The Complete Works of Thomas Manton, D.D. Vol. VIII.

by

Thomas Manton

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About *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton, D.D. Vol. VIII.* by Thomas Manton

Title:	The Complete Works of Thomas Manton, D.D. Vol. VIII.
URL:	http://www.ccel.org/ccel/manton/manton08.html
Author(s):	Manton, Thomas (1620-1677)
Publisher:	Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library
Description:	Several Sermons Upon the CXIX Psalm: Sermons CIV through CLVIII.
Publication History:	
Print Basis:	London: James Nisbet & Co. (1872)
Rights:	Copyright Christian Classics Ethereal Library
Date Created:	2009-03-05
General Comments:	Page images provided by Web Archive
CCEL Subjects:	All

Table of Contents

About This Book. . . . . . p. ii
Title Page.. . . . . p. 1
Prefatory Material.. . . . . p. 3
Contents.. . . . . p. 3
Several Sermons Upon the CXIX. Psalm.. . . . . p. 10
Sermon CIV. Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies; for they are ever with me.. . . . . p. 10
Sermon CV. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.. . . . . p. 16
Sermon CVI. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.. . . . . p. 21
Sermon CVII. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.. . . . . p. 32
Sermon CVIII. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me . . . . . p. 43
Sermon CIX. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.. . . . . p. 50
Sermon CX. Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.. . . . . p. 60
Sermon CXI. Therefore I hate every false way.. . . . . p. 66
Sermon CXII. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.. . . . . p. 72
Sermon CXIII. The word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.. . . . . p. 81
Sermon CXIV. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.. . . . . p. 87
Sermon CXV. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.. . . . . p. 96
Sermon CXVI. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, Lord, according unto thy word.. . . . . p. 102
Sermon CXVII. Quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word.. . . . . p. 108
Sermon CXVIII. Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will-offerings of my mouth, O Lord, and teach me thy judgments.. . . . . p. 114
Sermon CXIX. My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law . . . . . p. 122

Sermon CXX. The wicked have laid a snare for me; yet I erred not from thy precepts.. . . . . p. 135
Sermon CXXI. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.. . . . . p. 142
Sermon CXXII. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.. . . . . p. 149
Sermon CXXIII. I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always to the end.. . . . . p. 156
Sermon CXXIV. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.. . . . . p. 163
Sermon CXXV. Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I hope in thy word.. . . . . p. 174
Sermon CXXVI. Depart from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.. . . . . p. 185
Sermon CXXVII. Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope.. . . . . p. 196
Sermon CXXVIII. And let me not be ashamed of my hope. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe; and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.. . . . . p. 206
Sermon CXXIX. Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood.. . . . . p. 216
Sermon CXXX. Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.. . . . . p. 228
Sermon CXXXI. My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.. . . . . p. 238
Sermon CXXXII. I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.. . . . . p. 246
Sermon CXXXIII. Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.. . . . . p. 256
Sermon CXXXIV. Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.. . . . . p. 266
Sermon CXXXV. Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.. . . . . p. 271
Sermon CXXXVI. Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.. . . . . p. 281
Sermon CXXXVII. I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies. . . . . p. 293
Sermon CXXXVIII. It is time for thee, Lord, to work; for they have made void thy law.. . . . . p. 304
Sermon CXXXIX. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine god.. . . . . p. 315

Sermon CXL. Therefore, I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.. . . . . p. 328
Sermon CXLI. Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.. . . . . p. 341
Sermon CXLII. Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore doth my soul keep them.. . . . . p. 350
Sermon CXLIII. The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.. . . . . p. 354
Sermon CXLIV. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.. . . . . p. 365
Sermon CXLV. Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.. . . . . p. 373
Sermon CXLVI. As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.. . . . . p. 379
Sermon CXLVII. Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.. . . . . p. 390
Sermon CXLVIII. And let not any iniquity have dominion over me.. . . . . p. 397
Sermon CXLIX. Deliver me from the oppression of man; so will I keep thy precepts.. . . . . p. 406
Sermon CL. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.. . . . . p. 416
Sermon CLI. Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.. . . . . p. 428
Sermon CLII. Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.. . . . . p. 439
Sermon CLIII. Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments.. . . . . p. 445
Sermon CLIV. Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments.. . . . . p. 455
Sermon CLV. Thy testimonies, which thou hast commanded, are righteous and very faithful.. . . . . p. 462
Sermon CLVI. My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.. . . . . p. 473
Sermon CLVII. Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.. . . . . p. 484
Sermon CLVIII. I am small and despised; yet do I not forget thy precepts.. . . . . p. 497
Indexes. . . . . p. 507
Index of Scripture References. . . . . p. 507
Greek Words and Phrases. . . . . p. 516
Latin Words and Phrases. . . . . p. 518
Index of Pages of the Print Edition. . . . . p. 524

i

THE

WORKS OF THOMAS MANTON, D.D.

VOL. VIII.

ii

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iii

THE COMPLETE WORKS

OF

THOMAS MANTON, D.D.

VOLUME VIII.

CONTAINING

SEVERAL SERMONS UPON THE CXIX. PSALM.

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET & CO, 21 BERNERS STREET.

1872.

PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

CONTENTS.

PAGE

SEVERAL SERMONS UPON THE CXIX. PSALM.

SERMON

CIV. "Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies; for they are ever with me," ver. 98, 3

CV. "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation," ver. 99, 9

CVI. "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts," ver. 100, 14

CVII. "I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word," ver. 101, 25

CVIII. "I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me," ver. 102, 36

CIX. "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth," ver. 103, 43

CX. "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way," ver. 104, 53

CXI.	“Therefore I hate every false way,” ver. 104,	59
CXII.	“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,” ver. 105,	64
CXIII.	“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,” ver. 105,	74
CXIV.	“I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments,” ver. 106,	80
CXV.	“I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments,” ver. 106,	88
CXVI.	“I am afflicted very much: quicken me, Lord, according unto thy word,” ver. 107,	94
CXVII.	“Quicken me, Lord, according unto thy word,” ver. 107,	100
CXVIII.	“Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will-offerings of my mouth, Lord, and teach me thy judgments,” ver. 108,	106
CXIX.	“My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law,” ver. 109,	114
CXX.	“The wicked have laid a snare for me; yet I erred not	127

	from thy precepts," ver. 110,	
CXXI.	"Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart," ver. 111,	134
CXXII.	"Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart," ver. 111,	141
CXXIII.	"I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always to the end," ver. 112,	148
CXXIV.	"I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love," ver. 113,	155
CXXV.	"Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I hope in thy word," ver. 114,	166
CXXVI.	"Depart from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God," ver. 115,	177
CXXVII.	"Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope," ver. 116,	188
CXXVIII.	"And let me not be ashamed of my hope. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe; and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually," ver. 116, 117,	198

CXXIX.	"Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood," ver. 118,	208
CXXX.	"Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies," ver. 119,	220
CXXXI.	"My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments," ver. 120,	230
CXXXII.	"I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors," ver. 121,	238
CXXXIII.	"Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me," ver. 122,	248
CXXXIV.	"Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me," ver. 122,	257
CXXXV.	"Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness," ver. 123,	263
CXXXVI.	"Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes," ver. 124,	273
CXXXVII.	"I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies," ver. 125,	285

CXXXVIII.	"It is time for thee, Lord, to work; for they have made void thy law," ver. 126,	296
CXXXIX.	"Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold," ver. 127,	307
CXL.	"Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way," ver. 128,	320
CXLI.	"Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them," ver. 129,	333
CXLII.	"Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them," ver. 129,	342
CXLIII.	"The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple," ver. 130,	346
CXLIV.	"I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments," ver. 131,	357
CXLV.	"Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name," ver. 132,	365

viii

CXLVI. "As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name," ver. 132, 371

CXLVII. "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me," ver. 133, 381

CXLVIII. "And let not any iniquity have dominion over me," ver. 133, 389

CXLIX. "Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts," ver. 134, 398

CL. "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes," ver. 135, 408

CLI. "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law," ver. 136, 420

CLII. "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law," ver. 136, 431

CLIII. "Righteous art thou, Lord, and upright are thy judgments," ver. 137, 437

CLIV. "Righteous art thou, Lord, and upright are thy judgments," ver. 137, 447

CLV. "Thy testimonies, which thou hast commanded, are 454

righteous and very faithful," ver. 138,

CLVI. "My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words," ver. 139, 465

CLVII. "Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it," ver. 140, 477

CLVIII. "I am small and despised; yet do I not forget thy precepts," ver. 141, 489

SEVERAL SERMONS UPON THE CXIX. PSALM.

VOL. VIII.

