the business of our lives, and be projecting still how we may grow in grace, and increase in the love of God, and ripen for the heavenly state, and grow more like God every day? You know how sparing they are, and how apprehensive of their losses. Oh! should not the decays of religion go as near us? and should not we be careful that we do not waste that grace we have received, and that we increase it more and more, and that it thrive upon our hands?

2. Watch against the abatement of your desires, for they are of great use to you in the spiritual life. If a man lose his appetite, the body pineth and languisheth, and strength decayeth. What appetite is to the body, that desire is to the soul; it fitteth us to take in our supplies, and putteth us upon action and diligence; it is the vigorous bent of the soul. Therefore see that it doth not decay. It is said, Rev. ii. 4, of the church of Ephesus, that she had lost her first

love,' and then presently left her first works.' Now your desire decayeth when your prayers are less fervent, for prayer is the presenting our desires to God, or vent given to spiritual groans. Therefore keep up your desires: Ps. xxvii. 4, One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that I will seek after.' When the desires are fixed, endeavours are engaged; our desires must be pursued resolutely. But what shall we do to awaken these earnest longings in our souls, and those desires after holiness?

[1.] Go to God, for he giveth both to will and to do, Phil. ii. 13. All is from God; the will is from God, and the deed from God. The will; I bring that to show how you should beg that he would stir up those earnest desires in you, because all affections are but the vigorous motions of the will. Desire is but passionate will, or the will effectually and powerfully excited or stirred up to some absent good. Now the appetite is from God as well as the meat. Desire of grace is an affection above nature, and must be planted in us by the Spirit of God. God gives the desire, and he satisfies it. He draws,' then we run after him,' Cant. i. 4. He puts this desire in our hearts, then we are carried on with an earnest pursuit after grace.

[2.] Would you have and keep up ardent desires? Do as they do that would keep in the fire, cherish the sparks and blow them up to a flame. There is no man that lives under the means of grace, and under the discoveries of God and religion, but hath his good moods and very lively motions; the waters are stirred many times. Take hold of this advantage, Strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die,' Rev. iii. 2, and blow up these sparks into a flame. God hath left us enkindling means prayer, meditation, and the word. Observe where the bellows blows hardest, and ply that course. The more supernatural things are, there needs more diligence to preserve them. A strange

plant needs more care than a native of the soil. Worldly desires, like a nettle, breed of their own accord, but spiritual desires need a great deal of cultivating.

[3.] Improve your tastes: 1 Peter ii. 3, If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious;' and Col. i. 6, Since ye knew the grace of God in truth.' When you have got any taste of the worth of these spiritual things, they do not cloy but awaken appetite. Fancy and imagination cannot awaken it so much as this taste. When you have tasted how good and sweet it is to live in a state of conformity, this will make you long for more: Ps. lxiii. 1, My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee.' David had been acquainted with the pleasures of the sanctuary, therefore longs for them more. He that hath tasted honey is more affected with it than he that hath only read of it. The Gauls, when they had tasted of the wine of Italy, nothing would keep them from pressing into the country. So when we have tasted of the clusters of Canaan, the first-fruits of the Spirit, this should encourage and whet our appetite.

[4.] Watch over other desires, such as would dull and blunt the edge of the spirit. As iron drives out iron, so one desire drives out another. If we are taken with other things, Christ loseth his sweetness and relish. Vain worldly desires extinguish those that are spiritual and heavenly: they lose their fervour when prostituted to base objects; your prayers are more flat and cold, for your desires are manifested by prayer and industry. Now your desires will flag and abate when you let out your hearts to the world; therefore you must watch lest the carnal savour and carnal minding increaseth upon you, for then the spiritual minding is quite hindered, impeached, [15] and interrupted: Rom. viii. 5, For they that after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit.' When outward

things would steal away your hearts and affections from God, remember your first choice: Whom have I in heaven but thee?' &c., Ps. lxxiii. 25.

[5.] Renew your desires every time you come to God. When you come to the word, come with an appetite; prepare your stomachs always for God's food. They see more of Christ in an ordinance that come most unworthy in their own sense. John vii. 37, saith Christ, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' You shall have Benjamin's portion, and more plentifully filled, when you come with a strong appetite and a holy longing after God and his grace. Christ takes it best when you come with most enlarged desires and raised expectations. Did God ever fail a thirsty soul? Luke xxii. 15, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I die.' Christ himself hungered and thirsted for us, he longed to give us pledges of his love; and shall not we say, With desire have I desired to taste of thy feast and eat of thy supper? Christ longs to give, and shall not we long to take? Certainly where there is this earnest working of heart towards God, and this desire, the Lord will fill it. The gaping of young ravens, God satisfies it; the Psalmist concludes from thence, Ps. cxlv. 19, He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry and will save them.' Naturalists observe the raven exposeth her young ones, and they are merely fed by providence; but when they gape, the Lord satisfieth them with that food which is convenient for them: much more will he fulfil the desires of the humble.

[6.] Consider your wants, and the fulness that is in Christ, and his readiness to impart unto you.

(1.) Your wants. I speak not now of a total want. Indeed, if those that are under a total want of soul could be brought to consider their condition, the work of conversion would not stick so long as it doth.

But I speak now of such a want as remains in the saints after they have begun with God, and been put in a way of obedience. It is not enough that the soul is once come to Christ, but it is the business of our lives; we must be always coming: 1 Peter ii. 4, If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to whom coming as unto a living stone.' If you have tasted, then come to him for more. They must be frequently renewing the acts of their faith, and stirring up their desires, else there will be no growth of grace, no opposing corruption; for all our strength is in him; there is still something lacking to our faith, and all the graces of the Spirit that are in us.

(2.) Consider what a fulness there is in Christ. This encouraged the prodigal, that in his father's house there is bread enough. So should this encourage us, and awaken our desires; there is enough in Christ if I will but go and take it, and receive from this ever-flowing fountain of grace that God hath set up in our nature: John i. 16, Of his fulness have we all received.' Christ hath not only plenitudinem vasis, the fulness of a vessel, but fontis, the fulness of a fountain. The fulness of a vessel, that may be lessened; the more we take from it the less liquor is in it; but the more we take from a fountain, still there is the same overflowing fulness. Such a fulness is in Christ; therefore it is an encouragement to us to repair to him and enlarge our desires. Look, as it is with beggars in the streets, if they see a poor man meanly clad, they let him alone, but when they see a man of quality and fashion they rouse up themselves and besiege him with importunate entreaties and clamours, and will not let him go until he hath left something with them. Thus should we do. Christ hath enough and to spare; he hath the Spirit without measure; therefore give him not over until he bestow something upon you. He containeth more than we can receive; whatever we get he is not lessened; but, as the sea, though we

take never so much water out of it, it remains in the same fulness, so all the saints may have supply for their wants without any deficiency in Christ. The sun hath not less light, though it communicate it freely to the inferior world. Christ is not spent for giving; he hath enough to comfort and quicken us; he needs not our fulness, but emptiness. The prophet provided oil enough to help the widow; she only provided empty vessels. We may be too full for Christ, but cannot be too empty. We may be too full of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency. Christ brings all-sufficiency to the covenant, and we bring all-necessity. Therefore, since there is such an overflowing fulness in him, we must still repair to him that we may receive more.

(3.) Consider his readiness to give it you, therefore come with hungering and thirsting after him: John vi. 27, Labour for the meat that endureth for ever.' Mind the graces of the Spirit, come to Christ for these things. He was sent into the world, and commissioned for this end and purpose. All the fulness in Christ is for our use. As the sun hath light not for itself but for the comfort of the world, and a fountain hath water riot for itself, but for the use of man; so Christ the head is the seat of sense and motion, not for himself, but for his whole body; he is our storehouse for the supply of our wants; and he is clothed, empowered, and invested with offices to do us good. Oh, therefore enlarge your desires! In other things you desire to be full, why not of grace? Hypocrites are satisfied with a taste; they may taste the good word. Temporaries are contented with a taste; a little religion they must have. Ay! but it is for the honour of Christ that we should be complete in him, and filled with all the fulness of God; and this is his grief when his grace runs waste. Look, as when breasts are full, there is a great pleasure in having them drawn, or children to have them sucking; and the Lord hath as great a desire to impart his

holiness as we to receive it. Therefore come to him that we may have grace for grace, that is, for grace's sake. Thus much for the first point. David's appeal to God, Lord, I have longed after thy precepts.'

Doct. 2. Those that indeed long for holiness will see a need of new quickening.

So David, Quicken me in thy righteousness.' A man would have thought he had been in a lively frame then; yet Quicken me in thy righteousness;' excite and enliven me to all acts of obedience.

Here I shall inquire--

1. What is this quickening.

2. Why they that long for God's precepts, and a more perfect and ready subjection to God, are thus earnest for quickening.

First, What is this quickening? I shall not speak at large, for it often occurs in this psalm. It is used in scripture for two things:--

1. For regeneration, or the first infusion of the life of grace, Eph. ii. 1, 5. Then we have divine qualities put into us, that do incline and enable us to live unto God.

2. It is put for the vitality and the vigour of grace, when the spiritual life is in good plight. Deadness of heart is apt to creep upon us, therefore we need renewed excitations and quickenings, that we may serve our God with cheerfulness, liveliness, and zeal. Christians should not only be living but lively; 1 Peter ii. 5, Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house. And we read of living grace and lively grace, 1 Peter i. 3. And Christ came into the world that we might not only have life,' but have it more abundantly,' John x. 10; that is, that we might not only be living, but lively. So that quickening is the actuation of the spiritual life, either in a way of comfort or grace. There may be life where there is not this vigour and this vitality. This quickening is mainly seen in the most operative,

and the two necessary graces of the soul to which the gospel is sometimes reduced, and they are faith and love. These are the graces wherein life consists; and as these are acted and excited to God, so we are lively, and when these decay we are dead. When faith is dead all spiritual activity is lost: James ii. 26, For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.' If men want faith they cannot do anything with any life. So when love is dead, or love grows cold, Mat. xxiv. 12, or when men have any abatement in their love, all languisheth and grows dead in the soul, Rev. ii. 4, 5. But on the contrary, it is said we live by faith, Gal. ii. 20. Grace is kept in good plight when faith is strong and kept up in any vigour; and Gal. v. 6, Faith, which worketh by love.'

Well, this quickening (that I may most sensibly demonstrate it) depends upon these two things:--

[1.] The vitality of grace; that depends upon the degree and mea sure of our faith. For to speak nothing as to the mystical use, as it is a means of our function of life, but to speak only now as to its moral use, as it acts by the sight of invisible things, keep faith alive, and all is alive in the soul: Heb. xi. 1. Faith is the evidence of things not seen;' it doth make things absent and things not seen to act as if they were present, therefore it must needs be a very enlivening thing. Without faith our notions of God, Christ, heaven, and hell are never practical and lively in operation; for this is the evidence of things not seen, and this convinceth us of all spiritual and unseen things, to make them have a force and operation upon the soul. We do but hear, read, and discourse literally until faith puts life into our apprehensions and thoughts of them; for faith will affect us as if we did see the invisible God, and will put the same affections into us as if Christ were crucified before our eyes, Gal. iii. 1. What is the

reason the mystery of redemption is a wild story to some, lively to others? Faith affects the heart as if he were crucified before our eyes, and his life dropped out from him by degrees. So faith makes us hug and embrace them as if we were in the midst of the glory of the blessed ones. Take it only in its moral use, it is an enlivening thing; and as faith is kept up in any vigour, so the spiritual life is kept up.

[2.] For love. When we have a fresh and warm sense of the love of God upon our souls, we are quickened to do for him answerably to such a love; and our souls reason, What, hath God done so great things for us in Christ, and we do nothing for God again? Then we see we cannot do anything too much. Love hath a law upon the soul that stirs up lively and zealous motions towards God: 2 Cor. v. 14, The love of Christ constraineth us;' 1 John v. 3, His commandments are not grievous.' Then everything goes on pleasantly, and runs upon its wheels.

Secondly, Why will they that long after God's precepts see a need of quickening?

1. Because of the diseases incident to the renewed estate. There is a constant weakness by reason of indwelling corruption: The flesh lusteth against the spirit,' Gal. v. 17; they cannot serve God with that purity and liberty they desire. Then there are frequent indispositions of soul; sometimes they feel a slowness and loathness and dulness in their souls. Good men may yet be slow of heart to heavenly things, Luke xxiv. 25. Look, as the physician saith weariness that comes of its own accord is a sign of some disease upon us, laziness in duty comes from a remiss will. Sometimes too they find great deadness, that they cannot follow their work so closely, and with that life and earnestness. And sometimes they are in bonds, sometimes in straits, that they cannot enlarge and dilate themselves towards God: Ps. cxix. 32, When thou

shalt enlarge my heart, I will run the ways of thy commandments.' Now they that mind their work, they will be sensible of this, and call upon God to quicken them. David complains of the dulness and deadness of his spirit; but many do not, but go on in a cold track of duties, and never regard the frame of their hearts. But now a good man observes the temper of his soul. Most observe their bodies, but few their souls. If their body be ill at ease and out of order, they complain presently; but love waxeth cold, zeal for God and delight in God abateth, men grow weary in well-doing, grow flat, have this remiss will, this deadness and slowness of soul in the love of God, they can satisfy themselves in this frame and temper.

2. Because, too, without this supervening and quickening grace, they can never serve God cheerfully, nor do anything to purpose in the heavenly life; our general work of obedience goes on slowly: Ps. cxix. 88, Quicken me, so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth,' then I shall do good to purpose. But religion is an irksome thing when we are dead-hearted. For particular duties, it is not enough to pray, but it must be with life: Ps. lxxx. 18, Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.' It is not enough to hear, but to hear with life, Mat. xiii. 15. It is a judgment to be dull of hearing.

3. As it is uncomfortable to themselves to act without quickening grace, so it is a thing very hateful with God, a cold lukewarm temper: Rev. iii. 16, I will spew thee out of my mouth. 1 This dull and stupid profession is contrary to God and hateful to God, and such as content themselves with this dead profession, God will spew them out of his mouth. And it is contrary to all the provision God hath made for us. Christ is set up as a fountain of grace in our nature: John x. 10, I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' The Lord hath justified us by his grace, sprinkled our

hearts that we might serve the living God, serve him in a living manner; for titles given to God imply the qualification in hand, Heb. ix. 14; and he hath sanctified us, planted grace in our hearts on purpose to maintain the life given us, that there might be a lively hope. And all hearing is for life, Isa. lv. 3; we come to lively oracles that we may be quickened. The joys of heaven, redemption by Christ, hell's torments, these doctrines are all quickening truths. And the Lord hath given his flesh, not only to God for a sacrifice, but to us for food that we may live, John vi. 51. Therefore to be cold is odious to God.

Use 1. For caution.

1. Let us take heed we lose not quickening through our own default, that we lose not this enlivening grace. We may lose it by any heinous sin of ours, for by grieving the Spirit we bring on deadness upon the heart, Ps. li. 10-12. When David sinned heinously, he begs the Lord to quicken him, and restore his free spirit and the joy of his salvation. The spirit is a tender thing. Every heinous sin is as a wound in the body, which lets out the life-blood, and so we contract a deadness upon ourselves.

2. Take heed of immoderate liberty, or vanities of the world, or pleasures of the flesh, if you would not lose this quickening. The apostle tells us, 1 Tim. v. 6, The woman that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' Pleasures have a strange infatuation; they bring a brawn and deadness upon the heart, and hinder the sprightliness of spiritual and heavenly affections: Ps. cxix. 37, Turn away mine eyes from be holding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.' These two prayers joined together speak thus much: if you be too busy about vanity, it will bring on a brawn and deadness, and so you need to go to God for quickening. And Christ tells his disciples, Luke xxi. 34, Take

heed of being overcharged,' &c. The soul is mightily distempered by too free a liberty of the delights of the flesh; for surfeiting and drunkenness must not be taken there in the gross notion.

3. Let us take heed that we do not lose it by our slothfulness and negligence in the spiritual life: Isa. lxiv. 7, There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' As in a watch one wheel protrudes and thrusts forward another, so when we are diligent all is lively in the soul, but when we are not active and serious in a godly course all goes to rack. An instrument, though it be never so much in tune, yet laid by and hung up, it grows out of order. Wells are sweeter for draining; our graces, if we keep them not awork, lose their vitality; if we do not stir up the grace of God, 2 Tim. i. 6, they are quite quenched; when we grow careless, and neglectful of our souls, we lose this activity of grace.

4. Vain and dead-hearted company and converse are a very great means to damp the spirit and quench the motions of the heavenly life. We should provoke one another to good works,' Heb. x. 24. There is great provocation in good examples; but we grow lazy, formal, slight by imitation. Others profess knowledge, yet are vain, dead-hearted; so are we, we have adopted it into our manners, and leaven one another by this means. There should be a holy contention who should be most forward in the ways of godliness, and excel in our heavenly calling; this keeps Christians lively. Saul, when he was among the prophets, he prophesied; but when we converse with dead-hearted company, it breeds a great damp. You read in Isa. xli. 6, 7, how the idolaters encouraged one another--it was when the isles were to wait for the Messiah--that they should not faint, but get up their idols again, after Christ had got a little footing among them; and shall not the children of God encourage, and keep up the life of zeal one in another?

Use 2. Exhortation. It presseth you to divers duties.

1. To see a need of quickening. Though life received gives power to act, yet that power must be excited by God. No creature doth subsist and act of itself. All things live, move, and have their being in God. There is a concurrence necessary to all created things, much more to the new creature: partly because of the internal indisposition of the subject in which it is--alas! grace in the heart is but like fire in wet wood--partly by reason of external impediments; Satan is ready to cast a damp upon the soul, so that the Lord's grace is still necessary for us.

2. Ask it of God. All life was at first in him originally, and it is an emanation from him. The apostle proves Christ's Godhead from this, because in him was life,' John i. 4. But is this a good argument? Doth that prove therefore he was God? May we not say of the meanest worm, in it is life? But he means originally; he was the fountain of life, and still he keeps it in his own hands, and conveys it to all creatures every moment, even to the lowest worm: John v. 26, For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' The power of quickening and keeping of life belongs to God. He hath it originally from himself, he gives it to others, 1 Tim. vi. 13. He that quickeneth all things, worms, men, that gives life to them, is God.

3. Accept this grace in and through Jesus Christ, who hath purchased it for us, who, gave his flesh to be meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed,' John vi. 55; who rose again that we should walk in newness of life.' Rom. vi. 4; who ascended to pour out the spirit upon us, John vii. 38, 39, Therefore, when we find deadness spiritually, look to receive this life from Christ.

4. Rouse up yourselves. There are considerations and arguments to

quicken us. Certainly a man hath power and faculty to work truths upon himself, to stir up the gift and grace that is in us, 2 Tim. i. 6. We must not think grace works necessarily as fire burns, whether we will or not that this will enliven us; but we must rouse and stir up ourselves, as Ps. xlii. 5. There are many considerations by which we may awaken our own soul; from the love of God, from the hopes of glory; by which Christians should stir and keep their spirits awake and alive to wards God and heavenly things.