SEVERAL SERMONS UPON THE CXIX. PSALM.

SERMON CIV.

Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies; for they are ever with me.—VER. 98.

I COME now to the second consideration, they are wiser than their enemies as to security against their attempts, and that enmity and opposition that they carry on against them; they are far more safe by walking under the covert of God's protection, than their enemies can possibly be, to have all manner of worldly advantages. I shall prove it by this argument, because they are more prepared and furnished as to all events. A godly wise man is careful to keep in with God; he is more prepared and furnished, can have a higher hope, more expectation of success, than others have; or if not, he is well enough provided for, though things fall out never so cross to his desires.

1. As to success. Who hath made wiser provision, think you, he that hath made God his friend, or he that is borne up with worldly props and dependences? they that are guided by the Spirit of God, or they that are guided by Satan? those that make it their business to walk with God step by step, or those that not only forsake him, but provoke him to his face? those that break with men and keep in with God, or those that break with God? Surely a child of God hath more security from piety than his enemies can have by secular policy, whereby they think to overreach and ruin him. The safety of a child of God lieth in two things—(1.) God is his friend; (2.) As long as God hath work for him to do, he will maintain him and bear him out in it.

[1.] God is his friend; and that must needs be a man's wisdom when he complies with the will of him upon whom he depends. All things do absolutely depend upon the providence of God; he hath wisdom, strength and dominion over all events. The wisdom of God is on his side, and therefore

it is but the wisdom of men against him. If the difference only lay between men and men, the craft and policy of their enemies and their own craft and policy, the scales would soon break of their enemies' side, for they are wiser in their generation, Luke xvi. They have great abilities and great malice, which sharpens men's understandings; they have a large conscience, and more liberty to do what they will; so that a child of God is gone if it were to oppose craft with craft; and usually they carry their matters more subtilly, laying hidden snares and profound counsels; whereas the children of God carry it simply and plainly. But then there is a wise God to act for a foolish people, and sometimes God may give his people great abilities; as Joseph was wiser than his brethren, Moses wiser than the Egyptians, Daniel than all the magicians of Babylon. But yet usually parts and secular wisdom are given to the enemies. Only a child of God hath this point of wisdom above the enemies, he taketh in with the wise God, which is the ready and compendious way to success; whereas secular wisdom takes a long way about, and must work through many mediums and subordinate causes before the intended effect can be brought about: Ps. xxxvii. 12, 13, 'The wicked plotteth against the just.' God is the other party: 'The Lord shall laugh at him; for he seeth that his day is coming.' He doth not say the just counterbalance the wicked, or strains his wit to match his enemy with craft, but God hath a providence and love, ever waking on his behalf; therefore it lies not between policy and piety, but between men's craft and God's wisdom. Then he hath the power of God on his side, and therefore he is wiser than his enemies, he is of the stronger side: Gen. xvii. 1, 'I am God all-sufficient; walk before me and be thou perfect.' All warping comes from doubting of God's all-sufficiency, evidenced by our carnal fear, and our distrustful care what shall become of us and how we shall do to live. Certainly, if God be able, we need not doubt, or run to in direct courses. Again, he hath him of his side who hath dominion over all events. Carnal policy is full of jealousies; they know not what will succeed, they have no sure bottom to stand upon; they are not sure of events, when their business is never so well laid. But now a child of God is wiser, and hath much the more comfortable course, as well as successful; he can do his duty, and leave the event to God. When a business is never so well and cunningly laid, yet God loves to dispose of events, and to take the wise in their own craft,' Job v. 12, 13. They are outwitted, and they outreach themselves, that so Christ may, as it were, get upon the devil's shoulders, and even be beholden to his enemies. Never are they such fools as when they seem to say things wisely against God and his people. Carnal wisdom is the greatest folly: it brought Moses to the flags, but Pharaoh to the bottom of the sea. The devil was the first fool of all the creation, and ever since his first attempts against his God he hath been playing the fool for these thousands of years. The tempting our first parents seemed a masterpiece of wit, but it was indeed the ruin of his kingdom. So in the attempts of wicked men against his people, God still disposeth of the event contrary to their aim.

4

[2.] As long as God hath work for him to do, he will maintain him and bear him out in the midst of all dangers; that is certain; as he did David in the very face of Saul. There is an invisible guard set upon plain-hearted and zealous Christians; every day they do as it were, by their pleading against the corruptions of wicked men, exasperate them; they are in the secret of God's presence, and are

kept none know how; none so nigh to dangers, yet none so free from them; in the lion's mouth, yet preserved, as Christ lived in the midst of his enemies, yet they could not touch him till his hour was come, John xi. 8-10. Christ had work to do in Judea: 'Master,' say the disciples, 'the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again? And Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world; but if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.' In the disciples' question is bewrayed the true genius of carnal fear. Oh, men say, why will you go run yourself into the mouth of danger? They think the discharge of duty will cost them their utter ruin: 'Master, the Jews sought to kill thee.' Now Christ's answer showeth that men should not choose their way according to their apprehensions of danger and safety, but as God cleareth a call to them; he answers by a similitude taken from God's order in the course of nature. God made the day for work, and the night for rest and sleep; now as long as men have daylight they will not stumble, but if they set forth in the night, then they would stumble. The meaning is, as long as a man hath a clear call from God (for a call from God is compared to the day), and can say, This is a duty God hath put upon me, he hath daylight, he shall not stumble; though he doth come and go in the face and teeth of enemies on God's cause, and plead against their corruptions and base miscarriages, he shall not stumble. Indeed, when a man is in the dark, and knows not what God's mind is, then he is ever and anon stumbling. A Christian is to study his duty rather than his danger, and then leave t he care of all events to God; he is in a safe course when he is in God's way, and shall not be interrupted till he have finished his work: Luke xiii. 31, 32, 'The Pharisees said unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee. And he said, Go tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' If he cast himself into troubles, he is sure they are not sinfully procured; but men that run on danger without a calling may meet with many a snare, or he that doth not observe his call meet with more difficulties than ever he thought of: 1 Peter iii. 13, 'And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?' The best way to eschew trouble is to adhere closely to what is right in the sight of God; he can allay their fury, putting convictions upon their conscience. A man would think to stand nicely upon terms of duty is to run in harm's way; and there are none so much harmed, maligned, and opposed in the world as those that follow that which is good, as those that will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but will reprove them rather; possibly they may hate and malign you if you keep to that which is good, but they cannot harm your consciences. God can allay the rage of men, by putting convictions upon their consciences, evidencing your sincerity; as the history saith, when the Arians persecuted the orthodox Christians, they durst not meddle with Paulinus out of reverence. Therefore who will harm you if you be followers of that which is good?

2. In case things succeed ill with him, and contrary to his expectation, yet they are wiser than their enemies can be, because they have provided for the worst. Carnal policy is but wisdom in

opinion for a time, not always, while they have matter to work upon in the world; but these always, in prosperity and adversity.

6

[1.] Because he hath secured his great interest, which lies in the favour of God and in hopes of eternal life. God, by his commandment, hath taught him this wisdom, to make sure of the kingdom of God, and then a man is safe; whatever happens, nothing can befall him that doth endanger his hopes, or endamage his interest in Christ; if they kill him, they do but put him there where he would be; he hath secured his great interest; persecutors cannot reach the better part: Luke xii. 4, they 'kill the body, after that they can do no more.' A good man, let them do what they can, can come to no hurt; he is indeed like a die; cast him high or low, still he falls upon his square; he hath a bottom to stand upon, hopes to support him.

[2.] Because he hath fitted his spirit for all kind of conditions. A man that is to go a long journey must prepare for all weathers; so a Christian must learn to be abased as well as to abound, Phil. iv. Now a mortified man hath the advantage of all the world; a man that is dead to worldly interests hath the advantage of all others for doing and suffering for God, and in noble and generous actions. It is our affections that increase our afflictions, that make us so base and pusillanimous: 1 Cor. vii. 31, 'Rejoice as if you rejoiced not, weep as though ye wept not.' If our hearts did not rejoice so much in the creature, if we were in a greater indifferency to worldly things, the loss and miscarriage of them would not surprise us with so great terror. A mortified man is wiser than other men, because he hath plucked out the root of all trouble, which is an inordinate affection; and then let his condition be never so bad, he is fortified. Temperance makes way for patience: 2 Peter i. 6, 'Add to temperance, patience.' Temperance, or a moderation in the enjoyment of all things, tends to patience in the loss of them. A man that possesseth them without love can lose them without grief. They may lessen his estate, but cannot lessen his comfort. Therefore this is the man that can 'pray always, rejoice evermore, in everything give thanks,' for giving and taking, for the word of God hath taught him this holy weanedness from worldly things.