Use 3. If quickening be so necessary, it presseth us to see whenever we have received anything of the vitality of grace. Sense, appetite, and activity, we may know it by these things: When there is a sense of sin indwelling as a burden--life is strong then when it would expel its enemy, Rom. vii. 24--when there is an appetite after Christ and his graces and comforts. When there is a greater activity, a bursting and breaking forth towards religious duties, it is a sign grace is strong in the heart; for the Spirit is to be a fountain of living waters always breaking out, John vii. 38. When we are more fruitful towards God, when it is ready to discover itself for the glory of God, then the heavenly life is kept in good plight. For these things we should be thankful to God, for he it is that awakeneth you.

Chapter 50

SERMON XLVII.

Let thy mercies come also to me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word.--Ver. 41.

IN this verse you have the man of God in straits, and begging for deliverance. In this prayer and address to God you may observe--

1. The cause and fountain of all, thy mercies.

2. The effect or thing asked, salvation.

3. The warrant or ground of his expectation, according to thy word.

4. The effectual application of the benefit asked, come also unto me.

The sum of the verse may be given you in this point.

Doct. That the salvation of God is the fruit of his mercy, and effectually dispensed and applied to his people according to his word.

There is a twofold salvation--temporal and eternal.

1. Temporal salvation is deliverance from temporal dangers: Exod. xiv. 13, Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.'

2. Eternal deliverance from hell and wrath, together with that positive blessedness which is called eternal life: Heb. v. 9, And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.' The text is applicable to both, though possibly the former principally intended.

First, I shall apply it to salvation temporal, or deliverance out of trouble. There observe--

1. The cause of it, Thy mercies.' God's children often fall into such straits that nothing but mercy can help them out. All deliverance is the fruit of mercy pitying our misery, but some deliverance especially is the fruit of mercy pardoning our sin, I shall give you some special cases, both as to danger and sin.

[1.] In all cases as to danger, it is mercy which appears, partly because God's great argument to move him is the misery of his people. It is his great argument: Deut. xxxii. 36, The Lord will repent for his people;' when he seeth that all their power is gone, and none shut up and left, no manner of defence, but exposed as a prey to those that have a mind to wrong them. It is the only argument: Ps. lxxix. 8, Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us, for we are brought very low.' Mercy relents towards a sinful people, when they are a wasted people. Partly because when there are no other means to help, mercy unexpectedly findeth out means for us. We are at an utter loss in ourselves; God finds out means of relief for us: Ps. lvii. 3, He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up, Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and truth.' When we want help on earth, faith seeketh for help from heaven, and mercy chooseth means for us when we cannot pitch upon anything that may do us good. In these cases doth mercy discover itself as to danger.

[2.] More eminently in special cases, when their sins have evidently brought them into those straits. Many afflictions are the strokes of God's immediate hand, or the common effects of his providence permitting the malice of men for our trial and exercise; but some are the proper effects of our own sins. We run ourselves into inconveniences by our folly, and even then mercy findeth a way of escape for us. Two ways may our sin be said to bring our trouble upon us meritoriè et effectivè.

(1.) Meritoriè, when some judgment treadeth upon the heels of some foregoing sin and provocation; as David, when he had offended in the matter of Uriah, see Ps. iii. title, A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son,' and the two first verses, Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me; many

there be that say of my soul, There is no help for him in God, Selah.' David was deserted of his own subjects, chased from his palace and royal seat by his own son, Absalom. He had defiled Uriah's wife secretly, and his wives were defiled in the face of all Israel, and he driven to wander up and down for safety. God will make all that behold the scandalous sins of his people see what it is to provoke him to wrath. See how he complains, ver. 1, Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me.' You shall find in 2 Sam. xv. 12, The people increaseth continually with Absalom;' a multitude against him, and the rest durst not be for him, their hearts were hovering. And in another place, 2 Sam. xvii. 11, all Israel gathered to him from Dan to Beersheba. In what a sorry plight was David when all was against him, and the world thought God was against him! for so it followeth, ver. 2, Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God, Selah.' The world counted the case desperate, and insulted over him, now God hath left him; but they mistook fatherly correction for vindicative justice. This was a sad condition; but David goeth to God to fetch him off; though he had drawn this judgment upon himself, yet he deals with him for relief: in such cases mercy is seen. That pit must be very deep when the line of grace doth not go to the bottom of it. In the face of the temptation David maintaineth his confidence in God: see ver. 3, But thou, O Lord, art my shield, my glory, and the lifter-up of my head.' God is counter-comfort to all his troubles. He was in danger, God was his shield; his kingdom was at stake, God was his glory: he was under sorrow and shame, God would lift up his head; to the unarmed a shield, to the disgraced glory, to the dejected an encourager or the lifter-up of his head. Thus when his case was thought desperate doth mercy work for him.

(2.) Effectivè, when we ourselves run into the snare, and be holden

with the cords of our own vanity: Prov. v. 22, His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins;' when we have been playing about the cockatrice's hole, and have brought mischief upon ourselves. Sometimes God's children have been guilty of this; they have been the cause of their own troubles; as David, when his unbelief drove him to Gath, where he was in danger of his life, and escaped by his dissembling: Ps. xxxiv., entitled, A Prayer of David when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.' And Josiah put himself on a war against Pharaoh Necho, and other such instances. Then if they be saved, it is certainly mercy.

Again, observe, it is not mercy, but mercies; the expression is plural--

[1.] To note the plenty and perfection of this attribute in God. God is very merciful to poor creatures. See in how many notions God's mercy is represented to us. A distinct consideration of them yieldeth an advantage in believing; for though they express the same thing, yet every notion begetteth a fresh thought, by which mercy is more taken abroad in the view of conscience. This is that pouring out God's name spoken of Cant. i. 3, Thy name is as ointment poured forth.' Ointment in the box doth not yield such a fragrancy as when it is poured out. God hath proclaimed his name: Exod. xxxiv. 6, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth.' God hath given this description of himself, and the saints often take notice of it: Ps. ciii. 8, The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness;' Joel ii. 13, Turn to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil;' Jonah iv. 2, I knew that thou wert a gracious God, slow to anger, and of great kindness;' and in divers

other places. What doth the Spirit of God aim at in this^ express enumeration and accumulation of names of mercy, but to give us a help in meditation, and to enlarge our apprehensions of God's mercy? (1.) The first notion is mercy, which is an attribute whereby God inclineth to favour them that are in misery: it is a name God hath taken with respect to us; the love of God first falleth upon himself. God loveth himself, but he is not merciful to himself; mercy respects creatures in misery. Justice seeks a fit object; mercy, a fit occasion. Justice looketh to what is deserved; mercy, to what is wanted and needed.

(2.) The next notion is grace, which noteth the free bounty of God, and excludeth all means on the creature's part. Grace doth all gratis, freely, though there be no precedent debt or obligation, or hope of recompense, whereby anything can accrue to God. His external motive is our misery, his internal motive his own grace. Angels, that never sinned, are saved merely out of grace. Men, that were once miserable, are saved, not only out of grace, but out of mercy.

(3.) The next notion is long-suffering or slowness to anger. The Lord is not easily overcome by the wrongs or sins of the creature. He doth not only pity our misery--that is mercy, and do us good for nothing--that is grace, but beareth long with our infirmities--that is slowness to anger. Certainly he is easily appeased, and is hardly drawn to punish. Men are ready to anger, slow to mercy, quickly inflamed, and hardly appeased; but it is quite the contrary with God. It is good to observe the difference between God and man. Man cannot make anything of a sudden, but destroyeth it in an instant. When men are to make anything, they are long about it, as building a house is a long work; but plucking it down and undermining it is done in a short time. But God is quick in making, slow in destroying; he made the world in six days. He could have done it in a moment, were it not that he would give

us a pattern of labour and order in all things. Now it hath continued for six thousand years, and upwards, as some account. Such is his longsuffering. How many of us has God borne with for ten, twenty, thirty years, from childhood to grey hairs, from the cradle to the grave! The angels were not endured in their sinful state, but immediately cast into hell.

(4.) Kindness and bounty; he is plenteous in goodness. God is good and doth good; his communications to the creature are free and full, as the sun giveth out light and the fountain water. Thus you gee reason why mercies are plurally expressed.

[2.] The frequency of it: Lam. iii. 23, His mercies are new every morning;' that is, renewed; those that concern the body and soul: not only merciful in saving once or twice, but every day pardoneth our new sins, and giveth to his repenting children new comforts. There is a throne of grace open every day, not once a year, Heb. iv. 16, as it was to the high priest under the law. The golden sceptre is daily held out, the fountain is ever open, not stopped up nor drawn dry. God keepeth not terms, but keepeth a court of audience; and every day we may come and sue out our pardon, and take out the comforts we stand in need of.

[3.] The variety of our necessities, both by reason of misery and sin; go that not mercy, but mercies, will do us good. We have not one sin, but many; not one misery, but many; therefore mercies are needful to us.

(1.) Our miseries are many, danger waylayeth us on every side; therefore the mercy of God is said to compass us about: Ps. xxxii. 10, He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.' On which side soever temptation and trouble maketh the assault, mercy is ready to make the defence: Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all,' Ps. xxxiv. 19. Their troubles

are many, from God's own hand, Satan's temptations, malice of the wicked world; therefore Let thy mercies come to me.'

(2.) Our sins, so many provocations, transgressions from the womb, Isa. xlviii. 8. After grace received we have our failings; there remains much venom and evil of sin: Ps. li. 1, Have mercy upon me according to the greatness of thy mercy; according to the multitude of thy tender mercy blot out my transgressions;' where great sins, great mercies; many sins, many mercies. In that one fact how many ways did he sin? No great sin can be committed alone, but one evil act draweth on another, as links in a chain: adultery, blood; and this by a king, whose duty it was to punish it in others. The more above the stroke of man's justice, the more liable to God's. This when he had many wives of his own. A crime committed out of want is not so heinous as that committed out of wantonness. He took the poor man's one ewe lamb, when he had many flocks and herds. This was done not suddenly and in the heat of passion, but in cool blood, plotting his opportunities, abusing Uriah, his simplicity and sincerity, to his own destruction. His honesty in not returning to his house should have been a check upon David. He maketh him drunk; drew Joab into the conspiracy and confederacy of his guilt; many perished with Uriah in the attempt upon Rabbah.

[4.] The many favours to be bestowed upon us, as food, clothing, protection, liberty in our service, and after all eternal life; therefore mercies, which giveth us all things necessary to life and godliness,' 2 Peter i. 3.

2. The effect, thy salvation,' brought about in God's way, and upon God's terms. In temporal safety we must wait for God's salvation, such as God giveth, God alloweth. Better be miserable than be saved upon other terms. Many would be safe from troubles, but they would take their own way, and so turn aside to crooked paths. Those martyrs spoken

of in the Hebrews, chap. xi. 35, would not accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection;' to wince under trouble, and fling off the burden ere it be taken off by God without any sin of ours; otherwise we break prison, get out by the window, not by the door. We must take up our cross as long as God will please to have us bear it. David saith, Thy salvation.'

3. The warrant and ground of his expectation, According to thy word.' God's mercy is to be expected according to the tenor of the promise. How is that?

[1.] No temporal blessing is absolutely to be expected, for God hath reserved the liberty of trying and chastising his children in outward things. The covenant is to be understood with the exception of the cross, and we can have no temporal benefit by it but as it is useful for us: Ps. lxxxix. 32, 33, I will visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes: nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.' God will use medicinal discipline, though not satisfy his justice upon them.

[2.] The qualification of the promise must be regarded by those that would have benefit by it. God's covenant is made with his people; it is a mutual stipulation. Many would have comfort; we plead promises of safety with God, but forget promises of obedience to him; as Ephraim would tread out the corn, but not break the clods, Hosea x. 11. There was food: Deut. xxv. 4, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox which treadeth out the corn.' We mind our own interest more than God's honour.

[3.] A word of promise calleth for faith and trust. Whatever contrariety appeareth in God's providence, God's word must bear up our hearts; it is as a pawn till the deliverance come. God's mercy is the same still; his word calleth for trust. The more we trust and hope in

his mercy the better for us: Ps. xiii. 5, I have trusted in thy mercy; my soul shall rejoice in thy salvation;' Ps. xxxiii. 22, Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we hope in thee;' and Ps. xxxii. 10, He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.' The more clear is your claim when you trust yourselves with him. He is a merciful God, and his word saith he will take care for them that fear him.

[4.] All this trust must be set awork in prayer; so doth David, and so saith the word: Ps. 1. 15, Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify my name;' Jer. xxix. 11, 12, I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord; thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you;' Ezek. xxxvi. 37, Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.'

4. The effectual application, Let thy mercies come also unto me.'

[1.] He beggeth application: unto me also.' God is every day scattering his mercies abroad in the world, and David would not be left out of God's care and blessed provision, but have his share also. Esau's words are applicable upon this occasion: Gen. xxvii. 38, Hast thou but one blessing, O my Father? Bless me, even me also.' When the earth is full of his goodness, beg your share. God is the Father of mercies; he hath not the less for bestowing, as the sun hath not less light for us because others enjoy it with us. God doth not waste by giving.

[2.] He beggeth an effectual application, Let thy mercies come unto me.' The way was blocked up with sins and difficulties, yet mercy could clear all, and find access to him, or make out its way. Let it come to me, that is, let it be performed or come to pass, as it is rendered, Judges xiii. 12, Now let thy words come to pass to us;' Heb.--Let it come; here let it come home to me, for my comfort and deliverance.

David elsewhere saith, Ps. xxiii. 6, Mercy and goodness shall follow me all my days;' go after him, find him out in his wanderings. So Ps. cxvi. 12, What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?' They found their way to him though shut up with sins and dangers. Thus we see how to plead with God for temporal salvation; we must make grace, and nothing but grace, the ground of our hope, and this according to the tenor of the word.

Secondly, As it is applicable to eternal salvation; and then--

1. The ground of all is mercy, or pity of the creatures' misery. The Lord is not moved to bestow grace upon sinners for any goodness that he findeth in them, or could foresee in them, for he findeth none, and could foresee nothing but what was the fruit of his own grace: Rom. xi. 35, Who hath given him first, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?' It is the honour of God to begin all things, as the river floweth all to the fountain, the fountain nothing to the river; as none can give him first, so none can be profitable unto him, for he needeth nothing: Acts xvii. 25, Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.' Nay, we deserve the contrary, to be cast into utter darkness: Ezek. xxxvi. 21, 22, I do not this for your sakes: I had pity for my name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen;' 1 Peter i. 3, Of his abundant goodness he hath begotten us to a lively hope.' We have not a right notion of mercy unless we admire the plenty of it: Eph. ii. 4, God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love where with he loved us, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, hath quickened us with Christ.' There need many mercies from first to last for the saving of a poor sinner; their natural misery is great: Ezek. xvi. 6, When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when

thou wast in thy blood, Live.' Their actual sins many: Jer. xiv. 7, Our iniquities testify against us.' The way of their recovery by Christ is mysterious: John iii. 16, God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' The course taken for satisfying wronged justice; the application involveth many mercies. The renewing of their natures: Titus iii. 5, According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' The preserving of inherent grace against temptations, forgiving many sins after conversion: Isa. lv. 7, Let the wicked for sake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon;' Prov. xxiv. 16, The righteous fall seven times a day, and riseth up again.' The great eternal good things to be bestowed on them: Jude 21, Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.' So that from first to last there is nothing but a concatenation of mercies.

2. The effect, salvation. This properly deserveth to be called so. We are saved but in part before, then from all evils, from the greatest evil, hell. Before we are saved, but we maybe troubled again. Now no more sorrow, when all opposition is broken, and God is all in all, and the church presented as a prey snatched out of the teeth of lions; all former things are done away.

3. This dispensed according to the word. Now what doth the word say? When a sinner repenteth, all the iniquities which he hath committed shall be forgotten. There is abuse of mercy noted: Deut. xxix. 19, If he shall bless himself and say, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart;' I may go on in sin and cry God a mercy, and there is an end. No; mercy issueth out itself for salvation of men

according to the word; these are conclusions contrary to grace: Jude 4, There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness.' The principle is true, but the conclusion is false. Certainly God is merciful, there is no end nor measure nor bank nor bottom in his mercy; but throughout the whole scriptures mercy is only promised to the penitent, and those that come to God by Christ. Take mercy according to the word, according to the analogy of faith, and there is not a more powerful incentive of duty: Ps. cxxx. 5, There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;' Titus ii. 11, 12, The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;' Rom. xii. 1, I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.' This is true divinity. The flesh deviseth another doctrine. Let us sin that grace may abound, to make a carnal pillow of God's mercy, that they may sleep securely in sin, yea, a dungcart to carry away their filth. God is merciful, but to those that count sin a burden and misery; God is slow to anger, but yet angry when provoked: abused patience kindleth into fury, as water, when the mouth of the fountain or course of the river is stopped, breaketh out with more violence. God hath his arrows of displeasure to shoot at the wicked. You must not fancy a God all honey, all sweetness; he is the father of mercies,' but so that he is also a God of vengeance:' Ps. lxviii. 19-21, Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation, Selah. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. But God shall wound the hairy scalp of his enemies.' The mercy of God is large

and free, if men do not make themselves incapable by their impenitency.

4. We must beg--(1.) The application of these: to me also:' We have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful kings,' 1 Kings xx. 31. Now we would feel it: 1 Tim. i. 15, This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' Wind in ourselves within the covert of a promise, enter at the back-door of a promise; there comes virtue from Christ if but touched. The woman came behind him and touched the hem of his garment; so we must seek the application of this virtue. (2.) Effectual application, Let it come unto me.' Mercy cometh unto us, or we shall never come unto it, 1 Peter i. 10. The grace that cometh to us, cha'rin erchome'nen, the grace which is brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, God's grace, is brought home to our doors; we seek not after it, but it seeketh after us. Salvation has gone forth, saith the prophet, to find out lost sinners: Wisdom hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the high places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither,' Prov. ix. 3, 4. God sends the gospel up and down the world to offer his grace to men; it worketh out its way.

Use. Here is encouragement and direction to poor creatures how to obtain God's mercy for their comfort.

1. Encouragement. Mercy doth all with God; it is the first cause, that setteth every thing awork.

[1.] Mercy is natural to God: 2 Cor. i. 3, Father of mercies.' God is not merciful by accident, but by nature; the sun doth not more naturally shine, nor fire more naturally burn, nor water more naturally flow, than God doth naturally show mercy.

[2.] It is pleasing to him: Micah vii. 18, Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the

remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.' Judgment is called his strange work,' Isa. xxviii. 21, That he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act.' Primitive [16] acts he is forced to, but he rejoiceth to do good, as live honey droppeth of its own accord.

[3.] It is plentiful in God; he is rich in mercy, abundant in goodness truth. Thy sins are like a spark of fire that falleth into the ocean; it is quenched presently. So are all thy sins in the ocean of God's mercy; there is not more water in the sea than there is mercy in God.