[3.] He can look to the end of all things, not only to the present, but the future: Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' He can see victories in a down fall; and this is a wisdom proper to faith, to see the overthrow of the church's enemies when they rise up and prosper. A natural man may look above his condition as long as he seeth any probability in second causes, but 'faith is the evidence of things not seen.' When there is no probable way, then it can look above them. Reason usually is short-sighted, it 'cannot see afar off,' 2 Peter i. 9; it cannot look be yond the cloud and veil of present discouragement. But now faith can see one contrary in another, see a good end in bad means, and those things that make against them to make for them; and what in itself is hurtful, is altogether tempered by God's hand, and to the greatest good, Rom. viii. 28; Ps. xxxvii. 37, 38, 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end

of that man is peace but the end of the wicked shall be cut off;' and Ps. lxxiii. 17, 'I went into the sanctuary, and there I understood their end.' Those that are governed by sense, will, and passion, cannot be wise, for they do not see to the end; but he that lives by faith looks not to appearances, but seeth the end; therefore this man can bear up with hope and courage in the midst of all difficulties and troubles.

7

Use 1. Caution against two things—carnal fear and carnal policy.

1. Against carnal fear. Many are troubled when they consider the power and cunning of the enemies of God's people. Ay! but you need not be dismayed when you do, in the simplicity of your hearts, give up yourselves to the direction of God's word; you need not fear all their craft; when they are confounded and broken to pieces by their own devices, you shall stand firm. It seemeth to be the greatest folly in the world to keep at a distance from the rising side; in time it will be found to be the greatest wisdom. You think they carry their matters with a great deal of cunning, whilst they slight God and tread the unquestionable interests of Christ under foot, and that the cause of God will never get up again. Since they reject the word of God, what wisdom have they? Jer. viii. 9. When you fail, will you believe the word of God, or the doubtful face of outward things? Be sure once you are in God's way, and then you cannot miscarry finally. Will not Christ uphold the ministry in despite of the devil and evil men? Have we not the word of God to secure these hopes for us? Therefore what need we fear what wicked wretches attempt against us? Doth not God love righteousness? Will he not take vengeance? And in their highest prosperity, may not we see their downfall? Therefore why should we be afraid?

2. Then take heed of carnal policy; for we are made wiser than our enemies *through the commandment*. We must not oppose craft with craft, for so Satan will be too hard for us in the use of his own weapons. That is not wisdom to run to shifts, and to carnal and sinful devices. There is a wisdom that is necessary for the children of God: Mat. x. 16, 'I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be wise as serpents, simple as doves.' Ever it was so with God's people; they are sheep in the midst of wolves, destitute of all outward support: 'Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' Carry yourselves prudently and holily in my service. That wisdom and knowledge which doth not agree with justice, but puts upon doing things that are unjust, that is craft, not wisdom. Now though Christ hath bid us be wise, yet he hath forbidden us to be crafty. When you run to carnal shifts, you think to be wiser than God. All the mischiefs of the present age have merely been occasioned by unbelief. We durst not trust God in his own way, but will run to carnal practices merely to prevent evil, and you see how we are entangled in all manner of confusion. Jeroboam would be wiser than God; God would have settled the kingdom upon him, but he ran to a way of his own, and that was his undoing. Take heed of this fleshly wisdom: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'Not in fleshly wisdom, but in simplicity and godly wisdom.' The more simple and plain a Christian walks according to the direct letter of the scripture, the more safe he is; but when he doth run to those baser courses, merely out of distrust to God, all things come to ruin. Carnal policy never

succeeds well with the children of God; never did a Christian thrive by carnal policy, or using carnal fetches for carnal ends; God crosseth them. A man that will walk by the light of his own fire is sure to be led out of the way of peace and happiness. When they for sake the light of God's word and Spirit, and follow a false light, they run into sorrow and inconvenience; and therefore weaker Christians are sometimes safer than those of stronger parts, that lean to their own understandings and trust to carnal policy.

Use 2. To prize the scriptures, because of this wisdom, that is to be gotten in them. A very poor creature that walks in the fear of God is wise to avoid the chiefest danger, to secure the greatest interest, to avoid hell beneath, Prov. xv. 24; that wisdom hath escaped the greatest danger, the wrath of God, and made sure of heaven, Christ, and salvation, his great interest. He that gives up himself to be governed by God's word, though never so plain and simple, will be found to be the wisest in the issue: Ps. cxix. 24, 'Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors.' When God's testimonies are the men of our counsel, this is that which will give true wisdom. All things in this world are mutable and uncertain, they continue not long; we cannot foresee all changes, therefore a wise man may be mistaken sometimes, and do things he could wish were never done if he had consulted with God. Therefore now be wise; this will tell you when to act and when to forbear, not to be over-wise nor over-foolish.

Use 3. To get this wisdom from, the word of God that will make you wiser than your adversaries: Prov. iv. 7, 'Get wisdom, that is the principal thing, and with all thy gettings get understanding.' There are some maxims (if we would have this wisdom so as to be wiser than our enemies) and some graces.

First, Some maxims:—

1. Season the heart with this principle, that it concerns you to secure your interest in Christ rather than the world, Mat. vi. 34; Luke xiv. 26.

2. That we should not be solicitous about events so much as duty about dangers so much as sin, 1 Chron. xix. 13; 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18.

3. That in a way of duty it is better to depend upon Christ's care over us, without using any carnal reaches to secure ourselves 1 Peter v. 7, iv. 19.

4. All that befalls the people of God is either, good, or tends to good, Rom viii. 28.

5. That when deliverance is more for our turn than bondage, yokes, and oppression, we shall be sure to have it. God hath engaged himself by covenant that 'he will withhold no good thing,' Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

6 Close adherence to God, and constancy in obedience, is the surest way to present ease and future deliverance Ps. cxxv. 3.

7. It is better to attend God's leisure than to get out of trouble by any carnal means of our own, Isa. xxxviii. 15.

8. No man can be a loser by God, though he suffers never so much for him, Rom. viii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 17.

9. Then is our adversary wiser than we, when his opposition draws us to sin; then and then only are we foiled by our adversary.

Secondly, There are some graces also make us wise

1. To this wisdom faith is necessary. If we could but depend upon God in a good, plain, and downright course, we would not run to shifts, nor change ourselves into all shapes and colours, cameleon-like (unless it be white); but you would support yourselves with this, that he would maintain you and bear you out.

2. Fear of God, which makes us tender of spirit, that we dare not offend God nor break a rule for all the world; he fears a commandment more than a thousand dangers: Prov. xiii. 13, 'He that fears the commandment shall be safe from fear of danger.' If a commandment stand in his way, he dares not go through; it is more than if all the terrors of the world stand in his way; he will endure all hazards rather than break through a command.

SERMON CV.

I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.—VER. 99.

DAVID had spoken of his affection to the word of God, and then mentioned one special ground thereof, which was the wisdom that he got thereby; now this wisdom is amplified, by comparing it with the wisdom of others. Three sorts of men he mentioneth—enemies, teachers, ancients. The enemies excel in policy, teachers in doctrine, and ancients in counsel; and yet by the word was David made wiser than all these. Malice sharpens the wit of enemies, and teacheth them the arts of opposition; teachers are furnished with learning; but ancients, they grow wise by experience: yet David, by the study of the word, excelled all these. In the text we may observe two things:—

1. David's assertion concerning his profiting by the word of God, *I have more understanding than all my teachers*.

2. The reason, taken from his diligent use of the means, *for thy testimonies are my meditation*.

For the first of these, ‘I have more understanding than all my teachers,’ to clear the words:—

1. It is certain that he speaks not this of his extraordinary revelations as a prophet, but of that wisdom which he got by ordinary means. The holy men of God in the Old Testament, considered as prophets, so they had extraordinary visions and revelations. Now David speaks of that kind of knowledge got by the ordinary means, not those special revelations made to the prophets; for he renders the reason of it, ‘Thy testimonies are my meditation.’

2. It is certain he speaks not this by way of boasting; for this is a psalm of instruction, not a history or narrative. Now the children of God would not commend their failings to the imitation of others, and this which David speaks is rendered as a reason of his respect; by the word he got wisdom above his teachers, enemies, and ancients.

Briefly, the intent and use of this assertion will be known by considering the quality of these teachers here mentioned. You may look upon them either—(1.) As faulty or defective in their duty; (2.) As performing their duty. In both these notions David was wiser than they, or a man of a better understanding.