[4.] It is the great wonder of the divine nature. Everything in God is wonderful, especially his pardoning mercy. It is no such great wonder in God that he stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain, since he is omni potent; that he formed the earth or the waters, since he is strong; that he distinguished times, adorned the heavens with so many stars, decked the earth with such variety of plants and herbs, since he is wise; that he hath set bounds to the sea, governeth the waters, since he is Lord of all; that he made man a living creature, since he is the fountain of life; but that he can be merciful to sinners, infinitely merciful when infinitely just. There is a conflict in the attributes about us, but mercy rejoiceth over judgment,' James ii. 13; that he is so gracious and condescending, when his first covenant seemed to bind him to destroy us; that he that hateth sin is so ready to forgive it, pardoneth it so often, and punisheth it so seldom.

[5.] He is communicative; it is over all his works,' Ps. cxlv. 9. Not a creature but subsisteth by God's mercy; he loveth man and beast, Ps. xxxvi. 6; and 1 Tim. iv. 10, He is the saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.' The whole earth is full of his goodness: Lord, show it to me also. He heareth the cry of the ravens.'

2. To direct us how to sue for it in a broken-hearted manner. There-are

two extremes--self-confidence and desperation. Self-confidence challengeth a debt, and despair shutteth out hopes of mercy. A proud Pharisee pleads his works, Luke xviii. 11. Cain saith, Gen. iv. 13, My punishment is greater that I can bear.' The middle between, both is the penitent publican: Luke xviii. 13, He stood afar off, and would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner.' Go to him; that which with men is the worst plea, with God is the best.

SERMON XLVIII.

So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.--Ver. 42.

IN the former verse we saw the man of God begging for deliverance, or temporal salvation, from the mercies of God according to his word. Salvation belongeth to the Lord, and his mercy can pardon great sins, and fetch us off from great extremities, and that according to the word of God. He had boasted of this. There is his request; here is his argument, from the use and fruit of his deliverance; he should have some thing to reply to the scoffs and mocks of wicked men, who insulted over him in his distress and calamity. He had spoken of great things or the promise, [17] and now desireth the promise to be made good, that he might have an answer ready against their reproaches, So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me.'

But hath a child of God nothing to answer to a wicked man before salvation cometh? Ans. Yes; a child of God could answer them of the principles of faith; but they must have instances of sense. He could say that his God is in heaven, and doth whatsoever he pleaseth;' that he is the shield of his help, and sword of his excellency,' Deut. xxxiii. 29. Weapons offensive and defensive enough yet left; but the business is not what is an answer in itself, but what answer will satisfy them? for they that have no faith must be taught by sense. When we urge principles of faith, unless their senses hear, feel, see, they will not regard them. Then their mouths are stopped when God doth own his people from heaven. They count faith a foolish persuasion, hope a vain expectation, and inward supports and comforts fantastical impressions; as if men did feed themselves with the wind. But God's

salvation would answer for him, and some sensible providences be a real confutation.

Observe three things:--

1. The ground of David's comfort, I trust in thy word.

2. The enemy's insultation thereupon, intimated in these words, him that reproacheth me. They scoffed at his trust in God, as if he would not bear him out in his strictness.

3. The request of the Psalmist, that God would confute and stop their mouths by making good his promises to him, so shall I have wherewith to answer him. Points:--

Doct. 1. It is our duty to trust God upon his word.

Doct. 2. Those that do so must look to be reproached for it.

Doct. 3. God making good his promises confuteth their reproaches and insultations.

Doct. 4. God will therefore make them good, and his people may expect and beg deliverance to that end.

Doct. 1. It is our duty to trust God upon his word. The act of trust is spoken of with respect to a twofold object--the word and God; the one more properly noteth the warrant of faith, the other the object. Both are mentioned together, John xvii. 20, Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.' In other places sometimes one is mentioned, sometimes the other; trusting in God and trusting in the word of God; but whenever the one is mentioned the other is included. To trust in God without his word is a foolish and groundless presumption, and the word without God is but a dead letter. It is not the conveyances merely that a man liveth upon, but the lands conveyed by them.

First, What is this trusting in God?

Ans. An exercise of faith, whereby, looking upon God in Christ through

the promises, we depend upon him for whatsoever we stand in need of, and so are encouraged to go on cheerfully in the ways wherein he hath appointed us to walk. It is a fruit of faith, and supposeth it planted in the heart, for an act cannot be without a habit. I suppose a man to have this grace before I require the exercise of it. And it looketh upon God in Christ as the fountain of blessings, for otherwise God, to the fallen creature, is not an object of trust, but horror; as the devils believe and tremble,' James ii. 19; and that may be the reason why the sons of men are said to put their trust under the shadow of his wings:' Ps. xxxvi. 7, How excellent is thy lovingkindness, God! Therefore the children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of thy wings;' and Ps. lvii. 1, My soul trusteth in thee, yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.' In which there is supposed to be an allusion not only to the feathers of a hen spread over the chickens, but the out-stretched wings of the cherubim over the mercy-seat, which was a type of Christ, who is therefore called ilaste'rion, a propitiation, as also the mercy-seat, Heb. v. 8, with Rom. iii. 24, Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.' The mercy-seat, or God offering himself to be reconciled in Christ, is an open sanctuary for distressed souls to fly unto. This doth draw our hearts to him through the promises. These are the holdfast which we have upon God, the sacred bands which he has taken upon himself, the rule and warrant of faith which shows how far God is to be trusted. Our necessities lead us to the promises, and the promises to Christ, and Christ to God, as the fountain of grace; and therefore we put these bonds in suit; we turn them into prayers; and then we have free leave to challenge him upon his word: Ps. cxix. 99, Remember thy word unto thy servant,

wherein thou hast caused me to hope.' Therefore, to bear up our hearts, God hath not only promised us, in the general, that he will never fail us nor forsake us,' Heb. xiii. 5, And all things shall work together for good.' Rom. viii. 28; that he will be with us in fire and water, Isa. xliii. 2, and that he will be a sun and a shield, and give us grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold,' Ps. lxxxiv. 11; but also, in particular, hath multiplied and suited his promises to all our necessities, that when we come to the throne of grace we may have a promise ready. A general intimation is not so clear a ground of hope as a particular and express promise: the more of these we have, the more explicit are our thoughts about God's protection, and the more are our hearts fortified and borne up in praying to him and waiting upon him. Chirographa tua injiciebat tibi, Domine--whose are these? Lay up his words in thy heart, Job xxii. 22. The more of these the more arguments in prayer. We depend upon him for all that we stand in need of. Herein is the nature of trust seen, in dependence and reliance upon God, that he will supply our wants in a way most conducible to his glory and our good. Now, this depending on God must be done at all times, especially in a time of straits and difficulties. At all times: Ps. lxii. 8, Trust in the Lord at all times.' It is an act never out of season, but especially in a time of fears, misery, and distress: Ps. lvi. 3, At what time I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee.' In prosperity and adversity we are to depend upon God, and to make use of him in all conditions: Ps. xci. 9, Thou shalt make the Most High thy refuge, and my God thine habitation.' A refuge is a place of retreat and safety in a time of war, and a habitation the place of our abode in a time of peace. Whatever our condition be, our dependence must be on God. When all things are prosperous, God must be owned as the fountain of our blessings, all our comforts taken out of his hand, and that we hold all

by his mercy and bountiful providence. Because of our forfeiture by sin, and the uncertainty of these outward comforts, and the continual necessity of his providential influence and support, the heart must still be exercised in the acknowledgment of God and his gracious hand over us; and so the heart is not enticed by our outward comforts, but raised by them. Indeed, in some cases, it is harder to trust God with means than without. When there are visible means of supply, the heart is prone to carnal confidence. Good Paul was in danger: 2 Cor. i. 9, We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead.' But then in adversity, when kept bare and low, then is a time to show trust; how hard soever our condition be, grounds of confidence are not lost: Zeph. iii. 12, I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.' Every man thinketh trusting in God easy when things go well with him; but indeed he trusteth in other things; he eateth his own meat, and weareth his own apparel, only God carrieth the name of it. But now, when we are without all comfort and encouragement from the creatures, as David, when he was left alone, Refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul: I cried unto thee, O Lord, and said, Thou art my refuge and portion in the land of the living,' Ps. cxlii. 4, 5. When men fail, God never faileth; when riches take wing, and worldly friends forsake us, then is a time for trust and dependence upon God. It is the end of providence that we should have the less comfort in the creature that we may have all in God. Now we are to depend on God for whatsoever we stand in need of, as at all times, so for all things, temporal and spiritual mercies; for God will withhold no good thing from us. He hath undertaken not only to give us heaven and happiness in the next world, but to carry us thither with comfort, that we may serve him without fear all the days of our lives,'

Luke i. 75. His providence concerneth the outward and inward man, and so do his promises. A whole believer is in covenant with God, body and soul, and he will take care of both. But all the difficulty is how we ought to depend on him for temporal supplies.

1. It is certain that we ought not to set God a task to provide meat for our lusts: Ps. lxxviii. 18, And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lusts.' Carnal affections and hopes do but make trouble for ourselves. Though it be the ordinary practice of God's free grace and fatherly cares to provide things comfortable and necessary for his children, whilst he hath work for them to do, yet he never undertook to maintain us at such a rate, to give us so much by the year, such portions for our children, and supplies for our families. We must leave to the great Shepherd of the sheep to choose our pastures, bare or large; and he that will depend upon God must be sure to empty his heart of covetous desires, and be contented with our lot, if we would cast ourselves upon his providence: Heb. xiii. 5, Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor for sake thee.' We do but ensnare and perplex our own thoughts while we would reconcile the promises with our lusts, and crave more than ever God meaneth to give.

2. It is as certain that we ought not to be faithless and full of cares about these outward supplies: Mat. vi. 23, Take no thought what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed;' because, if we had no promises, there is a common bounty and goodness of God which is over all his works, and reacheth to the preservation of the smallest worm, decketh the lilies, feedeth the ravens and the fowls of the air; and certainly more noble creatures, such as men are, may expect their share in this common bounty; how much more when there is a

covenant wherein God hath promised to be a father to us, and temporal blessings are adopted and taken into the covenant as well as other blessings. Will not he give that to children which he gives to enemies, to beasts and fowls of the air? You would count him a barbarous and unnatural father that feeds his dogs and hawks, and lets his children die of hunger; and can we without blasphemy think so of God?

3. As we ought not, on the one hand, to think God will supply our lusts, nor, on the other hand, distrust his care of necessaries, so we cannot be absolutely confident of particular success in temporal things; for they are not absolutely promised, but with exception of the cross, and as God shall see them good for us. God reserved in the covenant a liberty both of showing his justice and his wisdom; his justice, in scourging his sinning people: Ps. lxxxix. 32, He will visit their iniquity with rods, and their transgression with scourges.' The world shall know God doth not allow sins in his own children. Sin is as odious to God in them as others, yea, more; and therefore they feel the smart of it. The liberty of his wisdom: Ps. lxxxiv. 11, The Lord God is a sun and a shield: the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly;' Ps. xxxiv. 9, 10, O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him: the young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing.' They may want many comforts, but no good thing. Good is not determined by our fancies, but God's wisdom. Well, then, we cannot expect a certain tenure of temporal happiness-; there is great danger in fixing a deceitful hope; much of the subtlety of Satan is to be seen in it, who maketh an advantage of our disappointments, and abuseth our rash confidence into a snare and temptation to atheism and the misbelief of other truths.

4. The dependence we exercise about these things lieth in committing

ourselves to God's power, and referring ourselves to God's will. He is so able that he can secure us in his work, so good, that we should not trouble ourselves about his will, but refer it to him without hesitancy, which, if we could bring our hearts to it, it would ease us of many burdensome thoughts and troublesome cares: 1 Peter iv. 19, Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator;' Prov. xvi. 3, Commit thy ways unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.' Put yourselves into God's hands, so trusting him with the issue of our affairs, though we know not how it will fall: 1 Chron. xix. 13, Let the Lord do what is good in his sight;' 1 Tim. iv. 10, Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the saviour of all men, especially of those that believe;' and so are encouraged to go on cheer fully with their duty. Trust in God is not idle expectation or a devout sloth, but such a dependence as giveth life to our service, that we may go on cheerfully, without disquiet in our work, and in ways wherein he hath appointed us to walk. The law gives protection to those that travel on the road, not in byways: He shall keep thee in all thy ways:' in viis, non in prcecipitiis. Otherwise you seek to draw God into a fellowship of your guilt, and do make him serve with your iniquities,' Isa. xliii. 24--he was doubly censured among the heathen that took a lamp from the altar to steal by--to make God's providence subservient to the devil's interest: 1 Peter iv. 19, Commit your souls to God in well-doing.' God never undertook to protect us in the devil's service.

Secondly, Reasons why it is our duty.

1. Trust, as it implieth recourse to God in our necessities, is necessarily required in the fundamental article of the covenant, in the choice of God for your God. Nature teacheth men in their distress to

run to their gods: Jonah i. 5, The mariners cried every man to his god.' It immediately results from the owning of a God, that we should trust him with our safety; much more when taught thus to do, and how to do so in the word.

2. Else there can be no converse with God. Truth is the ground of commerce between man and man; so our dependence, which is built upon God's fidelity, is the ground of commerce between God and us. Man fell from God by distrust, by having a jealousy of him; and still the evil heart of unbelief doth lead us off from God: Heb. iii. 12, Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' But the more we believe him, the more we keep with him. God doth not give present payment, nor govern the world by sense; therefore faith is necessary: 2 Cor. v. 7, For we walk by faith, not by sight.' Sight is for heaven, faith for the present dispensation. We are now under sense, and that will mislead us. Reason is either refined by faith, or depressed by sense.

3. Consider whose word it is. God's word is the signification of his will who is merciful, able, true. (1.) There is benignity and goodness, by which he is willing to help poor creatures, though we can be of no use and profit to him. The hen receiveth no benefit by the chickens, only her trouble of providing for them is increased; but they are her own brood, therefore she leadeth them up and down that they may find a sustenance: so doth God to the creatures. We are the work of his hands, therefore he pitieth us, and is willing to save us; and not only so, but carried us in the womb of his decree from all eternity. (2.) His truth and fidelity is laid at pawn with the creature in the promises: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' He standeth much on his truth, is punctual in his promises. It is a great disgrace done to God if we do not trust him upon his word; we make him

a liar:' 1 John v. 10, He that believeth not God hath made him a liar,' and so not God. (3.) He is able to make it good; his word never yet found difficulty: He spake the word, and it was done.' There is the same power that goeth still along with his word. If he say he will do this, who can let? Therefore, none that ever yet trusted in God were disappointed: Ps. xxii. 5, They trusted in thee, and were not confounded.'

4. From the benefits of this trust.

[1.] This fixeth and establisheth the heart against all fears, which so often prove a snare to us: Ps. cxii. 7, He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' Ill news and cross accidents falling out in the world do not dismay him, because he looketh higher, because he hath set God against men, the covenant against providences, eternal things against temporal; he is not fearless, yet his heart is established and fixed.

[2.] It allayeth our sorrows, and maketh us cheerful in the midst of all difficulties and discouragements: Ps. xiii. 5, I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation;' so Ps. lii. 8, I am like a green olive-tree, for I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.' As some trees are green in winter; this will make a man flourish notwithstanding opposition, and all the bitter cold blasts of trouble and worldly distress.

[3.] It quiets the heart as to murmurings and unquiet agitations of spirit, to wait God's leisure. When there was a storm in David's spirit, he allayeth it thus: Ps. xlii. 5, Why art thou disquieted, my soul? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him.' On the contrary, murmuring, impatience, and vexation is the fruit of distrust: Ps. cvi. 24, 25, They believed not his word, and murmured in their tents.' They that distrust God's promise fall a quarrelling with his providence. Did

we believe that the wise God is still carrying on all things for our good, we would submit to his will.

[4.] It banisheth and removeth far from us distracting cares and fears; these are a great sin, a reproach to our heavenly Father: Mat. vi. 25, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, nor what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on;' and ver. 32, After all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' As if your children, when you are able to maintain them, should distrust your allowance, and beg their bread from door to door. We are forecasting many things, take God's work out of his hands, and are anxious in inquiring what we shall eat, what we shall drink, what shall become of such a business and affair. Now, how shall we be eased of these tormenting thoughts? Prov. xvi. 3, Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established;' 2 Chron. xx. 20, Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established.'

[5.] It keepeth us from warping and turning aside to crooked paths. As long as we are persuaded that God will maintain us by honest and lawful means, we are kept upright with God; but an unbelieving person makes haste; right or wrong, he will be his own carver. Men, if they have not faith enough to trust God in an ordinary course of providence, think God is a bad pay-master, and therefore take up with present things: Zeph. iii. 2, She obeyed not my voice, she trusted not in the Lord;' that was the reason of her corruption, oppression, and deceit; this was the reason why they rose up against Moses, and would go back to Egypt; they would not believe God could maintain them in the wilderness. Warping and declining from God cometh from want of faith.

The first use is to persuade us to trust in God upon his word. I will direct you--

1. As to the means.

2. The nature of this trust.

1. As to the means. If you would do so--

[1.] Know him: Ps. ix. 10, They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.' If God were better known, he would be better trusted: 2 Tim. i. 12, I know whom I have believed.'

[2.] Get a covenant interest in him. If our interest be clouded, how can we put promises in suit? But when it is clear, you may draw comfortable conclusions thence: Ps. xxxi. 14, I trusted in thee. O Lord; I said, Thou art my God;' Ps. xxiii. 1, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;' he will provide for his own: Lam. iii. 24, 4 The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.'

[3.] Walk closely with him: Micah iii. 11, The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money; yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? None evil shall come upon us.' God will shake them as Paul did the viper. Shame, fear, and doubts do always follow sin. Will a man trust him whom he hath provoked? Doubts are the fumes of sin, like vapours that come from off a foul stomach. If we mean to make good and keep a friend, we will be careful to please him. A good conversation breedeth a good conscience, and a good conscience trust in God.

[4.] Observe experiences, when he maketh good his word: Ps. xviii. 30, As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is tried; he is a buckler to all them that trust in him.' All these providences are confirmations that feed and nourish faith: Ps. lvi. 10, 11, In God will I praise his word; in the Lord will I praise his word: in God have I put my trust; I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.'

2. As to the nature of this trust. Let me commend to you--

[1.] The adventure of faith: Luke v. 5, At thy word we will let down the net.' At thy command; when we cannot apply the promise, venture for the command's sake; see what God will do for you, and what believing comes to.

[2.] The waiting of faith, when expectation is not answered, and you find not at first what you wait for; yet do not give God the lie, but resolve to keep the promise as a pawn till the blessing promised cometh: Isa. xxviii. 16, He that believeth maketh not haste.' It is carnal affection must have present satisfaction: greedy and impatient longings argue a disease. Revenge must have it by and by; covetousness waxeth rich in a day; ambition would rise presently; lusts are earnest and ravenous; like diseased stomachs, must have green trash.

[3.] The obstinacy and resolution of faith. Resolve to die holding the horns of the altar; you will not be put off; as she cried so much the more, and the woman of Canaan turned discouragements into arguments: Job xiii. 15, Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'

[4.] The submission and resignation of faith: Mat. vi. 33, Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added to you.' Set your hearts upon the highest interest, make sure of heaven, and refer other things to God; be at a point of indifferency for temporal supplies.