10

1. If you look upon them under a diminishing notion; so some would understand it thus, that those which instructed him in human learning and civil discipline had not understanding as he that meditated in God’s testimonies. If this were the sense, there is no boasting, but only comparing knowledge with knowledge, the knowledge of the word with the knowledge of ordinary sciences; and it gives us this lesson, that the great sages of the world that do excel in secular wisdom are but fools to a child of God; they know the secrets of nature, and he knows the God of nature; they dispute about the chiefest good, and he enjoys it; they know the use of natural things, and he knoweth the use of spiritual. This wisdom and skill in outward things, compared with the fear of God, is but vanity; and the wisest man must ‘become a fool that he may be wise’ with this kind of wisdom, 1 Cor. iii. 18.

2. You may look upon them as corrupt and sinful. In those days of Saul, the teachers might be corrupt as well as other ranks and orders of men; and then it only implies this, that God gives greater understanding to his people than to their corrupt guides: Luke xi. 52, ‘Woe unto you lawyers; for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.’ The expounders of the law were corrupt, and hindered others from entering into the kingdom of God. It is a great evil when the church of God is given up to such kind of guides. But now, in such a case, they that make conscience of God’s ordinances, use private means with diligence, have more understanding than their teachers: Mat. xxiii. 2, 3, ‘The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not.’ Though they were naught and corrupt themselves, yet if they bring God’s message, it should not be slighted, because of the office and lawful authority with which

they are invested, though not every way qualified for their station; and in this sense a child of God may be wiser than his teachers.

3. We may look upon them as contenting themselves with the naked theory of God's law, without making conscience of practice; that they were such kind of guides that never tasted themselves what they commended to others, or practised what they taught; then 'I have more understanding than my teachers.' He that excels in practice hath the best understanding. Practical knowledge is to be preferred before speculative, as much as the end is to be preferred before the means; the end is more noble than the means. Now speculative knowledge is the means to the end: Ps. cxi. 10, 'A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.' Not only know what is to be done, but do what is to be known. As for others, whatever light they seem to have, they have not wisdom and understanding: Jer. viii. 9, 'Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?' They were boasting of the knowledge of the law, yet there was no wisdom in them. A mean Christian, that fears God, is a man of more understanding than he that hath a great deal of head-light and in this sense may it be well said, the children of God are wiser than their teachers. Many times those that are unlearned rise up and take heaven by violence, when others, by all their literal and speculative knowledge, are thrust down to hell.

11

Suppose it spoken no way in diminution to these teachers, but that they did their duty.

4. Some comment thus; that David had more understanding than all his teachers who taught him the first rudiments of religion, that he transcended them by far, by God's blessing, in making further progress in this kind of knowledge. If this were the sense, it would teach us not always to keep to our milk and to the first principles of religion, but to wade further and further into these mysteries, Heb. v. 12, 13. We should go on still, and grow up to a greater fulness in knowledge according as we have more means and advantages. But this is not the sense, for he saith, 'than all my teachers.' Why then, secondly, take it for his godly teachers that were every way qualified; and it is no new thing for a scholar to exceed his master, and Christians of a private station many times to excel those that are in office. Look, as in secular things among the heathens, Aristotle was wiser than Plato his master, and opposed him in many things, and therefore is called an ass's colt, that as soon as he was full with the dam's milk, he kicks her; he forgot that he was his father. We should, if we can, exceed our teachers, but not despise them; and Daniel, chap. i. 20, was wiser in civil arts than all his teachers, so also it is true as to holy things. Jesus Christ at twelve years of age puzzled the doctors. Eli brought up Samuel in the fear of God, but he proved wiser than Eli; Paul, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, Acts xxii. 3, proved a more notable instrument of God's glory; and Austin was taught by Ambrose, but grew afterwards more eminent than he. Thus David was wiser than his teachers, and yet they might be faithful and holy. Now he mentions this partly to commend the Lord's grace, 'Thou hast made me wiser than my teachers;' and partly to commend meditation in the word, the means by which he got it; not to boast of his own attainments, but to commend grace, and commend the means of grace to others.

What may we observe from this assertion of David, ‘I am wiser than my teachers’?

Obs. 1. The freeness of God’s grace in making a difference between men and men as to measures and degrees of knowledge: 1 Cor. iv. 7, ‘Who made thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou hast not received?’ Some have more and some less understanding, and all is as God gives out. There is not only a difference between men and men as to their great distinction of election and reprobation, but within the sphere of election as to measures of grace. God manifests himself to some more than to others; they are admitted to this favour, to see more than others into the mind of God, though they have the same teacher, God’s Spirit; the same rule and direction, God’s word; the same principles of grace; yet they have greater measures of knowledge: the reasons lie in God’s bosom and grace. Now this should be noted, that those which excel should be kept humble, as being more indebted to grace than others are. and surely none should be proud because more in debt; and that those who are excelled might submit, and be contented to be outshined: John iii. 30, ‘He must increase, but I must decrease.’ It should be a rejoicing to them that God is likely to be glorified more by others; especially teachers should rejoice that God should give such a blessing to the ministry, that they which seem to be under them should see more than they. When those two quarrelling pronouns, *meum et tuum*, mine and thine, have no more use, as in heaven, then we shall fully rejoice in one anothers’ gifts and graces, and what they enjoy it will be our comfort: as, in a choir of voices, one sings the treble, another the bass; they are refreshed, and every one delights not only in his own part and performance, but in the part of each other; all concurs to the harmony; so one hath this measure of grace, another another, and all concur to the glory of God.

12

Obs. 2. Not only the freeness of God’s grace in giving wisdom to one more than to another, but observe also the sovereignty of God’s distribution. The treasures of grace are at his free disposing, and he will not be tied to any order; he gives to every one that measure of understanding which he sees fit. Indeed his ordinary course is to bless the teachers of his people with an increase of knowledge, for he hath promised a more especial presence with the public gift than with private: Mat. xxviii. 20, ‘I am with you to the end of the world.’ Yet many times private believers excel their godly teachers in wisdom and piety. Wisdom is not so tied to the teachers but that God is free to the giving as much, nay, more, to those that are taught. Though the general course is, in the ordinary way, that teachers should know more than the taught, yet God sometimes doth work extraordinarily, to show his prerogative, and absolute sovereignty; and things revealed to babes may be hid from the wise and prudent, to show that it is at his disposing, to hide and manifest as he pleaseth.

Obs. 3. The equity and proportion that he observes in the dispensation of his sovereignty, for David ascribes it to God, but observes that this came to him as a blessing upon the use of means, ‘For thy testimonies are my meditation.’ God gives knowledge to whom he pleas eth, but those that meditate most thrive most.

There are three sorts of meditation—(1.) Of observation; (2.) Of study and search; (3.) Of consideration or inculcative application; and all these conduce to make us wise.

1. There is a meditation of observation, when a man compares the word and providence, and is still taking notice how such a promise is accomplished, such a threatening made good; this man will grow more wise and more understanding than others: Ps. cvii. 43, 'Whoso is wise, and will observe those things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.' That is, he that is comparing the prediction and event, God's proceedings either in justice or mercy according to his word, how he doth punish and reward his people, and what visible comments his works are upon his word, he hath a clearer discerning than others, and they will see more cause to adhere to God, and yield him more faithful obedience than others.

2. There is the meditation of study and search, they that are inquiring into the word of God to find out his mind: Eph. v. 17, 'Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.' They that exercise themselves in the word to find out his mind shall have more of his blessing than those that rest in hearing and reading: 'For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear, shall more be given,' Mark iv. 24. It is spoken of measuring to God in ordinances; as we measure to God in the use of means, so the Lord will measure out to us in his blessing and the influences of his grace.

13

3. There is a meditation of consideration, when we consider that which we read and hear, how it may be for use and practice, and of what moment it is for our eternal weal or woe. The scripture calls it consideration: 2 Tim. ii. 7, 'Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things;' Ps. l. 22, 'Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.' The more men consider things with application to their own soul, the more wise will they grow, and the more understanding in the things of God, and able to apply all for their own direction; he will see more than the teacher ever could express when he gives forth the general doctrine of faith and manners. But let any meditate upon it, and urge his own heart, and he shall find something the teacher thought not of; and this principally is the sense spoken of in this place. A man that urgeth his own heart with what is taught, when he hath a general doctrine applies it to his own soul, and reflects the light of it upon his own heart, meditates upon it by serious and inculcative thoughts, will ever find something either the teacher saw not, or seeing expressed not, see further into this truth than the teacher was aware of. The life and success of all means doth lie in this meditation.