[5.] The prudence of faith. Settle your mind against present necessities, and for future contingencies leave them to God's providence: Mat. vi. 34, Sufficient for each day is the evil thereof.' Children, that have to allay present hunger, do not cark how to bring the year about; they leave that to their father. Manna was to be gathered daily; when it was kept till the morning, it putrified.

[6.] The obedience of faith. Mind duty, and let God take care of success. Let God alone with the issues of things, otherwise we take the

work out of his hands. A Christian's care should be what he should be, not what shall become of him: Phil. iv. 6, Be careful for nothing;' and 1 Peter v. 7, But cast your care on him, for he careth for you.' There is a care of duties and a care of events. God is more solicitous for you than you for yourselves.

Use 2. Do we thus trust in the Lord? All will pretend to trust in God, but there is little of this true trusting in him in the world.

1. If we trust God we shall be often with him in prayer, Ps. lxii. 8, Trust in the Lord at all times; pour out your hearts before him;' 2 Sam. xxii. 2-4, The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, the God of my rock; in him will I trust; he is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my Saviour; thou savest me from violence; I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from mine enemies.' We #ct our trust at the throne of grace; encourage ourselves in God.

2. It will quiet and fix the heart, free it of cares, fears, and anxious thoughts: Phil. iv. 6, 7, Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ;' Ps. xciv. 19, In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.'

3. A care to please, for dependence begets observance. They that have all from God will not easily break with him.

Doct. 2. Those that do trust in God must look to be reproached for it by carnal men.

1. There are two sorts of men in the world ever since the beginning--contrary seeds: Gen. iii. 15, I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' Some born of the

flesh, some of the spirit; the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; some that live by sense, some by faith: ever it will be so. And there is an enmity between these two, and this enmity vented by reproach: Gal. iv. 29, But as he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now;' that persecution was by bitter mockings. So Ishmael: Gen. xxi. 9, Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.'

2. The occasion, from their low condition; hence they will take liberty to mock at their interest in God, and to shame them from their confidence, as if the promise of God were of none effect. Carnal men measure all things by a carnal interest; and therefore the life of those that live by faith is ridiculous to them; those that trust in a promise are exercised with delay and distress: Heb. vi. 12, Be ye followers of them who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises.' Here is matter for faith and patience. Now, they that know no arm but flesh, no security but a temporal interest, no happiness but in the things of this life, have them in derision that look elsewhere.

Use 1. Not to count it strange when it is our lot to be exercised with reproaches because of our trust; so was Christ: Ps. xxii. 6-8, I am a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people: all they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, and shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him;' Mat. xxvii. 39-43, And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross,' &c. If Christ Jesus was mocked for his trust, we should bear it the more patiently. So the people of God: 1 Tim. iv. 10 Therefore we both labour

and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.' It is no new thing for the adversaries of religion to scorn such as trust in God, and rely upon his promises; therefore bear it the, more patiently. (1.) Whether they be upbraidings of our trust: Mat. xxvii. 43, He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God;' Job iv. 6, Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?' (2.) Or insultings over our low and comfortless condition. Men will tread down the hedge where they find it low. The Psalmist complaineth, Ps. lxix. 26, They speak to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded;' pour in vinegar and salt where they find a wound, and add affliction to the afflicted. You will hear bitter words. Christ himself was thus exercised: Mat. xxvii. 29, Hail, King of the Jews.' To be mocked and scorned we must expect, and that men will insult. (3.) Or whether they be perverse applications of providence. Thus Shimei insulted over David in his distress: 2 Sam. xvi. 7, 8, Come out, thou bloody man, thou man of Belial; the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul,' &c. So men will say, This is for your rebellion, &c.

Use 2. Since there are two parties in the world, they that trust and they that reproach them for their trust, consider in what number you are. It is needful to be far from the disposition of the seed of the serpent, and not to have your tongues set on fire of hell, to be far from the disposition of those that are governed by sense and carnal interests. (1.) It is unmannerly to insult over any in distress, and to reproach them with their condition. Places blasted with lightning were accounted sacred amongst the heathens, because the hand of God had touched them; so you should not speak to the grief of those whom God hath wounded, but pity them, and pray for them, if they are fallen into God's hands. (2.) It is unchristian to reproach those that trust in

God. It is easy to know them. Who are they that pray, that plead promises, that carry not on their hopes by present likelihoods? Though they have their faults, they are, for the main, strict, holy, charitable. (3.) It is dangerous to offend any of Christ's little ones, and to grieve their spirits.

Doct. 3. That these reproaches are grievous to God's children, and go near their hearts; therefore David desires God to appear for him, that he may have somewhat to answer them that reproached him.

1. Man's nature cannot endure reproach, especially a scornful reproach: every man thinketh himself worthy of some regard.

2. Religion increaseth the sense of it, as the flood increased when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, Gen. vii. 11. When the deep below and the heaven above combined, the flood was greater; so when grace and nature join, it is very grievous. David said, Ps. xlii. 10, It was a sword in my bones when they said, Where is now thy God?' These were cutting words to David's heart.

[1.] It is a dishonour to God, and they are sensible of that, as well as a misery to themselves.' It is a dishonour to his power, as if ha could not help; to his love, as if he would not; to his truth, as if he would fail in the needful time, or were fickle and inconstant, as if he would desert his friends in misery; to his holiness, as if he favoured wicked men in their evil courses, and formal dead-hearted services: Ps. 1. 21, These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.' How can a soul that loveth God endure this, that the power of God should be lessened or his truth questioned? Rabshakeh said, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?' Isa. xxxvi. 4, compared with xviii. 19, 20, Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The Lord shall deliver us. Hath any of

the gods of the heathens delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they amongst all the gods that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?' As if the living God had no more power than dumb idols. Therefore Hezekiah goeth and spreads the letter before the Lord. You touch a godly man to the quick when you strike at God's honour; they have a tender sense and feeling of this.

[2.] It reflects upon the ways of God, to bring them out of request. You thought you were one of God's darlings, you thought nobody served God but you; this is your godly profession, your fasting and prayer; what need such niceness? Thus they count his way folly, his life madness.

[3.] These reproaches strike at the life of faith, and therefore go very near the hearts of God's children. Trust and confidence in God is the life of their souls: Ps. iii. 2, There is no help for him in God'. Such temptations are very catching, when he seemeth opposite to. them. Now our unbelief puts in to make the temptation stronger. There is some visible pretence for what is said, Where are the promises thou talkest of? Where the promises and the deliverance? What have thy prayers brought from heaven? Thou hast called and none answered, cried and none hath pity on thee. What profit in serving the Lord? And then what followeth after this open objection? Unbelief cometh; and whispereth in our ears, Do you think those things true the word speaketh?

Well, then, open your hearts to God, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter; tell him of these cruel mockings,' as they are called, Heb. xi. 36. It is the manner of saints so to do: Ps. cxv. 2, Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?' and Joel ii. 17, on the

fasting day let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar; and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?'

Doct. 4. God making good his promises, confuteth these reproaches and insultations. When deliverance cometh their mouths are stopped: Job v. 16, The poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth;' Ps. cvii. 42, The righteous shall see it, and iniquity shall stop her mouth,' then when he sets the poor on high from affliction, and maketh them families like a flock.' In both these places it is not said, God stoppeth their mouths, or the saints stop their mouths, but they stop their own mouths; then we need not answer our adversaries, they answer themselves; they have not a word to say, and all their pride and insultation is defeated and silenced.

Use 1. Prayer is necessary. Desire God to appear and right himself, that he may confute the perverse thoughts of men, and wrong applications of his providence, that carnal men may see your hope and confidence in God is not in vain. You may beg deliverance on this ground, that the mouth of iniquity may be stopped.

Use 2. Wait. Carnal men reproach God's people with their trust, when in their distress he stays a little, when they have humbled themselves for their sins, and sought reconciliation with God as his word prescribeth, and are sufficiently weaned from carnal props, and have learned to depend on him; the wicked shall find himself mistaken about the godly, whose ways he counted folly.

[17] Q u. spoken great things of the promise'?--ED.

SERMON XLIX.

And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments.--Ver. 43.

IN the first verse of this portion David had begged for deliverance according to the word; this he backeth with several arguments. His first argument was from his enemies, who would else reproach him for his trust. He now enforceth that request from another argument, lest his case and condition should make him afraid, or his disappointments ashamed to own his faith in God's promises, and so his mouth be shut up from speaking of God and his word, for the edification of others and the confutation of the wicked. Here observe--

1. His request, and take not the word of truth out of my mouth.

2. The profession of his faith, repeated by way of argument and reasons, for I have hoped in thy judgments.

1. For his request. You may wonder why he beggeth that the word of truth may not be taken out of his mouth. Rather you would think he should ask that it might be kept in his heart. But you must consider that confession of truth is very necessary, and in a time of dangers and distresses very difficult. The proper seat of the word of truth is the heart; it must abide there. But when the heart is full, the tongue will speak: I have believed, and therefore have I spoken,' Ps. cxvi.

10. The word is first in the heart, and then in the mouth; therefore David saith, Take it not out of my mouth.' And pray, mark, he doth not only deprecate the evil itself, but the degree and extremity of it, Take it not utterly out of my mouth.' God's children may not have liberty to speak for him, or if liberty, not such a courage as is necessary. Therefore, though he should or had failed in being ashamed

to profess his hope, yet he desireth he might not wholly want either an occasion or a heart so to do; that he might not wholly want an occasion, having no relief and comfort by the promises, nor an heart, as being altogether dismayed or disconsolate.

2. The profession of his faith is renewed, For I have hoped in thy judgments.' The word msphtym, judgments, signifieth either the law, or the execution of the sentence thereof.

[1.] The law, or whole word of God, so that I have hoped in thy judgments is no more but in thy word do I hope,' as it is Ps. cxxx. 5, I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.'

[2.] Answerable execution, when the promise or threatening is fulfilled.

(1.) When the promise is fulfilled, that is judgment in a sense; when God accomplisheth what he hath promised for our salvation and deliverance. Thus God is said to judge for his people when he righteth and saveth them according to his word: Lam. iii. 59, O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong; judge thou my cause.'

(2.) But the more usual notion of judgment is the execution of the threatening on wicked men, which being a benefit to God's faithful servants, and done in their favour, David might well be said to hope for it. Their judgment is our obtaining the promise. Points:--

Doct. 1. It is not enough to believe the word in our hearts, but we must confess it with our mouths.

Doct. 2. Such trials may befall God's children that the word of truth may seem to be taken out of their mouths.

Doct. 3. At such a time God must be dealt withal, as much concerned in it. David saith to the Lord, Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.'

Doct. 4. If it please God to desert us in some passage of our trial, we

must not give him over, but deal with him not to forsake us utterly.

Doct. 5. They will not utterly be overcome in their trials who hope in God's judgments.

Doct. 1. It is not enough to believe the word in our hearts, but we must confess it with our mouths. So it is expressly said, Rom. x. 9. 10, If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' There is the whole sum of Christianity, and it is reduced to these two points--believing with the heart, and confessing with the mouth; an entertaining of Christ in the heart with a true and lively faith, and a confessing of Christ with the mouth in spite of all persecution and danger. So in the first solemn proposal of the gospel: Mark xvi. 16, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;' where not only belief is required, but open profession; for that end serveth baptism, which is a badge and bond a badge to distinguish the worshippers of Christ from others, and a bond to bind us to open profession of the name of Christ, and practice of the duties included therein. So Heb. iii. 1, Jesus Christ is called the great high priest and apostle of our profession.' The Christian religion is a confession, not a thing to be smothered and kept in secret, or confined to the heart, but to be openly brought forth, and avowed in word and deed to the glory of Christ. If a man should content himself to own God in his heart, what would become of the Church of God, and all his ordinances, and the assemblies of his people, among whom we make this open confession?

1. This confession is necessary as well as the inward belief, because God hath required it by an express law, which law is confirmed by a

sanction of great weight and moment, the greatest promises on the one hand, and the greatest penalties and threatening^ on the other. That there is an express law for confession, besides what hath been said already, see 1 Peter iii. 15, Sanctify the Lord God of hosts in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear;' where they are required not only to revere God in their hearts, but to be ready to own him with their mouths, and to give a testimony of him when it should be demanded; yea, that sanctifying God in their hearts is required in order to the testimony given with their. mouths, that having due and awful thoughts of God they may not be ashamed to own him before men. Now this is backed with the greatest promises, and on the other side with the severest threatenings. God hath promised no less than salvation to those that confess him: Mat. x. 32, Whosoever will confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.' Father, this is one of mine. He will do them more honour than possibly they can do him; and Rom. x. 10, With the mouth confession is made to salvation.' Salvi esse non possumus, saith Austin, nisi ad salutem proximorum etiam ore profiteamur fidem--we cannot be saved unless we profess the faith that we have. On the other side, the neglect of profession, either out of shame or fear, is threatened with the greatest penalties; Mark viii. 38, Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with his glorious angels.' Then, when all shadows flee away, and we would crouch for a little favour, that Christ should be ashamed of us, These were Christians, but cowardly and dastardly ones: I cannot own them to be of my flock and kingdom,--oh, how will our faces gather blackness! The same is Luke ix. 26, Whosoever shall be

ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.' So for fear: 2 Tim. ii. 11, If we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he will deny us.' So that you see it is not a matter of small moment whether we confess or no, but a thing expressly enjoined by God, and that upon terms of life and death.

2. This confession is of great use, as conducing much to the glory of God and the good of others.

[1.] The glory of God, which should be the great scope and end of our lives and actions, is much concerned in our confessing or not confessing what we believe. When we boldly avow the truth, it is a sign we are not ashamed of our master: Phil. i. 20, According to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.' Ministry or martyrdom, he calls this a magnifying of Christ; whereas flinching, concealing, halving the truth, denying confession, is called a being ashamed of Christ: Luke ix. 26, Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words;' as if his name were a thing base, unworthy, not to be owned.

[2.] The good of others and their edification is concerned in our confessing^or not confessing. No man is born for himself, and therefore is not only to work out his own salvation, but as much as in him lieth to procure the salvation of others, and to bring God and his truth into request with them; therefore not only to believe with the heart--that concerneth himself, but to confess with the mouth--that concerneth the good of others. When we own the truth, though it cost us dear, that tendeth to the furtherance of the gospel: Phil. i. 12, 13, For I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my

bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places,' &c. But when we dissemble, that is a scandal and a stumbling-block to others, whom we justify and harden in a false way; as Peter, fearing them of the circumcision, dissembled, and the Jews dissembled with him, insomuch that Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation,' Gal. ii. 12, 13, Men of public fame and-favour, when they are not men of courage and of self-denying spirits, their temporising may do a great deal of hurt, and, like a torrent, or stream, carry others with them. Oh, let us beware of this! Zuinglius saith, Ad aras Jovis et Veneris adorare, ei sub antichristo fidem occultare, idem est--as well worship before the altars of Jupiter and Venus, as hide our faith under antichrist. Fear and weakness excuseth not. The fearful and unbelieving are put with murderers and sorcerers and idolaters, and sent together to the lake that burneth with fire and brim stone, Rev. xxi. 8.

Use 1. To reprove them that think it to be enough to own the truth in their hearts, without confessing it with their mouths. This libertinism prevailed at Corinth, where they thought they might be present at idols' feasts, as long as in their consciences they knew that an idol was nothing. The apostle argueth against them, 2 Cor. vi., and concludes his argument thus: 2 Cor. vii. 1, Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.' To pretend to serve God in my heart, whosoever thinks so mocketh God and deceiveth himself. He that warreth with the enemies of his prince, and is as forward in battle as any of the rest, can he say, I reserve the king my heart and affections? Or when a woman prostituteth her body to another, will the husband be content with such an excuse, that she reserveth her heart for him? God is not a God of half of a man: he made the whole body and soul r and

will be served with both; he bought both: 1 Cor. vi. 20, Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are God's.' Therefore you should not only love him in your hearts, but openly plead for him and maintain his quarrel. The devil asketh but Christ's knee: Mark iv. 9, Fall down and worship me.' What I were all the martyrs of God rash, inconsiderate, that suffered so many things rather than lose their liberty in God's service? Would we be content God should deal with us as we deal by him, glorify their souls only, love their souls, but punish their bodies eternally?

2. Them that, though not tainted with this libertine principle, yet are afraid or ashamed to own the truth.

[1.] Some afraid because of troubles and persecution. Hath Christ endured so much for us, and shall we be afraid to own his truth? God forbid! If I would fear, whom should I be afraid of? Mat. x. 28, Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.' Whom should a child fear, his father or the servants of his house? So, whom should we fear, God or man, a prison or hell?

2. Ashamed in peace and out of trouble, ashamed to own Christ in such company, or to speak of God and his word. O Christians! shall we be ashamed to speak for him that was not ashamed to die for us, or count religion a disgrace which is our glory? Would a father take it well that his son should be ashamed of him? Are we ashamed of the gospel, the great charter of our hopes, the seeds of the new life, the power of God to salvation?' Rom. i. 1 6, For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God to salvation.' Oh, shake off this baseness! John v. 44, How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that comes from God only?'

Use 2. To exhort us to confess with the mouth, and to own the truths we

are persuaded of. And here I shall handle the case of profession.

1. How far it is necessary. It is a matter intricate and perplexed, and therefore I care not to comprise all cases, but to the most notable I shall speak.

2. As to the manner how this profession is to be made.

1. How far we are bound to profess.

[1.] The affirmative.

[2.] The negative.

[1.1 The affirmative.

(1.) It is certain that the great truths must be owned and publicly professed, or else Christ would not have a visible people in the world, distinct from pagans and heathens. Our baptism bindeth us to this profession, and to all practices consonant and agreeable with it: Rom. x. 10, With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' To own Christ as the Saviour of the world, evidenced by his resurrection from the dead.

(2.) It is certain we must do nothing to contradict the truth in the smallest matters: 2 Cor. xiii. 8, We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.' Nothing contrary to the glory of God, or the prejudice of the least truth, whatever it costs us.

(3.) In lesser truths, when they are ventilated and brought forth upon the stage, and God crieth out, Who is on my side, who? we ought not to give up ourselves to an indifferency, to hide our profession for any danger: 2 Peter i. 12, Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.' The church of God is out of repair sometimes in one point, sometimes in another; the orthodoxy of the generality of men is usually an age too short in things now afoot; they go wrong, or forbear to give help to the church, be cause the god of

this world hath blinded their eyes. Fight Christ, fight antichrist, they are resolved to be lookers-on.

(4.) When our non-profession shall be interpreted to be a denial. Thus Daniel, chap. vi. 10, opened his casement, which looked towards Jerusalem, and prayed three times a day as he was wont. We must rather suffer than deny the truth by interpretation, when such practices are urged as cross a principle, and we comply.

(5.) When others are scandalised by our non-profession, or not owning the truths of Christ; that is, not only with the scandal of offence or contestation, but with the scandal of seduction, in danger to sin; and to run into error by our not appearing for God, the interest of truth should prevail above our ease and private content.