Obs. 4. 'I have more understanding than my teachers.' We learn this, that private means is a duty, and meditation must be joined with public hearing. Many content themselves with public ordinances, but make no conscience of private means, as secret prayer, and debating with themselves by serious inculcative thoughts returning upon their own heart. Oh! make conscience of this private duty. You may prosper and thrive more in a way of grace. When the apostle laid down the privileges of a justified estate, Rom. viii. 31, he concludes, 'Now what shall we say to these things?' implying

we should urge our own heart upon every general doctrine, or rouse up ourselves with such a smart question, Heb. ii. 3, ‘How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?’

Obs. 5. We learn, again, that it is good to submit to God’s institutions; though the persons employed in them be never so mean, yet if they be clothed with lawful authority, by a conscientious attending upon God’s ordinance, we may get a great deal of wisdom more than the teacher ever had, as they set your thoughts awork. Surely, if teachers be corrupt, as they sit in Moses’ chair, though they are corrupt, yet as far as they do God’s message they are to be regarded. Certainly we are not to turn back upon one meaner gifted if godly, or be a discouragement to those that are weak, though they are not so able, and have not so strong a gift. God may make a mean teacher a means for the increasing of knowledge.

Obs. 6. We learn the glory of all profiting; it must not be given to the instruments, but to God, for the scholar may become wiser than the teacher; that is, God may give more grace by an instrument than the instrument hath in himself, to show that all is of him, that it doth not lie in the teacher’s gift. All profiting must be ascribed to God; therefore the glory of all must redound to him, to his grace: 1 Cor. xv. 10, ‘By the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain: I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.’ If never so able, it is still from God.

14

Secondly, The reason, ‘I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.’

Point. That meditation is a great help towards gracious improvement. David grew in such a manner as that he did excel all his teachers, and he giveth this reason of it: ‘For thy testimonies are my meditation.’ The scripture calleth for this: 1 Tim. iv. 15, ‘Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. So consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things;’ and Ps. l. 22, ‘Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver;’ and Luke ii. 19, ‘Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.’ Here I might show—(1.) What this is; (2.) What a notable means this is for spiritual improvement and growth in knowledge; to debate things with himself, Who made him, and for what end he was made. But of this you may see at large, ver. 15.

SERMON CVI.

I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.—VER. 100.

MAN is a rational being, and should close with things more or less as they do perfect and polish his understanding. Now among all the inventions of mankind to remedy the defects of nature, not

one of them can compare with the means which God offers for curing of the blindness and darkness of the mind which is introduced by the fall. Man hath found out grammar to rectify his speech, rhetoric to adorn it and make it more cogent and powerful in persuasion, logic to revive reason, medicine or physic to preserve the health of the body, politics for government of human societies, and for ordering our converse with others in the world, economics for prudent ordering of families, ethics for the tempering of each man's spirit, that it may live under the dominion of natural reason. But mark, for commerce and communion with God, wherein our happiness lies, there all the inventions of man are very short, and only the word of God can guide us, and furnish us with this wisdom; and because of this is the word so desirous[1] and precious to the saints. 'Oh, how they love the law of God!' for it is their wisdom. Well, David having showed how it prevailed with his own heart, Oh, how I love thy law!' for thereby I get spiritual wisdom and understanding; to draw in other men to love and study the word, and to make this motive strong and pressing upon them, he doth compare the wisdom that men may get by the word with other things that look like wisdom; he compares it with the sagacity of enemies, the speculation and knowledge of the teacher, and the prudence we get by age and experience.

1. With the sagacity of enemies, whose wit was sharpened with their own malice. There he shows that a man that taketh counsel of the word to secure his great interest, by getting into the favour of God, and walketh by the plain rule of the word, without consulting with flesh and blood, hath the advantage of all other men, and will be found to be the wisest man at length. He compares this wisdom he got by the word with the speculations and knowledge of teachers. He that doth not content himself with the naked rules delivered by them, but labours with his own conscience to make them profitable to his own soul, he will see more by his own eyes as to the particular duties and concernments of the spiritual life than his teachers could ever direct him unto.

2. He compares it here in the text with the wisdom of the ancients, or men of long experience. By the elders or ancients may be meant either men of former times, or aged men of the same time.

[1.] Men of former times: Heb. xi. 2, 'By it the ancients or elders obtained a good report;' that is, the holy patriarchs of their time. If this be meant of men in former times, then *thou hast made me wiser than the ancients* recommends this observation to us, viz., the church of God is growing always, and one age sees more than an other. A dwarf upon a giant's shoulders may see further than he. The ancients had their measures of light, so hath the present age: Joel ii. 28-30, 'In the latter days'—meaning the times of the gospel, all that efflux of time which was between Christ's ascension and his second coming, is called 'the latter days'—'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions,' &c. The knowledge which younger ones shall get under the New Testament is expressed by visions, dreams, and prophecy. These three were the ways of God's

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1 That is, "desirable," or "desired."—ED.

revealing himself to the old prophets; therefore it implies that those very truths which the prophets and holy men of God had by visions, dreams, and prophecies, by such extra ordinary ways of revelation, will then be commonly known by preaching and catechising and other means of instruction in the church of God: and thus, 'I have more understanding than the ancients.' Succeeding ages may see more into the mind of God; therefore antiquity should not sway against truth, and former ages should not prescribe to succeeding, which grow up to a further latitude and increase in knowledge.

[2.] Rather let us take it, 'I have more understanding than the ancients;' that is, than many old men of the same age. They that are slow and dull of conceit, yet by long use they grow wise; and having smarted often, they learn by their own harms to become circumspect. But here is the excellency of the word, that it made a young man wiser than those that are men of age and experience. Youths well studied in God's law may exceed men of great experience and knowledge in arts and sciences. True zeal and piety, and the defects of his age and want of experiences, are recompensed by the exactness of his rule that he takes to guide him; if he will but wholly subject and give up himself to the directions of this rule, he will not need much experience; he hath enough to guide him: 'I understand more than the ancients: because I keep thy precepts.' In which words you have—

16

1 The benefit that we get by God's precepts, that is *understanding*.

2. This benefit is amplified by comparing it with the understanding that is gotten by age and experience, *I understand more than the ancients*.

3. The manner of obtaining this more excellent benefit, by a diligent heed and practice, 'I understand more than the ancients.' Why? *Because I keep thy precepts*. So that from hence three points are to be observed:—

1. That understanding gotten by the precepts of the word is better than understanding gotten by long experience. I observe this, because David doth not speak this so much to commend his own proficiency, as to set forth the exactness of our rule and goodness of the word of God; therefore this point lies couched here.

2. That young ones may sometimes have more of spiritual wisdom than those that are ancient. I observe that, because David instanceth in his own person, though young, that he exceeded many, not only of his equals, but of his seniors.

3. The way to increase in spiritual understanding is to be studious in practical holiness. I observe this, because the reason rendered was his own diligent practice, 'I understand more than the ancients.' Why? 'Because I keep thy precepts.'

Doct. 1. That understanding gotten by the precepts of the word is better than understanding gotten by long experience. It is better in four regards:—

1. It is more exact. Our experience reacheth but to a few things, but the word of God reacheth to all cases that concern true happiness. The word is the result of God's wisdom, who is the Ancient of days, therefore exceeds the wisdom of the ancients, or experience of any man, or all men. God is more ancient than they, sees all things that have been, are, and shall be, at one view and sight; and therefore, if he will give us a rule, certainly that is more than all our experience. Experience will show us the evils of this world, and give us some rules to escape it; but the word of God tells us of evils in the next, and that with more persuasiveness and evidence than if one came from the dead, and had been wallowing in those devouring flames that had been kindled in the other world, Luke xvi. 30, 31. There is more exactness and completeness in this rule than possibly can be in experience: 2 Tim. iii. 17, 'The word is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' By the man of God is meant the teacher; the prophets are called men of God, and the public teacher is the man of God. If there be enough to furnish the teacher to every good work, surely there is enough to furnish the practiser. There is enough to furnish the maw of God, who is to consult not only for his own private necessity, but the necessities of others.

17

2. As it is a more exact, so a more sure way of learning wisdom, whereas experience is more uncertain. Many have much experience, yet have not a heart to see and to gather wisdom from what they feel: Deut. xxix. 2, 3, 'Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt. Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.' They saw it, that is, had experience of it, yet not a heart to improve it: Ps. xlix. 13, 'This their way is their folly, yet their posterity approve their sayings.' The father gets an estate; when gotten, he thinks to enjoy it; God takes him off; their posterity live by their carnal maxims, and do not profit by their experience. Though they stand upon the graves of many that made a great bustle in the world to compass their worldly ends, yet they are never the wiser for all this. Therefore it is a great advantage to have a stated fixed rule to our hands, to have a rule of wisdom and principles given us by God himself, wherewith to steer and guide our course.