(6.) When an account of my faith is demanded, and I am called forth to give testimony for Christ, especially by magistrates: Mat. x. 18, Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles: 1 Peter iii. 15, Be always ready to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you,' provided it be not in scorn: Prov. xxvi. 4, 5, Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.' Answer and answer not; not out of curiosity, as Herod questioned Christ many things, but he answered him nothing, Luke xxiii. 9; or to be a snare, Isa. xxxvi. 21, They held their peace, and answered him not a word, for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not,' nor parley with Rabshakeh. In such cases you must not cast pearls before swine, lest they turn again and rend you,' Mat. vii. 6.

(7.) When impulsions are great, and fair opportunities are offered in God's providence: Acts xvii. 16, While Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to

idolatry.' It is an intimation from God that then it is seasonable to interpose for his glory.

[2.] Negatively, which is to be forborne.

(1.) Till you be fully persuaded in your own mind of the truth which you would profess, for otherwise we shall appear with a various and doubtful face to the world, changing and wavering according to the uncertainty of our own thoughts, and so make the profession of religion ridiculous. We often see cause to suspect what before we were strongly conceited of. There is a certain credulity and lightness of believing which men are subject to. Now when this breaks out into sudden profession, men run through all sects and religions, and so blast and blemish their own service, therefore what is contrary to the received sense, especially of the godly, ought to be weighed and weighed again before we appear to the world to be otherwise minded.

(2.) When the profession of a lesser truth proves an offence to the weak, and a disturbance to the church, and a hindrance of some greater benefit. All private opinions must give way to the great law of edification: Rom. xiv. 22, Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God.' We must not perplex weak souls with doubtful disputations, till they be established in greater things; neither must the peace of the church be troubled with nice debates, but all things must give way to the profit and general edification.

(3.) When the unseasonable venting of things will do more hurt than good, and the sway of the times and strong tide and current of prejudices running down against us hinder all probability of doing good, then our profession now may deprive us of a more useful profession another time: Prov. xxix. 11, A fool uttereth all his mind, but he that is wise keepeth it in till afterward.' Paul was at Ephesus two years before he spake against Diana, Acts xix. 10; only intimated

in general terms that they were no gods that were made with hands. When we cannot effect the good things we desire, nor in that holy manner we would, we must not obstruct our future service, but commend the cause to God. and wait further opportunity to do good.

2. The manner how to make profession.

[1.] Knowledge must be at the bottom of profession. Some will run before they can go, leap into opinions and practices before they gee the reasons of them; and then no wonder they are as children, carried about with every wind of doctrine,' Eph. iv. 14. Wherefore, that which we profess we must do it knowingly, that we may be able to render a reason of all that we do profess.

J2.] Gracious wisdom to espy the due occasion when God is glorified our neighbour edified. Bash, arrogant, and presumptuous spirits are heady, high-minded, disgrace religion more than honour it.

[3.] With boldness to do it freely and without fear of men: Acts iv. 13, When they saw the boldness of Peter and John.'.&c.; ver. 29, Grant to thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word;' and 1 Tim. iii. 13, They that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus;' Acts ix. 27, Barnabas declared unto them how he had preached boldly to them at Damascus in the name of Jesus;' ver. 29, He spake boldly in the name of Jesus;' Acts xiv. 3, Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord;' Acts xiii. 46, Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold.' Fear and shame argueth diffidence of the truth which we profess, or else a distrust of the 3rod from whom it cometh, or at least the unsoundness of the professing party, that he hath a naughty conscience, or a great deal of fleshly fear unmodified. As he cannot walk stoutly that has a stone in his shoe, so he that hath sin in his conscience. Obmutescit facundia si aegra sit conscientia, saith

Ambrose--a bad conscience stoppeth the mouth.

[4.] With sincerity, without dissimulation and guile. Profession without answerable duty is like leaves without fruit. Words must come from the heart. To be talking of God when they lie under the guilt of known sins. James ii. 16, If one say unto the poor, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?' Ps. l. 16, 17, Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my word behind thee?'

[5.] With meekness and reverence: Peter iii. 15, Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;' not in a passionate, froward, arrogant way, but with meekness of spirit, without all show of passion, and with sober and respectful language.

[6.] The general end is the glory of God and the edification of our neighbour; and the means to this end is the fear of God, which keeps us out of all faulty extremes: Eccles. vii. 16, 17, Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over-much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?' Some drive all things to extremity, hot like gunpowder; others freeze into a compliance and time serving. When the heart is seasoned by the fear of God, and we are guided by reasons of conscience rather than interest, and we constantly wait upon God for direction, then will God guide us.

Doct. 2. Such trials may befall God's children that the word of truth may seem to be taken out of their mouths.

This may come to pass two ways:--

1. They may not have liberty to own it; as Acts iv. 18, 19, They

commanded them not to speak at all, nor to teach in the name of Jesus: and they said, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you or unto God, judge ye.' The magistrate's command is a silencing of them, shutting of their mouths; only here cometh a question whether ministers forbidden by magistrates should desist from preaching? If we say they ought, it seems to be against the apostle's reply; if we say not, we shall seem to deny obedience to secular and politic powers, who ought to be satisfied in the persons that exercise a public ministry in their dominions, and so lay a foundation for public disturbance and disorder. For answer We must distinguish between persons employed to preach the gospel; some immediately called by Christ himself, others mediately called by men; some fallible and obnoxious to errors and many failings, which render them unworthy of such a calling; others infallibly guided and assisted. These latter, without flat disobedience and injury to Christ, could not own any command contrary to the precedent authority of Christ, being the only men of that order that could witness these things. It is true a necessity is laid upon us' of preaching the gospel, 1 Cor. ix. 16, so as not voluntarily to relinquish our station, but we may be forced to give way to the greater force. Some are silenced by authority and opposition of men, a dispensation God often permitteth for despising the truth and playing the wanton with an opportunity of open profession. When men dally with the light, God removeth their candlestick, and the door is shut upon them.

2. They may not have courage to own the word of truth for fear of danger, because of many adversaries. There is a great deal of this unmortified fleshly fear in the best, and may be tongue-tied when God's glory is concerned, and awed by the menaces and insults of evil men, or discouraged, that they dare not trust God with events, and are out of

all hope of success: Ezek. iii. 26, I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, and thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them for a reprover, for they are a rebellious house.' By these and many other ways they may be discouraged from speaking of God and his truth. But now, when such a case falleth out, what shall we do? That in the third point.

Doct. 3. At such a time God must be dealt withal about it upon two grounds:--

1. Because God hath a great hand in the judgment. In the outward case, want of liberty, nothing falleth out without his providence; he seeth fit sometimes to exercise his people with unreasonable men, for all have not faith,' 2 Thes. iii. 2, that obstruct and hinder the course of the gospel; some that be like Elymas the sorcerer, enemies to all goodness,' Acts xiii. 10. And this in ecclesia constituta, in the bosom of the church, where orthodox faith is professed, where magistrates be Christians, and should be nursing fathers to the church. la Abraham's family, which Paul makes the pattern of our estate to the end of the world: Gal. iv. 29, But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now.' These may prevail many times to the great discouragement of the faithful. God may suffer it to be so for the punishing and trying of his people: Acts xix. 9, But when divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.' Then, as to the inward case, he may justly desert us in the time of trial, when we should give a testimony for him, and take the word of truth out of our mouths. All these speeches: Hide not thy commandments from me,' ver. 19; Incline not mine heart to covetousness,' ver. 26; and here, Take not thy word out of my mouth,'

and many such like, relate to God's judicial sentence, in what he doth as a judge. Upon our evil deserving he withdraweth his grace, and then we are delivered over to our own fears and baseness of spirit. Besides our own fault there is judicial tradition on God's part, which takes away the heart and courage of men: Job xii. 24, He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness, where there is no way.' Now none can suspend God's sentence but God himself. If he shut who can open? therefore he is to dealt with.

2. God only can give us a remedy by his grace and power; therefore our great business lieth with him, in regard of the power of his providence, by which he can remove rubs and oppositions: 2 Thes. iii. 1, Pray for us, that the word of God may have a free course,' hina ho logos tou Theou treche--that it may run as chariot wheels on smooth ground, without rubs and oppositions. There are many times mountains' in the way, potent oppositions and strongly combined interests, that hinder the liberty of the word; but God can smoothe them into a plain: Zech. iv. 7, Who art thou, great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.' Opposition seemeth insuperable. That great mountain that obstructed the work of God was the court of Persia, instigated and set on by the Samaritan faction--a great mountain indeed; but as great as it is, God can thresh it into dust, when it hindereth his interest.

As to the inward case, it is God that giveth a spirit of courage and fortitude, and a mouth and wisdom which all the adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist,' Luke xxi. 15; he will give it us in that hour what we shall say. So God encourageth Moses when he pleadeth his slowness of speech: Who hath made man's mouth, or who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing or the blind? Have not I the Lord?' Exod. iv. 10, 11. Whatever inclination of heart there be in the creature, it is

God must give a spirit and a presence, by the continual influence of his grace. He frees the heart from fears, and ordereth the tongue; for the power of the tongue is no more in our hands than the affections of the heart: Prov. xvi. 1, The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord,' parresi'a, is the gift of God, that we own him and his truth.

Use. Let, then, every person be dealing with God about this case, every single private person for himself; and for public persons the prayers of others are necessary; it is a common case, wherein all are concerned: Col. iv. 3, Praying for us, that God would open to us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ;' Eph. vi. 19, Pray for me that utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.' They that are sensible of the weight of the ministerial charge and their own many infirmities, and how much it concerns us to own all the truths of God in their season, let us beg of God this boldness, and set others a-begging for us.

1. Humbly confessing our ill-deservings. It is a sign God is angry when he suffereth his gospel to be obstructed, much more when the mouths of his ministers are shut up that they shall not plead for his interest and truths. It is a notable sign of his departure that he is not much concerned in the progress of the gospel. God's raising spirits is a hopeful presage. Oh, therefore, let us humble ourselves before the Lord!

2. Earnestly; for it is a case that concerneth us deeply, because upon our trial we should be strict and precise: Phil. i. 20, My hope and expectation is that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness' own Christ. It would be sad if the gospel should suffer loss by us. Alas! what a torment to us will the thought of it be, that we have dishonoured God, and wronged souls, and strengthened the hands of

the wicked! Origen, who had exhorted others to martyrdom, having himself bowed under the persecution, could never more open his mouth to preach the gospel, though often requested to it; only one day, having taken for his text Ps. 1. 16, Unto the wicked he saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?' he wept very much, and could speak no more. Oh, therefore, it is no slight thing!

3. Deal with God believingly; pray in faith. There are two considerations in the text which may fortify us:--

[1.] Because it is a word of truth.

[2.] There are judgments to be executed on the hinderers of the word of truth.

[1.] It is a word of truth, and that will prevail at length, however it be obstructed for a time. In the first publishing of the gospel this was manifested, when the whole world was conspired to shut the door against it: 1 Cor. xvi. 9, A great door and effectual is opened to me, and there are many adversaries.' A few fishermen, who had not the power of the long sword, yet it is spread far and near. The fathers often urged this. Clemens Alexandrinus saith, Proposition Graeciae philosophiam si quivis magistratus prohibuerit, en statim perit; nostram autem doctrinam a prima usque ejus praedicatione prohibent reges, duces, magistratus cum universis satellitibus, illa tamen non flaccescit ut humana doctrina, sed magis floret. It spread far and near, the first reformation, what small beginnings it had.

[2.] There are judgments, strange providences, by which God breaketh opposition, either changing the hearts of men, or else cutting them off in the mid-way, when his wrath his kindled but a little,' Ps. ii. 12. They dash against the corner-stone. God will show himself mighty and powerful in promoting the word of truth, and will carry on the kingdom

of Christ over the backs of his enemies.

Doct. 4. We should not give over dealing with God, though he is pleased to desert us in some passages of our trials, that he may not forsake us utterly.

Many of God's choicest servants have been tripping: Ps. lxxiii. 21, As for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped;' but they recover themselves again. Peter fell for a time, but after wards groweth bold. Once timorous Peter, but, Acts iv. 13, When they saw the boldness of Peter and John.' The martyrs that were permitted for a while to deny the truth, yet were not permitted to deny it utterly; they bewailed their faults, and suffered the more courageously. (1.) It is fit the creatures should know themselves; therefore God will humble us, and in part leave us to our own fears, but not wholly leave us destitute of grace; as the nurse seemeth to let the child fall, that he may clasp the more strongly about her. (2.) It is fit the world should know that a zealous defence of the truth comes not from natural stubbornness and pertinacity, but from divine assistance; therefore God showeth what the flesh would do, how it would shrink in the confession of the truth, if it were permitted to prevail. (3.) It is fit we should see the necessity of continual dependence. After grace received we have not always the same presence of mind so as to plead for God, but only as he is pleased to influence us: our case doth change and alter, ebb and flow, as it pleaseth God.

Use. Not to be severe against those that fail out of infirmity, nor to cast them off, for God doth not pity them; rather than censure them, let us help them out of the mire. Unhumbled hearts, that are puffed up with pride and confidence in their own strength, when out of the temptation may judge it a task of no great difficulty to carry it with courage, and will readily condemn others of cowardice and backsliding

who ride not out the storm with as much courage and cheerfulness and resolution as they conceive themselves would do: Job iv. 5-7, Now it is come upon thee and thou faintest, it toucheth thee and thou art troubled. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, and the uprightness of thy ways thy hope?' But a humble heart, acquainted with sufferings, will not judge so: he is sensible of weakness, and how hard it is for flesh and blood to deny itself, and to prefer a good conscience before safety and worldly increase: how ready it is to faint under a continued cross, how crafty to find out evasions to beguile itself into a way of sin, that they pity the poor tempted man. In the primitive times, Novatus and his followers denied those that had fallen to be received into the communion of the church, though upon repentance.

Doct. 5. They will not be utterly overcome in their trials that hope in God's judgments. Why?

1. Because this hope will teach us to wait upon the Lord until he show us better things: Ps. lxii. 5, My soul, wait thou upon the Lord, for my expectation is from him.' They can tarry a little while, and so are not carried away with the violence of the present temptation. It is an inclination to present things that undoeth us. Demas hath forsaken us and loved this present world.' Now, when we can wait for future things, the soul is stayed and kept from apostasy. We read of the patience of hope,' 1 Thes. i. 3. And the apostle saith, Rom. viii. 25, If we do hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.' He that believeth a better condition is not dejected with present evils.

2. It fortifieth the soul against present difficulties, so as they do not unsettle, but quicken us. It hath an apprehension that the good is hard to be obtained, therefore it gathereth all the force and strength of the soul to resist it.

For the nature of hope, see the Sermon on the 114th verse.

Well, then, hope in God's judgments. Consider who hath made the promises. Is it not God, whose word cannot fail of its effect? Rom. iv. 20, 21, He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform.' And then consider how he standeth affected to us. Doth not he love us? And also in what relation he is obliged to us as a Father. And then consider what doth the promise say, and how it maketh for his glory to accomplish it; what plentiful means he hath in store to bring to pass what he hath spoken, and what a potent and wise intercessor we have to plead our cause at the right hand of the Father, and to mind him still of whatever concerns our comfort!

SERMON L.

So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.--Ver. 44.

FIRST, David prays for deliverance, ver. 41, Let thy salvation come,' &c. Next he prays, if he might not have deliverance, yet a little liberty to own God in the time of his trouble, Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth;' and with what argument doth he enforce it? In the close of the former verse he had pleaded, I have hoped in thy judgments.' Now he pleads his steadfast purpose to serve God, conceived in the form of a vow, So shall I keep thy law,' &c. They that hope in God's promises must have a tender regard to his precepts. First he saith, I hope in thy judgments,' then, I shall keep thy law.' The tender regard of God's precepts. How? What! to talk of them only? No. As in the former verse he speaks of the word of truth in his mouth, so here he speaks of keeping and observing the law in his practice, to show we should not own God in word only, but in deed also. He spoke of profession there, and now we are to fill up our profession with answerable practice: So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.'

The text contains a promise of obedience.

1. The matter promised, I shall keep thy law.

2. The manner and constancy of that obedience, continually for ever and ever.

Mark, the promise of obedience is brought in by way of argument, So shall I keep;' so, that is, this will encourage me, this will enable me.

1. The granting of his requests would give him encouragement. When God answers our hope and expectation, gratitude should excite and quicken

us to give him all manner of obedience. If he will give us a heart, and a little liberty to confess his name and serve him, we should not be backward or uncertain, but walk closely with him.

2. This would give him assistance and strength. If God do daily give assistance, we shall stand; if not, we fall and falter. This will be a means of his perseverance; not only engage and oblige him, but help him to hold out to the end.

Then mark the constancy of this obedience, Continually, and for ever and ever.' David would not keep it for a fit, or for a few days, or a year; but always, even to the end of his life.

Here are three words to the same sense, Continually, for ever, and ever.' And the Septuagint expresseth it thus: I shall keep thy law always, and for ever, and for ever and ever; four words there. This heaping of words is not in vain.

1. It shows the difficulty of perseverance. Unless believers do strongly persist in the resistance to temptation, they will soon be turned out of the way; therefore David binds his heart firmly. We must do it now, yea, always, unto the end.

2. He expresseth his vehemency of affection. Those that are deeply affected with anything are wont to express themselves as largely as they can. As Paul, that had a deep sense of God's power: Eph. i. 19, Exceeding greatness of his power,' according to the working of his mighty power.' He heaps up several words, because his sense of them was so great. So David here doth heap up words, continually, and for ever, and for ever and ever.

3. Some think the words are so many, that they may express not only this life but that which is to come. I will keep them continually, and for ever and ever;' that is, all the days of my life, and in the other world. So Chrysostom, I will keep them continually,' &c., points out

the other life, where there will be pure and exact keeping of the law of God. Here we are every hour in danger, but then we shall be put out of all danger; and without fear of sinning, we shall remain in a full and perfect righteousness. We hope for that which we have not attained unto, and this doth encourage us for the present; so would he make David express himself.

4. If we must distinguish these words, I suppose they imply the continuity and perpetuity of obedience: the continuity of obedience, that he would serve God continually without intermission; and the perpetuity of obedience, that he would serve God for ever and ever, without defection and revolt, at all times, and to the end.

Doct. Constancy and perseverance in obedience is the commendation of it.

When David promiseth to obey, he saith he would do it continually for ever and ever.' This is the obedience God longs for: Deut. v. 29, Oh, that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always!' Here we find all things which are requisite to God's service: the sincerity of it, that they had a heart; the gracious principle which works in obedience, a heart to fear me; the universality of it, to keep all my commands; and the perpetuity of it, to keep them always. They are in a good mood now. As if God had said, Oh, that they bad a heart to do it always! Christ redeemed us to this end: Luke i. 74, 75, Delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him;' not for a while only, but all the days of our life.'

I shall distinguish of a double constancy and perseverance, and under ach branch give some reasons, with their applications.

1. A perseverance without intermission.

2. Without defection. Both are necessary.

First, A perseverance without intermission. We should at all times and in all places serve God, and not by fits and starts; as it is said of the twelve tribes, Acts xxvi. 12, they served God instantly clay and night;' alone and in company, in all conditions, adverse and prosperous. In all actions, common and sacred, God must be served and obeyed.

Let me give some considerations to enforce it, to serve God continually.

1. The law of God doth universally bind, and the obligation thereof never ceaseth, so as there can be no truce with sin for a while, nor any intermission of grace for a moment: Prov. vi. 21, 22, O my son, keep thy father's commandments, and forsake not the law of thy mother; bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.' The commandments of God, he calls them the law of the father and mother; for Solomon speaks as to young ones and children, as those that had been trained up by their parents. Now these must be looked upon as having a perpetual obligation to direct us and keep us: sleeping and waking we must have them always in our sight. Every motion and every operation of ours is under a law; our thoughts and words are under a law, and our actions are under a law; all that we speak and all that we do, it is still under a rule. The law of God is of perpetual use to show us what we must do and what we must leave undone. Oh, how exact should we be if we did regard this, and were mindful of the perpetual obligation of the law!

2. Grace planted in the heart should be always working. The fire on the altar was never to go out; and so grace should be always working, and influence all our actions, civil and sacred: 1 Peter i. 15, Be ye holy, as he that hath called you is holy, in all manner of conversation.' There is no part of a Christian's conversation which should not savour

of holiness; not only his religious, but his common and civil actions. The pots in Jerusalem and the horses' bells were to bear God's impress, as well as the vessels and utensils of the temple, Zech. xiv. As the sun is placed in the middle of the heavens to diffuse his influence and scatter his beams up and down the world, and nothing is hid from his light, so is grace planted in the heart to diffuse its influence into every part of his conversation; and therefore grace, where it is true, it is always at work. There are some parts of the body that are never out of action, as the heart and lungs; wherever a man goes, and whatever he goes about, yet they always do their office. So some graces are of continual exercise; as the fear of God: Prov. xxiii. 17, Be thou in the fear of God all the day long.' A Christian doth not only pray in the fear of God, but eat, drink, and trade in the fear of God. So the love of God, in referring all things to his glory, whether they be acts of worship, or acts of charity, or of our callings, or recreations: grace hath an influence upon these, and is still to be at work upon these, 1 Cor. x. 31. And so faith is always at work in depending upon God and looking up to him; it is our life, That which I live in the flesh:' Gal. ii. 20, All that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.' Well, then, the law of God is always binding, and every operation of ours is under a law, and grace should always be working.

3. God's eye is always upon us; he is alike everywhere; therefore a Christian should be alike everywhere, always like himself, at home and abroad, alone and in company: Phil. ii. 12, As ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but much more in my absence.' Many are devout abroad, but carnal, careless, profane, if you follow them home to their families. When you are alone you are not alone, God is there; we have a heavenly Father that seeth in secret, Mat. vi. 4; what you do

in your closets, the doors made fast, and all company shut out. A man might allow himself in carnal liberty if he could go anywhere where God doth not see him; but his eye is still upon us; and therefore we should say with David, I will keep thy law continually.' Will he force the queen before my face?' saith Ahasuerus. We break God's laws before his face; his eye is always upon us, and all our ways are before him.

4. God is always at work for us: John v. 17, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' He sustains us every day, hour, moment, and waketh ^for us, watcheth over us by night and by day. When we sleep, the devil is awake to do us mischief. Ay! but the God of Israel, he that keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth,' but watcheth for our good. As soon as we arise, his compassions are new every morning,' Lam. iii. 22, 23. Now, can we offend him from whom we receive life and breath every moment? If God should intermit his care but for one day, nay, but suspend it for one hour, what would become of thee?

5. All our actions concern eternity. This life is compared to a walk, Eph. ii. 10. Everything we do or speak is a step either to heaven or hell, therefore to have an influence or tendency on that action. The more good we do, the more we are acted with a fear of God, and love of God, to do all things to his glory, the nearer heaven; and the more evil, the nearer hell. We should not stand still or go back, but always be getting ground in our journey.

6. To be off and on with God will cost us much sorrow; it will be bitterness in the end. Either it will cost us the bitterness of repentance here, or of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever; either holy compunction or everlasting horror. When you straggle from God, there is no returning to your former husband but by Weeping-cross, Hosea ii. 14. And who would provide matter of sorrow for himself? I say, when you thrust your hand into Satan's dish, there is

some sauce mingled with his meat, and then everlasting horror if not compunction, for that will be the end of them that are always un stable in all their ways, James i. 8. God will not always bear with them; he may at first, while they are children, poor weak novices, but will not always, Eph. iv. 14. God expects that at length we should grow more constant, and grow up to a radicated state of grace; therefore, if we are always children, off and on with God, then he will cast us off.

7. By every intermission we may lose ground, and possibly may never wholly, if we recover it in part again. We may lose ground, for the way of the Lord is strength to the upright,' Prov. x. 29. The more we continue in it the fitter we are to walk in it. A bell, when once up, is kept up with greater ease than if we were to raise it anew. A horse warm in his gears is more fit for his journey than at first setting forth; and therefore keep up while you are in the way of God. If it be hard to keep in with God, it will be harder to recover when you are out of the way. The only way to make religion easy is to be still in it, and to have our hearts still upon it; and therefore you lose by your intermission. And if you recover yourselves after intermission, it is not always to that degree of largeness of heart and fulness of spiritual comfort. A prodigal that hath rioted away his estate, if set up again, is not trusted with the like stock; and after a great disease, though a man recovers, yet it is not to the degree of his former health many times. Therefore we should without intermission persevere in our duty to God.

To apply this part.

Use 1. It should humble us all that we are so fickle and inconstant in that which is good. Our hearts are unstable as water. In the space of an hour, how are our thoughts changed from good to evil, and from evil to good in a moment! What a monster would man seem, if his heart were

visible, in the best duty that ever he performed! Our devotion and goodness comes by pangs and fits; now humble, anon proud; now meek, anon passionate; now confident, then full of fear and anguish. Like men sick of an ague, sometimes well, some times ill, we do not seem to be the same men in a duty and out of a duty; nay, sometimes in the same duty we do not seem to be the same men, are not carried on with the same largeness of heart, and confidence in God, and savouriness and spirituality. Oh, how changeable and fickle are our hearts! This should humble us.

2. It reproveth them that would have a dispensation at times, and take liberty to cast off all Christian modesty and gravity; that think if they be serious sometimes, they may be light and vain at others; and therefore sometimes like angels of light, at other times like fiends of darkness. Sometimes we would take them for grave, serious Christians, at other times for loose libertines; and they cast the fear of God behind their backs: Ezek. xxxiii. 13, If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity,' &c.; that is, if upon presumption that he hath been righteous, he dispenseth with himself, and takes an indulgence from his former duty to be light, vain, careless, all his righteousness shall be forgotten. Such a dissimilitude is there between men; now they seem to be grave and serious, anon vain, light, and wanton; so very uncertain and uneven are we in our temper and practice.

3. It shows what need there is of a constant watchfulness, that in all things we may behave ourselves as God's children. Sin is always at work: Gen. vi. 5, The imaginations and thoughts of our heart are only evil, and that continually:' and Satan is always at work, espying advantages against us, 1 Peter v. 8, to draw us off from God. Oh, then, let grace be in its continual exercise! Live as knowing all the motions and operations of the soul are under a rule; live as being always under

the eye of God; live as being sensible God takes care of us himself, remembereth us every moment, therefore it is but reason we should take him.

Secondly, A perseverance without defection and apostasy, that we may not fall off from God when we have taken a profession of his name upon us. Now, the considerations to quicken you to that will be these:--

1. Consider how equal it is that our duty should last so long as we would have God's blessings last, that one part should answer another. We would have God bless us to the end, therefore we must serve and obey him to the end: Ps. xlviii. 14, For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.' He doth not lay down the conduct of his providence until we come to heaven, and therefore we should keep his law for ever and ever. How can we desire God to be ours to the end, if we are not his to the end? The stipulation of our part of the covenant must answer that of God's.

2. We have the same reasons to continue that we had to begin at first; there is the same loveliness in God's ways; Christ is as sweet as ever, and heaven as worthy and as great as ever. If there be any difference, there is more reason to continue than there was to begin. Why? Because we have more experience of the sweetness of Christ; you knew him before only by report and hearsay, but now you have tasted he is gracious, you know him by experience, 1 Peter ii. 3. Surely when we have made trial, Christ should be sweeter and heaven nearer: Rom. xiii. 11, Our salvation is nearer.' The nearer to the enjoyment of any good, the more impatient in the want of it. A Christian, as he is nearer to his hopes and happiness, and the more experience of God and Christ, the more stable should his heart be in the ways of God. I speak of this, because at first men are carried out with great affection and zeal, and are of very promising beginnings. There is no reason of altering our course,

or why we should grow remiss, lazy, and changeable in God's service. What is more usual with men than to cast off their first faith, 1 Tim. v. 12, and their first love, Rev. ii. 4, and their first diligence and obedience, 2 Chron. xvii. 3. We read of the first ways of David.' Many that seem to have set forth with a great deal of forwardness and zeal tire afterward. In the marriage relation true affection increaseth, but adulterous love is hot only while it is new.

3. Consider the danger and mischievous effects of apostasy and declining from God.

[1.] This is somewhat, that you lose your crown: Rev. iii. 11, 4 Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.' The honour and comfort of all we have hitherto done and suffered will be lost and gone, Therefore take heed to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which ye have wrought.' All your watchings, strivings, prayings, fastings, professing the name of God, all is come to nothing. The Nazarite under the law was to begin again if the days of his separation were defiled, Num. vi. 12. If he had separated himself for such a while, though he kept almost all his time, yet if he defiled himself before the time was out, he was to begin all again: Ezek. xviii. 24, When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned.' When you turn head against your former profession, all comes to nothing.

[2.] Consider, falling off is more dishonourable to God than a simple refusal. Why? You bring an ill report upon him, as if he were not a good master. A wicked man that refuseth grace, he does not so much dishonour God, because his refusal is supposed to be the fruit of his prejudice. But now you cast him off after trial, and so your refusal is supposed to be the fruit of your experience, as if the devil were a

better master. When you have tried both, you do as it were deliberately judge that Satan's service is best, or that you do not find in God that which he promised, and you expected from him. And that is the reason why God stands upon his credit, and pleads with apostates, Jer. ii. 5, What iniquity have your fathers found in me that they are gone far from me?' and Micah vi. 3, my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.' Is he hard to please, or backward to reward? What cause of distaste have you found in him? for you do implicitly accuse him.

[3.] When you fall off after a taste of the sweetness and comfort of the practice of godliness, your condition is worse than if you had never begun, and you will be more unable than you were at first A man that is climbing up a tree or ascending a ladder, if after he hath gotten up many steps he let go his hold and falls down, he doth not only lose the benefit of his former pains, but gets a bruised body and broken bones, and is less able to climb up than he was before.

[4.] All the promises are made to perseverance, Heb. iii. 6; Col. i. 23; Rev. ii. 10; Rom. ii. 7. Oh! there be many that leave their first love, and so they forfeit all the comfort of the promises.

[5.] The more you persevere, the more assurance you have of the goodness of your condition: Heb. vi. 11, We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.' When a man keeps up his warmth, his hope increaseth, and he grows to more assurance and more establishment, and keeps up his diligence in God's service.

Use 1. For reproof.

1. Those that take up religion only by way of essay and trial, that do not resolve upon all hazards, but take it only as a walk, and not a journey, like men that go to sea for pleasure, not to make a voyage.

But whenever we begin with God, we should say, I will keep thy law continually for ever and ever. We should sit down and count the charges, make God a good allowance, resolve that nothing shall with draw us from him, Rom. viii. 35, 36.

2. It reproveth aguish Christians, whose piety and devotion takes them by fits. Their righteousness is like the morning dew,' Hosea vi. 4, that cannot endure the rising sun, and so they are off and on with God.

3. Those that are of the Samaritan temper, swayed altogether by temporal advantages. The Samaritans, sometimes they would be of the Jews' religion, when favoured by Alexander; when the Jews were pursued by other princes, then they would be against the Jews, and deny the temple of God: sometimes their temple was dedicated to the God of Israel, sometimes to the God of the heathens, as their interests did fall or rise. So there are many that do intend or remit the conscience of their duty according to their interests; and therefore, when trouble ariseth, they are offended, Mark iv. 17.

Use 2. For exhortation, to press you thus to keep God's law for ever and ever. To this end--

Direct. 1. Be fortified within. After you have gotten grace--I suppose men that they are in a good way--oh, be fortified from that which may shake you from without. Three things are wont to hurry men from one extreme to another--errors, persecutions, and scandals.

1. Errors. Be not troubled when differences fall out about the truths of God, nor shaken in mind: 1 Cor. xi. 19, For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.' Many question the ways of God and all religion; because there are so many differences about them, therefore they think nothing certain. These winds God lets loose upon the church to distinguish the chaff and the solid grain. God saw this discipline necessary, that we

might not take up religion upon trust, without the pains of study and prayer.

2. Persecutions are an offence: Mat. xi. 6, Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me;' that is, offended because of troubles that accompany the profession of the truth. The whole drift of the Christian religion is to draw us off from the interests and concernments of the present world, to look after another.

3. Scandals of professors. All that profess the name of God are his witnesses; their lives should be a confirmation of the gospel, but indeed they often prove a confutation of it we should confirm the weak, and we offend the strong. Many have been gained by persecution, when they have seen the courage of God's servants; but the scandals of those that profess the name of God have proved a stumbling-block. Those that are offended by crosses, yet they have a secret liking of the truth; but those that are offended by scandals, they loathe the truth itself, and so are hurried away against the profession of God. Therefore be fortified against all these.

Direct. 2. Be fortified within by taking heed to the causes of apostasy and falling off from the truth, either in judgment or practice. What are those things?

1. Ungrounded assent. A choice lightly made is lightly altered, when men do not resolve upon evidence. We are to try all things,' 1 Thes. v. 21. When we take up a profession without evidence, we soon quit it: men waver hither and thither for want of solid rooting in the truth.

2. Ungrounded profession, want of solid rooting in grace, when not rooted either in faith, Col. ii. 7, or grounded in love, Eph. iii. 17, or established by grace, Heb. xiii. 9. There must be a foundation before a building, a thorough sense of the love of God, and a being rooted, when our hearts are sound in God's statutes.

3. Unmodified lusts. That which is lame is soon turned out of the way. While men keep up their respects to the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world unbroken, they are sure to miscarry; though they should stand for a while, yet temptation will come that will take them away. Lusts put us upon great uncertainty, as fear, or the favour of men, or as carnal hopes sway: 2 Tim. iv. 10, Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world.'

4. A fond easiness. Men change their religion with their company, out of a desire to please all, as the cameleon changeth colours according as it touches. True religion is indeed easy to be entreated,' James iii. 17. But now, to make bold with God and conscience, to please men, is a sad adventure; it is not a good disposition, but pusillanimity.

5. Self-confidence, when we think to bear it out with natural courage and resolution, and will be playing about the cockatrice's hole, and dallying with temptation; as Peter's confidence; you know how dear it cost him, John xviii. 16, 17. It is God which keepeth the feet of his saints,' and he will be known to be their guardian, 1 Sam. ii. 9; therefore he will be depended on.

Direct. 3. Take heed of the first decays, and look often on the state of your hearts. A man that never casts up his estate is undone insensibly. It is the devil's policy, when once we are a-declining, to carry us further and further. A gap once made in the conscience, grows wider and wider every day. The first declinings are the cause of all the rest. Evil is best stopped in the beginning. When first you begin to be careless, mindless of God, and neglectful of communion with him, oh! then take heed. It is easier to crush the egg than kill the serpent. He that keeps the house in constant repair prevents the ruin and fall of it; so do you keep your soul in constant repair, take notice of the first swerving, lest it carry you further and further.

Men fall off by degrees, and grow worse and worse, neglect this duty and that, till they cast off all. Like Nebuchadnezzar's image, which was of gold, silver, iron, clay, from worse to worse, they presently run from one extremity to another. There are degrees of hardness: Heb. iii. 14, Let us hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.' The first sense, taste, and liveliness of it: learn from whence you are fallen. And then a steadfast expectation of the reward, 1 Cor. xv. 58. You have but a few years' service more, a little while to be put upon labour and striving, then you shall be as happy as heart can wish. Then a religious use of the Lord's Supper, for here you renew again the oath of allegiance to God. The great purport of this duty is to bind yourselves to this firm and close walking. The Lord's Supper is a renewing of covenant, to fix our hearts by new promises of obedience. When we begin to waver and faint, and stand, we receive new strength; as they, when they had a little refreshing, then they went on from strength to strength, Ps. lxxxiv. 7, 8. The Lord's Supper is our viaticum, our well and refreshing by the way, that we may hold out to our journey's end.

SERMON LI.

And I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts.--Ver. 45.

THE copulative in front of the text showeth some dependence which the words have upon the former. His last request was, ver. 43, for an opportunity and heart to own the ways of God. His arguments are--

1. His present hope, in the end of that verse.

2. His perseverance in obedience, ver. 44. Now--

3. The freedom of his heart in that continued course of obedience. A free and open confession of the truth may seem to cast us into bonds and straits, but yet it giveth us liberty: the truth sets us free, John viii. 32. If it bring the body under fetters, yet it enlargeth the heart, We never have greater freedom than when we are pleasing God, though at our bitter cost: I will walk at liberty,' non in angustiis timoris, sed in latitudine dilectionis--not straitened by fear, but set at large by love: I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts.' In the words observe--

1. David's privilege, and I will walk at liberty.

2. The ground of it, for I seek thy precepts.

The points are two:--

Doct. 1. To walk in the way of God's precepts is to walk at liberty.

Doct. 2. The more we take care to do so, the more we find this liberty.