3. It is a safer and cheap way of learning, to learn by rule, than to come home by Weeping Gross, and to learn wisdom by our own smart. Experience is too expensive a way; and if we had nothing else to guide us, into how many thousand miseries should we run! how would a man's life be exposed to inevitable hazards and soul-dangers! And if by chance he should get out of the snare (which is uncertain), yet the taint of former practices will remain in him a long time; therefore it is God's mercy he will teach us by precept rather than by experience; that he doth not teach us, as Gideon taught the men of Succoth, by briars and thorns, but that we may learn wisdom at a cheaper rate. If we were only to know (as God saith of his people, Jer. ii. 19, 'Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee') when we had smarted for it, this were an

expensive costly way; but if we will hearken to God's precepts, all this smart and trouble and bitterness of affliction may be saved. Therefore the precepts of God are better.

4. The way by age and experience is a long way, and so for a long time all a man's younger age must needs be miserable and foolish. Now here you may come betimes to be wise, by studying the word of God: Prov. i. 22, 'How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and ye fools hate knowledge?' It concerns a man not only to be wise at length, but to be wise betimes. The foolish virgins were wise too late, but never any were wise too soon. Therefore surely that is better which will make us wise betimes, as soon as we come to be exposed to dangers. In these respects he that applies himself to God's precepts will get more wisdom than he that gets wisdom by age and experience; he hath it in a shorter way, a safer way, a less expensive way, and in a more certain and exacter way.

Use I. To reprove the folly of men that will not take God's directions, but will be trying experiments at their own cost; as Solomon gave out his heart to a critical search, he would find where happiness and comfort was, and at length was forced to come home by Weeping Cross, to the fear of God and keeping of his commandments. This is the whole of man, he had tried pleasure, profit, and all things. The prodigal would be running out of his father's house, and we all would be trying because we will not take God's word. God hath given his word here to man, we need not search elsewhere; and it is a thousand to one that, when you are trying, that ever you recover yourselves out of the snare. Here or there a man returns; I found them, saith Solomon, but there are very few; and therefore, as the prophet saith, Jer xxxi 32 'How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter?' Why do you compass about? There is a shorter way to true happiness, if we had a heart to take it. Oh, but we must have our swing and our scope, and then come home by shame and sorrow: Mat xi. 28, 'Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.' Mark, they that come to Christ, come not only laden with their sins, but weary with vain pursuits. But this is the fashion of man, to be running about, to be wearying himself, and contract weariness and thirst, as the prophet speaks, Jer. ii. 13.

18

Use 2. To recommend the study of the word. O Christians! hath provided for us better than the heathens, who were forced to hunt up and down to find a spark of wisdom here and there; it is all brought home, and suited to your hands in the word of God; there is more wisdom to be gotten there for the guiding of your affairs and course of life in order to true happiness than by age and long experience you can possibly reach. Two ways doth this appear:—

1. Because the word doth sufficiently instruct us in our duty: Prov. ii. 9, 'Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.' Then! when? When you give up yourselves to God's direction, and take the law from his mouth, and walk in the way that is pointed out by his word and Spirit; you shall have enough to direct you in all your ways.

2. It doth warn us of all our dangers. It doth not only in the general call upon us ‘to watch,’ Mat. xiii. 37, and ‘walk circumspectly,’ Eph. v. 15, but it discovers all those deceits particularly whereby we may be surprised, diverted, and turned out of the way. There are snares in prosperity, snares in adversity; temptations you meet with in praying, trading, eating, drinking, in your public undertakings, and in your private converse; it shows your danger in all your ways, before you feel the smart of them. Therefore give up yourselves to God’s direction, reading, hearing, meditating, believing, and practising; read, hear it often, then the deceits of Satan will be laid open, and the snares of your own hearts. Christians! an exact rule is of little use if you do not consult it: Gal. vi. 16, ‘Peace and mercy be upon all them that walk according to this rule;’ that order their conversations exactly. The word signifies, that try their work as a carpenter doth by his square; they examine their actions by the word of God, what they are now a-doing, therefore consult with it often; then meditate of it, ponder it seriously: 2 Tim. ii. 7, ‘Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.’ If we would have understanding by the word, there must be consideration. Man hath a discursive faculty to debate things with himself. Why! this is my duty. What would become of me if I step out of God’s way? Here is danger and a snare; what if I should run into it now it is laid before me? And then believe it surely: Heb. iv. 2, ‘The word profited not, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.’ Believe God upon his word without making trial. You hear much of living by sense and by faith; living by faith is when we bear up upon the bare word of God, and encourage ourselves in the Lord; but living by sense is a trying whether it be so or no; as they that will not believe hell shall feel hell, and they that will not believe the word of God shall smart for it: Heb. xi. 7, ‘Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark.’ It may be there were no preparations to the accomplishment of the curse and judgment; the word threatened, it is a thing not seen, yet he prepared an ark. When a man is walking in an unjust course, all things prosper for a-while, the misery the word threatens is unseen. Ay! but if you would grow wiser by the word than ‘men can by experience, you must look to the end of things: Ps. lxxiii. 17, ‘I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end.’ And then practise it diligently. A young practiser hath more understanding than an ancient notionalist: Ps. cxi. 10, ‘A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.’ It is not they that are able to speak of things, and savour what the word requires, but they that do what they hear and discourse of, Gregory saith, we know no more than we practise, and we practise as we know; these two always go together. The word doth us no good unless there be a ready obedience; therefore this is wisdom, when we give up ourselves to God’s direction, whatever it cost us in the world.

19

Doct. 2. That young ones may have many times more of this wisdom than those that are ancient.

Divers instances there are. Joseph was very young, sold into Egypt about seventeen years of age; and when he was in Egypt, Ps. cv. 22, ‘He taught his senators wisdom,’ speaking of the senators of Egypt. With how much modesty did he carry himself when his mistress laid that snare! Isaac was young, and permitted himself to be offered to God as a sacrifice. Samuel was wise betimes: 1 Sam. ii. 26, it is said, ‘The child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord and also

with men.' From his infancy he was dedicated to God, and God gives him wisdom to walk so that he was in favour with God and men; yea, God reveals himself to Samuel when he did not to Eli. David, when he was but fifteen years of age, fought with the lion and bear; and some while after that with Goliath, when he was a ruddy youth. Josiah, when he was but eight years old, administered the kingdom; before he was twelve, sets upon serious reformation. Jeremiah was sanctified from the womb, Jer. i. 5; and John the Baptist leaped in his mother's womb, Luke i. 35. In the 32d of Job, the ancients, Job's friends, are spoken of pleading their cause; wise young Elihu brings wiser words and better arguments than those that came to comfort Job. Solomon asked wisdom of God when he was young. Daniel and his companions, those four children as they are called: Dan. i. 17, 18, it is said, 'The Lord filled them with wisdom above all the ancient Chaldeans.' And Timothy, the apostle speaks of his youth, and bids him 'flee youthful lusts;' he was young, yet very knowing, and set over the church of God. Our Lord Jesus at twelve years old puzzled the doctors. In ecclesiastical stories we read of one who at fifteen years of age died with great constancy for religion in the midst of sundry tortures. Ignatius pleads the cause of the bishop when he was but a very youth, but a man powerful in doctrine and of great wisdom; and therefore he saith, he would have them not look to his appearing youth, but to the age of his mind, to his wisdom before God. And he saith, there are many that have nothing to show for their age but wrinkles and grey hairs. So there are many young ones m whom there is an excellent spirit; and in all ages there are instances given of youth of whom it may be said that they are wise beyond their years.

20

For the reasons, why many times young ones may have more wisdom than those that are aged: God doth so—

1. That he might show the freedom and sovereignty of his grace. He is not bound to years, nor to the ordinary course of nature, but can work according to his own pleasure, and give a greater measure of knowledge and understanding to those that are young, and otherwise green, than he will to those that are of great age and more experience in the world. You have this reason rendered: Job xxxii. 7-9, 'I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.' There is the course: 'But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment.' Though all men have reason and a spirit, yet the Spirit of God is a wind that blows where he lists. Those that exceed others in time, may come behind them in grace. He gives a greater measure many times of grace and knowledge, to show his freedom and sovereignty.