I seek, that noteth an earnest diligence. Both these points will be made good by these three considerations:--

1. The way of God's precepts is in itself liberty.

2. There is a liberty given to walk in that way.

3. Upon walking in that way we find it liberty.

First, The way of God's precepts is liberty. Therefore his law is

called a law of liberty,' James i. 25. No such freedom as in God's service; and, on the contrary, no such bondage as to be held with the cords of our own sin: 2 Peter ii. 19, While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.' A liberty to do all we please is the greatest bondage. There are three pairs of notions in which men are extremely mistaken--in misery and happiness, wisdom and folly, liberty and bondage. Men think none miserable but the afflicted, and none happy but the prosperous, because they judge by the present ease and commodity of the flesh; therefore Christ in his Sermon on the Mount maketh it his drift to undeceive the world, to show that the mourners and the persecuted, the pure and the meek, they are the happy men, Mat. v. So in the notions of wisdom and folly the world are mistaken. Man, that is an intelligent creature, affects the reputation of wisdom, and would rather be accounted wicked than weak. But how do they mistake? He is the wise man in their account that can carry on his worldly business with success. They judge of wisdom and folly, not by the concernments of the other world, but by present interests. Therefore the whole drift of the scripture is to make us wise to salvation,' 2 Tim. iii. 15, to call us off from secular wisdom, and to teach us to become fools that we may be wise. So they are put in the notions of liberty and bondage. All men desire liberty, especially from tyranny and base servitude; and so far they do well in the general: but then they think that is only liberty to do what they please; and so the more they think to be, and labour to be, free in a carnal way, the more slaves they are. The service of God, and strict walking with him, they count a very prison and thraldom; and therefore cry out of bonds and yokes and cords: Ps. ii. 3, Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us;' and are impatient of any restraint. Whereas, on the other side, to do what we list without check or control, and to

speak what we list, and think what we list, this they think the only freedom: Our tongues are our own: who is Lord over us?' Whereas, indeed, he liveth the freest life that lieth under the bonds of duty, that maketh conscience of praying and praising God, and conversing and walking with him in a course of holiness; and the true liberty is in walking in God's statutes. So that true bondage and liberty is little or nothing at all known and discerned in the world. To make this evident unto you, I shall prove--

1. That carnal liberty is but thraldom.

2. That the true liberty is in the ways of God.

1. That carnal liberty is but thraldom. To understand this, I^must lay down one proposition that conduceth to cure the great mistake about liberty and bondage: That liberty is not potestas vivendi ut velis a power to live as we list; no, it is to live as we ought--potestas volendi quod lex divina jubet. The life and spirit of liberty lieth in that, a power to do what we ought, not a power to do what we will. Ever since we drank in that poison, Ye shall be as gods,' Gen. iii. 5, man affecteth a dominion over himself, and would be lord of his own actions, sui juris, at his own dispose, do what he pleaseth. Indeed, if we had a perfectly holy understanding to guide us, the danger would not be so great; but now it is the greatest misery that can befall a man to be at his own dispose, to do lawlessly what he will: and therefore God's fearful and dreadful judgment, after all other courses tried, is to give up men to the sway of their own hearts, to do what they please: Ps. lxxxi. 12, So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels;' to be left to our brutish affections.

But to prove it.

[1.] That infringeth a man's liberty that hindereth and disableth him from prosecuting his great end, which is to be truly happy. Now thus

doth the carnal life, and therefore this is true and perfect bondage. Though men live in their bonds with as much delight as fishes in their own element, yet that doth not alter the case; they are slaves for all that: They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.' Rom. viii. 5. They seem to live at large, but indeed they are in a spiritual prison; they cannot use the means that should make them happy. They employ their whole time in the remote subservient helps to a happy life, in pleasures, and honours, and profits; as dissolute and carnal factors and servants, who, finding contentment at the first inn they come at, spend most of their time and money there, which should be spent at the fairs and mart for which they are bound. Plea sure, and delight, and contentment of mind and body, is a remote subservient help; so competency of wealth, and some place wherein we may glorify God: these things are not to be desired for themselves, nor in any great measure, but subordinately, in order to our great end. Now, when they entice and detain our affections, and we cannot look after our great end, they break our liberty; for the less power we have to do that which we should desire to do, the more slaves are we.

[2.] That which disordereth the constitution of the soul, and puts reason out of dominion, that certainly is spiritual bondage and thraldom. Now, when the base prevail above the honourable, it is a sign a country is enthralled; where beggars are on horseback, and princes walk on foot; or, as it is monstrous in the body if the head be there where the feet should be, and the feet where the head should be; such a de-ordination is there in the soul when the affections carry it, and lust taketh the throne instead of reason: Titus iii. 3, Serving divers lusts and pleasures.' When a man yieldeth up himself to his own desires, he becometh a proper servant: Rom. vi. 16, Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye

obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?' Now, man rightly constituted, his actions are thus governed: The understanding and conscience prescribe to the will; the will, according to right reason and conscience, moveth the affections; the affections, according to the command and counsel of the will, move the bodily spirits and members of the body. But by corruption there is a manifest inversion and change; pleasures affect the senses, the senses corrupt the phantasy, phantasy moveth the bodily spirits, they the affections; and by their violence the will is carried captive, man blinded, and so man goeth on headlong to his own destruction. The corrupt passions are like wild horses, that do not obey the driver, but draw to precipices for his destruction. Therefore Basil of Seleucia calleth a carnal man a slave, that runs after the chariots of his own passions and corrupt affections.

[3.] Consider the great tyranny and power of sin; it leaveth us no right and power to dispose of ourselves and our actions, and so men cannot help themselves when they would; as is sensible in them that are convinced of better, and do worse: they see what they should do, but do not do it, being drawn away by their own lusts. Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor. Sin hath gotten such a deep interest in their actions, and command over their affections, that they cannot leave what they know to be naught, or follow that which they conceive to be good. And this bondage is more sensible in them that have some kind of remorse and trouble with their convictions, either from temporal inconvenience, shame, or loss, and yet cannot leave their lusts, and so in despair resolve to go on, and make the best of it: Jer. xviii. 12, And they said, There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart;' Jer. ii. 25, Thou hast said, There is no hope; no, for I have loved

strangers, and after them will I go;' yea, further, that have a kindly remorse from the conviction of the Spirit: Jer. xxxi. 18, I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.' And so Paul: Rom. vii. 14, I am carnal, sold under sin.'

[4.] Consider how this bondage is always increased by custom, which is a second nature, or an inveterate disease not easily cured: Jer. xiii. 23, Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good who are accustomed to do evil.' The more he continueth in this course, the less able to help himself; the more he sinneth, the more he is enthralled to sin; as a nail, the more it is knocked, the more it is fastened in the wood. First a man yields up himself to sin as a servant by covenant: Rom. vi. 16, Know ye not to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?' that is, gives up his principal time, actions, and employment. Then a servant of conquest: 2 Peter ii. 19, While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.' A sinner is under the dominion of sin, as a hired servant and a captive. We first willingly, and by our own default, run into it, and after cannot rid ourselves of it. Ligatus eram nonferro alieno, sed mea ferrea voluntate; velle meum tenebat inimicus, et me mihi catenam fecerat, et constrinxerat me--Lord, I am bound, not with iron, but with an obstinate will; I gave my will to mine enemy, and he made a chain of it to bind me, and keep me from thee. Quippe ex voluntate perversa facta est libido, et dum servitur libidini facia est consuetudo, et dum consuetudo non resistitur facta est necessitas (Aug. Confes. lib. viii. cap. 5)--a perverse will gave way to lustings, and lustings made way for a custom, and a custom let alone brought a necessity upon me, that

I can do nothing but sin against thee. And after that, Reformidabam quasi mortem consuetudinis mutationem (Aug. Confes. lib. viii. cap. 7). Thus are we by little and little en slaved, brought under the power of every toy. Things are lawful as subordinate helps; but we, contrary to the law of reason, and the inclination to true happiness, immoderately desire them; and these desires being excessive, get a complete victory Over our souls: and at length we are brought under the power of every creature: 1 Cor. vi. 12, All things are lawful, but I will not be brought under the power of any.'

[5.] There is one thing more that maketh the carnal life to be a mere slavery; and that is, the fear and terror which doth arise from the consciousness of sin, the fear of death and damnation, and wrath to come, which doggeth sin at the heels. When Adam sinned, he was afraid, Gen. iii. 7; and carnal men are all their lifetime subject to bondage through the fear of death,' Heb. ii. 15. There is a fire smothering in the bosom of a sinner, and sometimes it flashes out in actual gripes and horrors; they have grievous damps of heart; so that sinners are so far bondmen, that they dare not seriously call themselves to an account for the expense of their time and employments, which every one should do, nor think seriously of death, or God's judgment, or hell. He that is always under the check of a cruel master cannot be said to be a freeman. Now so is every man that is not in Christ; let him be never so great, and mighty, and powerful, he is enochos douleias, subject to bondage,' in danger of hidden fears, easily awakened in his heart. Well, then, call you this a free life? As jolly and jocund as wicked men seem to be, or as great as they are, it is a liberty of the flesh taken by men, not given by God; the quietness of the flesh, but bane of the soul.

2. On the contrary, the true liberty is in the ways of God.

[1.] There we are directed how to attain to our great end, which is true blessedness: Mat. vii. 14, Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' A way of sin seemeth broad and easy to the flesh, but it is strait and hard to the spirit; and the way of duty strait and narrow to the flesh, but, because it is to life, it is broad to the spirit or new nature: I shall walk at liberty.' To a renewed heart the divine commandments are not grievous, 1 John v. 3, for by this means they come to enjoy God, and walk to their happiness, and attain to the end for which they were made. A poor heart goes home cheerfully.

[2.] In loving, fearing, praising, serving God, the noblest faculties are exercised in the noblest and most regular way of operation. The soul is in the right temper and constitution; they are the highest actions of the highest faculties, elevated by the highest principles, about the highest objects. The objects are God, Christ, heaven, the great things of eternity. The principles are the love and fear of God, the faculties, understanding, and will, not sensitive appetite; these exercised in thinking of God, and choosing of God.

Secondly, The second part of the demonstration is that there is liberty given to walk in that way. Ever since Adam's fall every man is a spiritual slave, under the dominion and power of sin and Satan, and the curse of the law; but now, Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty,' 2 Cor. iii. 17; true Christian liberty, or a power given us to walk familiarly with God, and cheerfully and comfortably in his service. By grace a man is freed--

1. From the yoke of oppressing fears.

2. The tyranny of commanding lusts.

1. We are freed from the bondage of sin: Rom. viii. 2, The law of the spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, hath made us free from the

law of sin and death;' John viii. 36, If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' There is a liberty in that which is good: Ps. cxix. 32, I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.'

2. We are freed from those doubts and fears and terrors which accompanied the state of sin: Job xxxvi. 8, If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in the cords of affliction;' Job xiii. 27, Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks;' Lam. iii. 7, He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain heavy.' So that the meaning is, I shall walk at liberty, be cheerful and enlarged in heart; for I seek thy precepts.

Thirdly, There is liberty in that walking: it is the fruit of strictness. There is a twofold liberty:--

1. Outward deliverances out of straits and afflictions: Ps. cxviii. 5, I called upon the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place;' and Ps. xviii. 19, He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me because he delighted in me.' So Ps. iv. 1, Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.' Affliction is compared to a prison, where the poor afflicted creature is as it were confined, committed by God, and must not break prison, come out by the window, but the door. When we are let put by God upon submission and supplication, urging the satisfaction of Christ, as we are sent thither by God's authority, so we come out by God's love. Now, God doth this for those that obey him, as all those places manifest.

2. Inward confidence. Ennomos zoe` tes parresi'as demiourgos, saith Chrysostom on the text--A holy life is the ground of liberty, and holy boldness: 1 John iii. 21, If our hearts condemn us not, then have we liberty towards God;' we have delight, and pleasure, and contentment. Till we defile conscience, we have a great deal of boldness and courage

against opposition, yea, a boldness to go to God himself, who otherwise is a consuming fire.

Use 1. Is to take off that prejudice that we have against the ways of God, as if they were strait and hard, and not to be endured. Oh, no! all God's ways are for our good: Deut. vi. 24, The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes,' to fear the Lord our God for our good always. And the duties that he requireth of us are honourable and comfortable; we never walk more at large than when we have a conscience of them. Man acteth like himself when he is holy, just, temperate, sober, humble. Grace puts all things in the right frame and posture again: it puts reason in dominion, and maketh us kings in governing our own hearts; and this breedeth sweetness and peace. Pax est tranquillitas ordinis--when all things keep their place, then is there peace. As when the humours of the body are in order, and the spirits move tuneably, there is a cheerfulness ensueth; so the fruit of righteousness is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. If a man had no rule to guide him, and God had left him without a law, yet, if he were well in his wits, he would prefer the duties which he hath enjoined before liberty, and of his own accord choose to live according to such an institution; there is such a suitableness in all those things to the reasonable nature. What do men aim at--pleasure, honour, or profit? For pleasure: Prov. iii. 17, Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' None have such a sweet life as they that live virtuously and as God hath commanded. All the sensualists in the world have not such a dainty dish to feed on as they that have a good conscience: they have a continual feast, that never cloyeth. You never come away from your sports with such a merry heart as they come away from the throne of grace. If men would consider their experiences after the discharge of their duties and when straggling to carnal delights; after saddest duties, there is

a serenity in the conscience. Who ever repented of his repentance? 1 Sam. i. 18, Hannah went her way, and did eat, and her spirit was no more sad.' Prayer giveth ease, but sensual pleasures leave remorse and a sting. If you count liberty to consist in hunting after honours and great places, can there be a greater honour than to serve God? Who hath the better service, he that attendeth on the uncertain will of men, yea, of the greatest princes, or he that waiteth on the Lord? Your work is more noble: Prov. xii. 26, The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.' What an unprofitable drudgery is the service of the greatest prince in the world, in comparison of the work of a poor Christian, that liveth in communion with God? We serve a greater prince, and on surer terms. Then for profit: Where is there more gain, as to our vails and wages, than in God's service? Well, then, he that liveth holily hath much the sweeter and happier life than they that serve covetousness, ambition, or any other lust. Certainly this should persuade us to put our neck under Christ's yoke; it is zu'gos chresto`s--Mat. 11. 29, His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.' If it be grievous, it is to the flesh, and we have no reason to indulge the flesh: Rom. viii. 7, The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' The command to an unsound conscience is as a light burden laid on a sore back. Men that are soaked in pleasures are incompetent judges of the sweetness of the heavenly life. On the other side, what a miserable servitude is there in sin! how disabled for their great end for which they were created! Corruption is an imperious master; it will not suffer us to hear good things, to be there where good things are spoken, to accompany them that are good; it hath them in so strait a custody, they hate the means of their recovery. They have many masters. Quot habet dominos qui unum habere non vult! Titus iii. 3, For we ourselves were

sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures;' and James iv. i, Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?' One lust draweth one way, another another way; covetousness, voluptuousness, ambition, uncleanness; as when two seas meet. We have little reason to envy them for their free life; pity them rather. How do their brutish affections hurry them! What pains, aches in the body, wounds in the conscience! How many secret gripes and scourges! No such subjection, no slave so subject to the will of his lord, as a man to his lusts and sinful desires,--will speak, think nothing but what sin commands. It is a besotting slavery. Wicked men remain in this bondage with a kind of pleasure. Galley-slaves would fain be free, wish for liberty. Israel was in bondage in Egypt, but they groaned under it: The cry of the children of Israel is come up to me.' Here men loathe to come out of their slavery, and are enemies to those that would help them out. Their work is hard and oppressive, loss of name, health, estate. They tire their spirits, rack their brains, and after all their drudging are cast into hell.

Use 2. Do we walk at liberty?

1. There was a time when we served sin; but being converted, we change masters: Rom. vi. 18, Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.' If there be such a change, it will discover itself.

(1.) You will do as little service for sin as formerly for righteousness: Rom. vi. 20, When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness;' righteousness had no share in your time, thoughts, cares; you made no conscience of doing good, took no care of it: so now you do as little for sin. (2.) Positively do as much for grace as formerly for sin: ver. 19, As you yielded your members servants unto uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, so now yield

your members servants unto righteousness unto holiness;' as watchful, as earnest, as industrious to perfect holiness, as formerly to commit sin: it is but equal. He that hath been servant unto a hard and cruel master is thereby fitted to be diligent and faithful in the service of a loving, gentle, and bountiful master. You can judge what a tyrant sin was. Shall not grace have as much power over you now, and will you not do as much for God as for your lusts?

2. What do you complain of as the task and yoke--the strictness of the law, or the relics of corruption? Rom. viii. 7, The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;' compared with 1 John v. 3, This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.' What is a bondage--sin or duty? Is the commandment grievous, or indwelling sin? The apostle was complaining, but of what? The purity of the law? No; but the power of indwelling corruption, the body of death: Rom. vii. 24, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?' Which do your hearts rise against?

3. What freedom? Luke i. 74, 75, That you, being delivered out of the hands of your enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of your lives.' If you are enslaved to any one lust, you cannot walk at large. Are your gyves and fetters knocked off? Have you that free spirit? Ps. li. 11, 12, Cast me not away from thy presence, take not thy Holy Spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me by thy free spirit.'

SERMON LII.

I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.--Ver. 46.

THE man of God had prayed, ver. 43, that God would not take the word of truth utterly out of his mouth;' that is, deny him the liberty or the grace, the opportunity or the heart, to make an open profession of his faith and respect to God and his ways. This suit he backeth with sundry arguments.

1. From his hope: ver. 23, For I have hoped in thy judgments.' He had placed all his confidence in them, and therefore would openly profess what rule he lived by, and what expectations he had from

2. His resolution to persist in this course, whatever befell him: ver. 44, So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever;' it would engage him to constancy to the end of his life.

3. From the alacrity and readiness of his obedience, as well as the constancy: ver. 45, And I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts.' Then we have true liberty.

4. That no worldly splendour or terror should take him off from making this confession, if God would give him liberty and opportunity. Two things hinder a free confession of God's truth carnal fear and carnal shame. Both are obviated by the resolution of the man of God; he would neither be afraid nor ashamed to recommend the ways of God to the greatest princes of the world.

[1.] The terror of kings or men in power may be supposed to be a hindrance to the free confession of God's truth; therefore he saith, I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.'

[2.] Carnal shame may breed a loathness to own God's despised ways;

therefore he addeth, I will not be ashamed.' David would neither be afraid nor ashamed, if called thereto, to make this open confession, to own God and his truth.

First, His resolution against fear deserveth a little opening: I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.' The words may be looked upon as a direction for them who are called to speak before kings. Men may suppose to be called--

1. Either by the duty of their office, to speak to them in a way of instruction; or

2. As convened before them in a judiciary way, to give an account of their faith.

1. In the first sense, those who are called to instruct kings ought with the greatest confidence to recommend the ways of God to them, as that which will enhance their crowns and dignity, and make it more glorious and comfortable to them and their subjects than anything else. And so David's resolution showeth what faithfulness becometh them who live in the courts of princes. It concerneth princes to be instructed: Ps. ii. 10, Be wise now therefore, ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth.' Few speak plainly and sincerely to them, as Nathan to David: 2 Sam. xii. 7, Thou art the man;' and God to David: 2 Sam. xxiv. 13, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land; or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in the land?' John the Baptist to Herod: Mat. xiv. 4, It is not lawful for thee to have her,' Jehu to Jehoshaphat: 2 Chron. xix. 2, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord.' Many times they are impatient of truth, as Ahab could not endure Micaiah: 1 Kings xxii. 8, And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire

of the Lord; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil,' &c. (Josephus, lib. viii. cap. 10; Theodoret, lib. iv. cap. 30).

2. If convened before them in a judiciary way, as the three children were before Nebuchadnezzar: Dan. iii. 13, Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and they brought these men before the king;' and ver. 16-18, They answered and said to the king, Nebuchadnezzar! we are not careful to answer thee in this matter; if it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us out of thine hand, O king; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up;' Mat. x. 18, 19, Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.' There are some kings that have not submitted their crowns and sceptres to the King of kings; so pagans and wicked princes who can neither endure the truth, nor those which profess it. Hoi kalli'nikoi ma'rtures ton dussebon katephro'nesen basile'on. The children of God ought not to be daunted by any power and fear of princes. Their power may be a terror to us, and in other cases ought to be reverenced by us; but it should not be a snare to us, to make us desert our duty to God. We must never forget the honour put upon them by God: they bear his image, and in all lawful cases we acknowledge God's authority in them; they are those by whom God will govern us; but if anything be decreed against God, we only urge our obedience to the Lord paramount: Acts iv. 19, Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than God, judge ye;' Acts v. 29, Then Peter and the apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.'

The latter branch needeth little explaining. What shall we ob serve?

1. If I should take the first reference, and urge the duty of kings and princes, that would be unseasonable for this auditory. It is a preposterous solecism to preach to the people the duty of kings, and then to kings the duty of their people; as foolish a course as to make fires in summer, and adorn the chimney with herbs and flowers in winter.

2. If I should speak of the second reference, the clemency of the government we live under maketh it unseasonable also; for our king (whom God preserve) hath often avowed his resolutions against persecutions for conscience' sake. Therefore, waiving all other things, I shall only insist upon two points, which are necessary, partly to show the excellency of our religion which we profess, partly to guide our practice.

Doct. 1. That nothing is so necessary for kings, princes, and magistrates to know as God's testimonies.

Doct. 2. That God's testimonies are so excellent, that we should not be afraid or ashamed to own them before any sort of men in the world.

Of the first briefly.

Doct. 1. That nothing is so necessary for the potentates of the world to know as God's testimonies. The king of Israel was to write a copy of the law of God in a book, and to have it ever before him, that he might read therein, and learn to fear the Lord his God, Deut. xvii. 18, 19. And therefore Josiah, one of the good kings which God gave unto his people, searched for the book of the law, 2 Kings xxiii. 2. The reasons concern them, if considered both as men and as potentates.

1. As men.

[1.] They are upon the same level with others, and are concerned to understand the way of pleasing, glorifying, and enjoying God, as much as their meanest subjects; for it is said, Job xxxiv. 19, He accepteth

not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor; for they are all the works of his hands.' God dealeth with them impartially, respecting the greatest no more than the meanest. He hath an equal interest in all, and therefore doth command and dispose of all; for all are his creatures, not exempted from being subject to his dominion; as the potter is not more obliged to vessels of honour, than of dishonour. As his law bindeth all, so all that continue in impenitency and the neglect of his grace are obnoxious to the curse of the law. It is general to all transgressors: Cursed is every one,' &c. And if God should lay their sins home to their consciences, and speak to them in his wrath, they can stand before him no more than the meanest: Rev. vi. 15, 16, And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.'

[2.] The higher their station the greater their obligation. No sort of men more obliged to God than those that are advanced by him to rule over his people; therefore their ingratitude would be greater if they should sin against God: 2 Sam. xii. 7-9, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hands of Saul, and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight?' Their sins do more hurt, because of their example and authority, Job xxxiv. 20.

2. As rulers and potentates they are concerned to be acquainted with

God's testimonies.

[1.] That they may understand their place and duty. They are first God's subjects, then his officers. They have their power from God: Horn. xiii. 4, For he is the minister of God to thee for good.' They hold their power in dependence on him; both natural, their strength and force: Thou couldest have no power unless it were given thee from above,' John xix. 10, 11. Legal, their authority or governing power, they hold it in dependence upon the absolute and heavenly Sovereign, who is the Lord of lords and King of kings:' Prov. viii. 15, 16, By me kings reign, and princes decree justice; by me princes rule, and nobles, and all the judges of the earth.' And as they hold it in dependence on him, they must use it in subordination to him. God, who is the beginning, must also be the end of their government. They are not officers of men, but ministers of God, from whom they have their authority; and therefore must rule for God, and seek his glory.

[2.] That they may be carried through their cares, and fears, and snares, and may know what reward to expect from the absolute Sovereign, who is the great patron of human societies. It is trust and dependence upon God that maketh good magistrates: 2 Kings xviii. 5, He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that went before him.' Oh! it is a blessed thing when they can go to God for direction, and depend upon God for success. Great are the cares and fears which belong to a governor; and who can ease him of this burden but the Lord, who hath showed in his word how far he is to be trusted? It is not carnal policy which helpeth them out in their work, but trust in God in their high calling. Whosoever will improve his power for God will meet with many discouragements. Now that which sup ports his heart in his work is this holy trust: Prov. xxix. 25, The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso

putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.' Every public calling hath its snares and temptations from the fears of men. A minister, if he doth not trust God to bear him out in his work, he will do nothing with that courage which becometh a minister, but comply with the lusts of men, grow lukewarm, prostitute the ordinances for handfuls of barley, and pieces of bread, and family conveniences. The magistracy is a higher calling, which is more obnoxious to temptations from the different humours of men, who are to be governed. Nothing will carry a man through it but this holy courage and dependence on God. The fear of man brought a snare to Jeroboam, that he perverted the worship of God: 1 Kings xii. 30, And this thing became a sin; for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.' So Jehu, so others, for their cares. But he that trusts in God in his discharge of this public office, though, many difficulties interpose, finds the blessed experience of the Psalmist verified, In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.'

[3.] As to success and acceptance, obedience to God makes them a, double blessing to the people--as governors, as holy; as they have the natural image of God in dominion and authority: 1 Cor. xi. 7, Forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God,' which must be reverenced and respected, not resisted; so the spiritual image of God in holiness: the people doubly see God in their rulers. And besides, it bringeth down God's blessings, while they command and the people obey in the Lord: 2 Kings xviii. 7, And the Lord was with him, and he prospered whithersoever he went forth.' Good magistrates are usually more prosperous than good men in a private condition, because they are given as a public blessing.

Use 1. To inform us that religion hath a great influence on the welfare of human societies; for it equally respects governors an# governed,

carving out their respective duties to them, causing the one to rule well, and the other to obey for conscience' sake. The testimonies of the Lord prescribe the duty of rulers: 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.' There is a word belonging to either table; justice to the second, fear of God to the first. Now all this duty is best learned out of God's testimonies. For the governed it interposeth express rules for their obedience: Rom. xiii. 1, Let every soul be subject to the higher powers;' and 1 Peter ii. 15, For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' There are many arguments why we should reverence magistrates. They bear God's image: Ps. lxxxii. 6, I have said ye are gods;' visible representators of his authority and dominion over the creatures, because of their majesty, largeness of command and empire, and because of their use: they are exalted supra alios, above others in their authority; but propter altos, for others in their use and benefit. But the supreme reason is the will of God.

The magistrate was then an enemy to religion when this commandment was given forth, even then when that part of the world in which the church was seated was under the command of Nero, whose universal wickedness and particular cruelty against the Christians might tempt them to disobedience and scorn of his authority: then God said, Obey not for fear of wrath, but conscience 3 sake;' then, Fear God, honour the king, for so is the will of God.' Now let atheists and anti-scripturists, or the enemies of those who profess to live by scripture, think, if they can, that the Christian religion doth not befriend human societies, or doth contain dangerous principles to government.

Use 2. It showeth us what to pray for, for our princes and governors, even a wise and an understanding heart, and a spirit of the fear of the Lord, that they may rule for God, and take his blessing along with them

in all their affairs.

Doct. 2. That God's testimonies are so excellent that we should not be afraid or ashamed to own them before any sort of men in the world; for David saith, I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.'

First, Observe, here are two things supposed which might shut his mouth and obstruct the confidence and boldness of his profession fear and shame. Fear represents danger in owning the ways of God; shame represents mockage, scorn, and contempt. Fear considereth our superiors and governors; we fear them that have power and authority in their hands. Shame may arise not only from the consideration of superiors, but inferiors and equals also. Fear respects the danger of the party professing; shame, the cause or matter professed. Therefore, of the two, to be ashamed of the ways of God doth more destroy godliness than to be afraid to own them, for then it is a sign we are not so soundly convinced, and deeply possessed of the goodness of them; for, Pudor est conscientia turpitudinis--it is a consciousness of something that is base. Look, as, on the contrary, to be ashamed of sin doth more wound it to the heart than to be afraid of sin, many a man is apprehensive of the danger of sin, who yet doth not hate it in his heart, but only abstaineth out of the fear of punishment; but when be is ashamed of sin, then he beginneth to hate sin as sin. In conversion, fear is stirring before shame; as a man sick of a loathsome painful disease is more and first affected with the pain than with the nastiness and filthiness and putrefaction that accompanieth the disease. So here, in religion; as the case is hopeful when ashamed of sin, so dangerous when ashamed of a strict holy course. A man may be willing to do that which he dares not do for fear; but shame extinguisheth the willingness itself. In short, to be afraid respects our interest; to be ashamed

respects the cause, the gospel itself.

Secondly, I shall speak of them distinctly; and so--

1. Show why we should not be afraid to own the testimonies and ways of God before any sort of people in the world.

[1.] Because holy boldness in confession is an especial gift of God. David asketh it here, Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth;' and promiseth that if God would give him this gift, the splendour of worldly greatness should not dazzle his eyes, and he would behave himself as one armed against all terrors of men, or gotten above the hopes and fears of the present world. And indeed it argueth some good degree of profiting in the word of God when it is so with us. Fearlessness of men in God's cause is an excellent grace, which God hath promised to his choice servants. To Christ: Isa. 1. 7, For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed; I shall not be confounded, for God is at my right hand.' To Jeremiah, whom God set up as a brazen wall against all oppositions: Jer. i. 18; and to Ezekiel, chap. iii. 8, Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads.' So to the disciples: Mat. x. 19, 20, They shall bring you before rulers and governors; but take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in the same hour what ye shall speak.' None have the gift of boldness but those to whom God gives it. If left to ourselves, we shall falter, as Peter did at the damsel's question; but God will assist the resolved heart by his Spirit, and assist him in that very hour when the trial cometh; and then we need not be afraid before whomsoever we come, we need not be anxious. The servants of God beg this gift: Acts iv. 29, Grant unto thy servants that with all boldness we may speak thy word;' when the world rageth against them.

[2.] Though it be an especial gift of God, yet the duty is contained in our first dedication and resignation of ourselves to Christ; when we professed ourselves to be dead to every worldly interest, and promised to own him and his ways, whatever it cost us: Luke xiv. 26, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple;' ver. 33, So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' Therefore this should not be retracted, but verified in our whole course, for that showeth this dedication was sound: Heb. iii. 6, Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end; ver. 14, For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.' And therefore we should be ready to render a reason of the hope which is in us, to every one that asketh us, with meekness and fear,' 1 Peter iii. 15. Logon elpidos is an account of our religion, hetoimoi, ready to confess Christ in persecutions and dangers: it is the same with hetoimos echo--Acts xxi. 13, I am ready not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus;' the same with hetoimasia tes eirenes tou euangeliou, the preparation of the gospel of peace,' Eph. vi. 15; a prepared resolved heart to encounter all difficulties for the gospel's sake, so satisfied with the truth and hopes thereof.

[3.] This duty is confirmed in us by many Christian graces, as faith, love to God, fear of God, a deep sense of the world to come. We are afraid to own God and his ways, because we have not such a high opinion of God as we should have, but too great a love to ourselves; therefore faith, fear, and love is necessary to confirm and strengthen this resolution in us, and also the lively hope of blessedness to come.

(1.) Faith informeth us of the truth, goodness, power, and excellency

of God, the worth of his favour, and the terror of his wrath, that the displeasure of God is much worse than the frowns of men. When we think of a higher Lord, why should we be afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man that is as grass? If a great man stand by, we are not afraid of an underling. If the King of kings be with us, whom should we fear? Heb. xi. 27, By faith Moses feared not the wrath of the king,' meaning Pharaoh. Why? For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.' A heathen could say, Regum timendorum in proprios greges, reges in ipsos imperium est Jovis. A believer should much more oppose God's heavenly majesty to their earthly dignity. Their power is great, and to be reverenced next to God; but God is greater. We serve a king whose power is everlasting, and whose kingdom is to all generations.

(2.) Love to God is necessary to confirm and strengthen this resolution in us, for that overcometh all terrors: Rom. viii. 37, Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us;' and Cant. viii. 6, 7, Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame; many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.' There is an unconquerable force in love; it is a fire that cannot be quenched. When Christ hath us by the heart, it is much more than when he hath us by the head. They that make a religion of their opinions, and have a faith that never went deeper than their brains and fancies, are soon discouraged; but when Christ dwelleth in the heart by faith,' Eph. iii. 17, there he resideth as in his strong citadel and castle. A Christian, because he loveth Christ, will own him, and his ways and truth, though they be never so much, despised in the world. A superficial bare assent to the gospel may let Christ go, but a faith working by love will not.

(3.) The fear of God, or a deep awe and reverence of him, when we are more afraid to offend God than to suffer from man. The apostle, when he biddeth us to be ready to make profession, 1 Peter iii. 5, bids us do it with meekness and fear.' Meekness respects men; fear, a care to approve ourselves to God. The fear of men is checked by the fear of God: Isa. viii. 12, 13, Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid: sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread;' Luke xii. 4, 5, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear; fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.' A holy impression of God's excellency and greatness left upon the heart is this fear that carrieth the cause clearly for God; and as one nail driveth out another, the fear of men banisheth the fear of God out of our hearts. We are obliged to none so as to God, who hath the power of eternal life and eternal death. What is a prison to hell, a little vainglory to eternal glory, the creature to God?

(4.) A deep sense of the other world. When we translate the scene from earth to heaven, from this world to the next, and consider who is scorned there, received there, or rejected there, the temptation is lessened. The apostle showeth that a spirit of faith is at the bottom of confession with the mouth: 2 Cor. iv. 13, We, having the same spirit of faith, believe, and therefore speak.' He that believeth another world, and hopeth for it, will never be cowardly and bashful, but will confidently confess Christ, and own him both in worship and conversation. A spirit of faith cannot be suppressed, but will break out and show itself, and not be ashamed of Christ, his truth and ways. Well, then, Christians should be ashamed of that spirit of fear, bashfulness, and inconfidence which keeps us from confessing Christ and

owning his ways. Kings are more formidable by their place and power than the rest of the world; but alas! we give place to the meanest men, and the smallest opposition maketh us give out: 2 Tim. i. 7, We have not the spirit of fear, but the spirit of love, power, and a sound mind.' The Christian spirit is a sober spirit, that valueth all things according to their weight; but not a dastardly spirit: a spirit of love and power, that owneth Christ with meekness, and a due respect to earthly tribunals; and yet with courage, as looking higher, to the throne of God.

2. We must not be ashamed to own the testimonies and ways of God before any sort of men in the world. The apostle telleth us, Horn. i. 16, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.' The gospel is such a pure, sure rule, and offereth us such glorious hopes, that we should be ready to profess it without being ashamed of it. So he bids Timothy, 2 Tim. i. 8, Be not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner;' neither of the profession, nor of our companions in the profession, when they are under the greatest disgrace. So again, 1 Peter iv. 16, If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorify God in this behalf;' it is matter of thanksgiving, not of shame. David is an instance; when Michal scoffed at him, I will yet be more vile,' 2 Sam. vi. 22. It is an honour to be dishonoured for Christ. The primitive Christians, when the heathens reproached them, Art thou not ashamed to believe ^in him that was crucified? the answer was, I am ashamed to believe in him that committed adultery, meaning the heathen Jupiter. Affliction is no disgrace, but sin is.

But what danger is there of being ashamed of the gospel, since Christianity is in fashion?

Ans. 1. Sometimes the simplicity of the gospel is contemned by the wits of the world; and therefore they either muster up the oppositions of

science falsely so called, or else droll upon religion, and make it the common jest and byword.

Ans. 2. The stricter profession of the ways of God is under reproach. Though the nominal Christian and the serious Christian have the same Bible, and believe the same creed, and are baptized into one and the same profession, yet those that are false to their religion will hate and scorn those that are true to it; and among the carnal it will be matter of reproach to be serious and diligent. Now, though a gracious heart can be vile for God, yet others are afraid they shall be marked, and accounted precise, or Puritans; and so by resisting an imaginary shame, they fall into an eternal reproach.

Ans. 3. It may be the strict sort of Christians are the poorer sort; and though they be precious in the eyes of God, yet they are despised by men: John vii. 49, This people that knoweth not the law are accursed. Have any of the Pharisees believed in him?' any people of quality? They shall be accounted people of no port and breeding if they are strictly Christian. Quantus in Christiana populo honor Christi est, ubi religio ignobilem facit? coguntur esse viles ne mali videantur. Religion is too mean a thing for persons of quality, of their rank. Thus with many God's image is made a scorn, and the devil's image had in honour, and serious godliness is made a byword.

Now, to fortify you against being ashamed of God and his ways, take these considerations:--

1. The short continuance of this world's glory. Within a while we shall be levelled with the lowest, and our dust mixed with common earth; and shall we love the praise of men more than the praise of God? This corruptible flesh must turn into a loathsome rottenness, though now it looketh high, and sets forth itself, and would be brave and lordly; but the spirit must return to God that gave it,' to be commanded into

unseen and unknown regions: 1 Peter i. 24, All flesh is grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass.'

2. God is the fountain of honour; all things and persons receive an honour by having relation to him: James ii. 1, Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, in respect of persons.' Services mean in themselves are accounted honourable with respect to princes. The reproach of Christ is enough to weigh down all the honours in the world: Heb. xi. 26, Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.'

3. If your hearts be sincere with God, you will not be ashamed of his ways, for wisdom is justified of her children;' in Luke it is, All her children,' Luke vii. 35. They that have a faith which is the fruit of conviction only may be ashamed: John xii. 42, 43, Among the rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.' But that faith which is the fruit of conversion will make us courageous in God's cause. In its infancy there may be some relics of fear in a Christian, as Nicodemus at first came to Jesus by night, John xix. 39; but a grown faith counts it no loss of honour or impeachment of dignity to become vile for God.

4. The eternal recompense: 1 Sam. ii. 30, Those that honour me I will honour;' 1 Peter i. 7, That your faith may be found to praise, glory, and honour, at Christ's coming.' On the other side, if we are ashamed of Christ, Christ will be ashamed of us for evermore: Mark viii. 38, Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his father, with the holy angels.' The eagle eye of faith can look through all the pageantry of the world, and the mists and clouds of tune, to the future state, the

judgment that shall be made of things. To a believer's eye all the honour of the world is but a fancy and vain appearance, a scene in which a base fellow acteth the part of a prince.

5. The judgment of the world is not to be stood upon. Why should we desire the applause of the blind ungodly world, or make any great matter of their contempt and scorn? Shall the scorn of a fool be more to us than the approbation of God? If they slight you who slight God and Christ and their own salvation, why should you be troubled? They are incompetent judges of these things: 1 John iii. 1, The world knoweth us not.

Use. See the strange perversion of human nature. Men are ashamed where they should be bold, and bold and confident where they should be ashamed: They glory in their shame;' but think it a disgrace to speak of God, and own God, not before kings only, but before their familiars and companions. Be ashamed to be filthy, false, proud; but never be ashamed to go to a sermon, where you may profit in the ways of God, and the knowledge of his testimonies; to be strict in conversation, to speak reverently of God, though scorned by men. None of God's servants have reason to be ashamed of their master.

THE END OF VOL. VI.

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