2. Sometimes to manifest the power of his grace, both in the person that is endued with it, and the power of his grace upon others. As to the person himself in whom this wisdom is found, when they are young, the Lord doth show he can subdue them by his Spirit, and make their prejudices vanish, enlarge their understanding, and overrule their heart: 1 John ii. 14, 'I write to you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.' In that slippery age, when lusts are boisterous, temptations most violent, and they usually

uncircumspect and headstrong, and give up themselves to an ungoverned license, yet then can God subdue their hearts, and make them stand out against the snares of the devil. And then with respect to others, when by the foolish he will confound the wisdom of the wise, and blast the pride of man, and cast down all conceit in external privileges, and give young ones a more excellent spirit than the aged, as the apostle intimates such a thing, 1 Cor. i. 26, 'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.' And our Lord: Mat. xi. 25, 26, 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' Usually God will do so, when he will punish the unfaithfulness of those that are in public place and office: 'The law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancient.' God will not take the usual way and course, but will give his Spirit and graces of his Spirit to them, and deny it to those that should be builders.

21 Now what use shall we make of this? There may be an abuse of such a point as this, and there may be a very good use.

To prevent the abuse—

1. This is not to be taken so but that there should be reverence shown to the aged, Job xxxii. 4-6. Elihu had waited till Job's friends had spoken, because they were elder than he. It is an abuse of men of a proud persuasion of their own knowledge and learning to despise the aged, especially when they also have a competent measure of the same spirit. The scripture speaks of 'Paul the aged;' certainly there is a reverence due to grey hairs. And it argues a great disorder when the staff of government is broken, and the established order is overturned; when 'a child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient,' Isa. iii. 5, and young men shall peak up to the despising of their elders, Deut. xxviii.

2. This is not to be applied so as to prejudice the general case of consulting with the ancients, which was Rehoboam's sin. Though God sometimes giveth wisdom to young men, yet the usual course is that, Job xxxii. 7, 'I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.' Certainly those that are old they are freer from passions, bettered by use and experience, and long continuance in study, have more advantages to add to their knowledge; therefore usually, though the bodily eyes be dim, the understanding may be most clear and sharp.

Use 2. The use in general is twofold—that young men should not be discouraged nor despised.

1. Not discouraged. We use to say Youth for strength and age for wisdom: but if they apply their hearts to religion and the study of God's will, and with knowledge join practice, they may profit, and so as they may be a means to shame those that are elder, while they come behind them in many gracious endowments. They are not to be discouraged, as if it were too soon for them to

enter into a strict course, or grow eminent therein; for God may glorify himself in their sobriety, temperance, chastity, zeal, courage, and the setting their strong and eager spirits against sin is a mighty honour to God: Ps. viii. 2, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies,' &c. The graces of God in young ones do mightily turn to the praise of his glorious grace, and God is admired in them, and it is an honour and comfort to you, also: Eph. i. 12, 'In Christ before me:' it is a just upbraiding to elder people that lie longer in sin.

2. Nor yet should youth be despised: 1 Tim. iv. 12, 'Let no man despise thy youth.' God's gifts should not be despised in any, nor stir up rancour. God may speak by them as he spoke by Samuel, and to Samuel when he spoke not to old Eli.

Having premised this, let me come to apply it particularly, though briefly. It conduceth then—

1. To the encouragement of youth to betake themselves to the ways of God. Oh, consider! let us begin with God betimes; do not spend your youth in vanity, but in a serious mortified course. This is your sharp and active time, when your spirits are fresh: therefore, if your watch is set right now, you may understand more than the ancients. Give up your hearts to a religious course; let not the devil feast upon the flower of your youth, and God be put off with the fragments and scraps of Satan's table. While you are young take in with God; it is a great honour to God, and it will be an honour and an advantage to you. Mat. xxi. 15, 16, when the children cry 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' and the Pharisees reproved him for it, Christ approves of it, saying, 'Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?' When young ones take kindly, it is a great blessing. Therefore is judgment hanging over this nation, that youth is so degenerated; whereas formerly they were addicted to religion, now they are addicted to all manner of lusts and vanity. Then it would be an honour and comfort to you; the sooner we begin with God, the more we glorify God, and the more praise to God: Eph. i. 12, 'That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.' They that get into Christ above[2] others, they glorify grace above others: Rom. xvi. 7, 'They were in Christ before me.' He that first gets into Christ, he hath the advantage of others; seniority in grace is a preferment, as well as in nature. And then it is a great advantage: Eccles. xii. 1, 'Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.' When we begin betimes with God, we have more opportunity of serving and enjoying God than others have. A man should 'bear the yoke in his youth,' Lam. iii. If the bent of our inclinations were set right in our youth, it would prevent much, and hinder the growth of sin. Though a man cannot plant grace in his heart—that is the Lord's own work—yet it keeps sin in, and prevents inveterate custom, for they will grow upon us; and therefore it makes for the. encouragement of you that they should sooner begin with God.

22

2 Qu. 'before'?—ED.

2. It makes for the encouragement of those that have the education of youth; as masters of families, parents, and the like. Do not say it is too soon for them to learn; no age is too soon for God: 2 Tim. iii. 15, ‘Thou hast from thy infancy learned the scriptures.’ When we suck in religion with our milk, it is a great advantage; those things we keep with us that we learn young: Prov. xxii. 6, ‘Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.’ When the new vessel is seasoned with this precious liquor, it will keep the taste; tender twigs are bent this way when they are as wax, capable of any impression.

Use 3. Caution for young ones. If young men should obtain this benefit, to grow wiser than the ancients, notwithstanding this, yet they should learn to show reverence to the aged, Job xxxii. 4-6; and then to ascribe it to God. Saith he, ver. 8, ‘There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.’ It is not the sharpness of our wit, but the inspiration of his grace; he is the author of all this wisdom that is wrought in us.

Use 4. To humble the aged, that have not made conscience of their time and ways, and therefore are more blockish than many children: Isa. lxv. 20, ‘There shall be no more an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days;’ old men that are ignorant of the mysteries of faith, after they have long sat under the word of God, and had many advantages to improve their youth: Heb. v. 12, ‘When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.’ In this sense God is said to take away the understanding of the aged; that is, by a just judgment for their unfruitfulness and unprofitableness under the means of grace. They that are much younger than you are wise in comparison of you, when they excel you for ripeness in wisdom, for solidness and settledness in manners, in a course of godliness. Those old men that draw near to the grave before they have considered either the end wherefore they came into the world, or the state into which they shall be translated when they go out of it, those are children of one hundred years old, that have nothing to reckon age by, but wrinkles and grey hairs.

23

Doct. 3. That the way to increase in spiritual understanding is to be studious in practical holiness.

The word, that will give you understanding, will keep you out of all snares, sufficiently direct you to true happiness. But how shall we get it? Refer it to practice; practise what you know, and you shall know more: it must needs be so:—

1. Because these are such as have God’s promise: 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.’ They that make conscience of their ways, season their course in the fear of God, that take God’s direction with them, God will tell them, they shall know what doctrine is of God.

2. They have a greater clearness of mind and understanding, therefore must needs discern holy things. Why? Because they are freed from the clouds of lust and passion, which do insensibly blind

and make them stay in generals: Mat. v. 8, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ Saith Nazianzen, Where there is purity there is brightness; where there is a pure heart, there is a great deal more clearness in the understanding. Reason and fancy are dark, unless a man have a command over his passions and affections; over his passions, of anger, fear, grief; and over his affections, of love and joy, and appetite towards sensual delights; unless he be able to govern these things, he will never truly discern the mind of God for the seasoning his course in living a holy life, That of the apostle is notable, 2 Peter i. 5, ‘Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance.’ Unless they be able to govern their affections in the use of worldly delights, pleasures, and profits, they will never have this practical knowledge; and therefore the only way to know divine things, as Nazianzen well observes, is conscientiously to keep the commandments of God.’ If you would know the will of God, do not spend your time in heaping up notions, but framing your heart to obedience, governing your affections by the fear of God, and suiting your hearts to the word of God. Alas! those that seek knowledge out of ambition, curiosity, and vain ostentation, and lie under the power of vile affections, get but very little true spiritual light; they may have the understanding of teachers, but not the understanding to season them, and guide them in their communion with God.

3. The more we practise, the more religion is exemplified and made sensible, so that we come to understand more of the sweetness of it; and, on the other hand, the more of difficulty is in it when there is nothing but bare notions and naked apprehensions. There we have a double advantage, an exact rule, and more experience of the sweetness of religion: Prov. iii. 17, ‘All her ways are ways of pleasantness.’ When we practise what we know, then we come to know the sweetness of entertaining communion with the Lord; and they know more of the difficulty of religion, they know where their hearts are more averse, and more in danger: whereas others that soar aloft in notions, and idle and lofty speculations, have not this experience.

4. They that practise, study things with more affection than others, mightily help the understanding. The more piety and zeal any man hath, the more will the Lord bless his studies. Paul profited in the Jewish religion above many of his equals. Why? Gal. i. 14, ‘Being more exceedingly zealous of the tradition of my fathers.’ A man that hath a zeal in anything will profit more than others; so he that hath a zeal for the things of God profits above others. A blunt iron, if red hot, will pierce through an inch board sooner than a cold tool, though never so sharp; so those that have blunt parts in comparison of others, yet if they have zeal and good affections, they will pierce deep into the mysteries of religion; they that have sharper parts, want the fire of zeal.

5. The more fruitful any grace is, the more doth it abound with us; and therefore when your knowledge is fruitful you will find it increased by laying out your talents: Col. i. 10, ‘Be fruitful in every good work, always increasing in the knowledge of God.’ First he presseth knowledge in order to practice, then he presseth practice in order to knowledge. Saving knowledge is the cause of practice, and it is the effect of it.

Use 1. Learn how much practice exceeds speculation, and whereby a man's understanding is to be valued. Who is to be accounted a spiritual understanding man? Not he that hath finer notions, but he that is most skilful, and 'ready to every good work.' Do not content yourselves with a few fine opinions well dressed and curiously set forth, for all this is nothing to practice. It must needs be so, for practice is the end of knowledge. Now the end is always more worthy than the means; all the means have their loveliness from their end, and all the means have their order and measure from their end; that is, we must so use the means that we may come to such an end. Well, then, knowledge is worthy for practice sake, and only to be sought after in order to practice; not to soar aloft, but we are to be wise to sobriety; nor as wanton fancies, such as affect conceits of wit, and empty frothy notions; all should be suited to practice.

Use 2. Again, I might apply it, how ill they do that sever knowledge and a good conscience. When the age grew more knowing they were less moral in Seneca's time; as it was so with them, so it is with Christianity many times. It was the saying of one, When I compare former times with ours, times of ignorance, darkness, superstition, they had more zeal, we have more light; where there was less knowledge there was more practice. Now we have notions like a carbuncle, which seems at a distance to be all fire, though it is quite cold; so we seem to have high floating notions concerning godliness; the head is stored with these, but hearts empty of grace, hands idle, less circumspect, more careless and loose, fruitless in good works. It shows us the cause why many, that have great dexterity in wit and excellent gifts in other things, yet are very stupid and blockish in the things o God. There is now a decay of gifts and knowledge. Why? Because professors do riot refer all to practice; and then ungodliness and less practice provokes the Lord to withdraw the light. God punished the heathens with spiritual blindness, because they did not improve their knowledge; and we may justly fear it may prove so with us, who are all head, little heart; much in speculations, little, very little in practical holiness.

25

SERMON CVII.

I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.—VER. 101.

THE great work of a fast-day is to put away the evil of our doings; as when a fire is kindled in a house, and begins to rage and burn fiercer, it concerns those that would stop the fury of it to remove the combustible matter. The fire of God's wrath hath been kindled amongst us, and is not yet quenched. I suppose none of you doubt your business is to remove the combustible matter, to put away your sins; this scripture will be of some use to you to that purpose.

David had spoken of that wisdom which he had got by the word of God above enemies, teachers, ancients. It was not such a wisdom as consisted in speculation, but practice; not only such as did

enable him to talk high, and set his tongue awork. No; it was such as did enable him to do things worthy of God, as did set his feet awork. Our feet are slow and heavy in God's ways, but very swift to that which is evil; and therefore herein did David's wisdom consist, to bridle himself, to refrain his feet, that he might not run headlong into all manner of evil; and not only so, but that he might be also more ready to that which is good: 'I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.' Where—

1. We have David's practice, *I have refrained my feet from every evil way*.

2. His end or motive, *that I might keep thy word*; that he might be exact and punctual with God in a course of obedience.

1. In his practice. You may note the seriousness of it, 'I refrained my feet.' By the feet are meant the affections: Eccles. v. 1, 'Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God.' Our affections, which are the vigorous bent of the soul, do engage us to practise, therefore fitly resembled by the feet, by which we walk to any place that we do desire, so that 'I refrained my feet;' the meaning is, I keep a close and strict hand over my affections, that they might not lead me to sin. Then you may note the extent of it. He doth not only say, 'I refrained from evil,' but universally, 'from every evil way.' But how could David say this in truth of heart, because of his offence in the matter of Uriah? Ans. This was the usual frame and temper of his soul, and the course of his life; and such kind of assertions concerning the saints are to be interpreted *voce*[3]*et conatu, licet non semper eventu*. This was his errand and drift, his purpose and endeavour, his usual course, though he had his failings.

26

2. What was his motive and end in this? 'That I might keep thy word;' that I might be exact and punctual with God in a course of obedience, and adhere to his word uniformly, universally, impartially.

Doct. He that would keep the word must refrain his feet; that is, stand at a great distance in heart and practice from all sin.

For the illustration of the point observe—

1. A Christian must do both; he must stand at a distance from sin, and he must keep the word. There is a negative and an affirmative part in every commandment, precepts and prohibitions; we need both the bridle and the spur; the bridle, to refrain the feet from sin; and the spur, to quicken us to walk closely with God, according to the direction of his holy word. A simple abstinence from sin, without exercising ourselves unto godliness, will not serve the turn: Ps. xxxiv. 15, 'Depart from evil, and do good.' So Ps. xxxvii. 27. There is a double principle in every renewed man, flesh and

3 Qu. '*voto*'?—ED.

spirit, Gal. v. 17; and his work is to restrain the one, to keep in the flesh that would fain break out, and range abroad in unseemly actions; and to encourage and put forth the other, the spirit in its necessary operation, with vigour and life. There is a double estate laid before us, heaven and hell; therefore we are not only to forbear sin, which is walking to hell, but we must walk worthy of God in all well-pleasing, and be fruitful in good works, which is our way to heaven, Eph. ii. 10, 'Forbearing evil, and doing good.' The Pharisee's religion ran upon negatives: 'I am not an adulterer, an extortioner,' &c., Luke xviii. 11. Many are not vicious rather than godly, they keep themselves in a middle lukewarm estate; and though they be not defiled with foul sins, yet do not set themselves seriously to serve the Lord.

2. Both must be done with the whole man, or regarded both in heart and practice. It is not enough to leave off evil, but to hate it, nor to do good, but we must do it with a love and an affection. Com pare three places: Isa. i. 16, 'Cease to do evil, learn to do well;' Amos v. 15, 'Hate the evil, love the good.' And it is expressed with a further emphasis, Rom. xii. 9, 'Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.' These places compared together will show that the outward act is not only to be regarded, but the frame of the heart. There should not only be an abstinence from the act of sin, but mortifying of the love of it; for there are many that outwardly forbear sin, but yet do not inwardly hate it. On the other side, we are not only to do good, but there must be a love to good; for many may externally do good when the heart abhors it. And on. the other side, if there be a love to good, God passeth by many failings; it should not be a bare hatred, or a cold love, but such as hath life and vehemency in it, abhorring that which is evil, and cleaving to that which is good—the soul of Jonathan cleaved to David—it must be a knitting love. There is Haman's refraining, Esther v. 10, and David's refraining. It is said Haman refrained himself, when his heart boiled with rancour and malice against Mordecai; and there is David's refraining in the text, 'I refrained my heart from every evil way.' His heart is engaged, when the heart cleaves to him, not easily to separate.

27

3. Both are regarded, and both with the whole man. Now the one is required in order to the other; we must refrain from evil that we may do good, and do good that we may refrain from evil; mortification and vivification do mutually help each other. The more lively grace is the more sin droopeth, the more lively sin is the more is the new nature oppressed. Without refraining our feet from evil there is no doing of good, for vivification is increased according to the degree of mortification: 1 Peter ii. 24, 'That we, being dead to sin, might be alive to righteousness.' As long as we are alive to sin, active and delighting in the commission thereof, we are dead to righteousness. But now, as the love and life of sin is weakened in our hearts, so is grace introduced, and we are quickened and carried on with more strength in holy duties; the strength and fervour of the soul is diverted, and runs in another channel; the same affections that are carried out to sin, the same current and stream of soul that ran out towards our selves, then is carried in a way of grace, the same affections, but carried out to other objects. And so on the other side, wherever there is an affection to good, there will be a cordial detestation to evil; the affection to the one will awaken and increase the hatred of the other; for still the soul draws that way which our affections carry them.

4. As the one must be done in order to the other, so our care in the first place must be to avoid evil, or to stand at a distance from every known sin. He begins with that as necessary to the other; first, 'I refrained my feet,' and then, 'that I might keep thy law;' he was to be more exact in a course of obedience. In planting of grace God keeps this method, he roots up the weeds, and then plants us wholly with a right seed, and so far as we are active under God in the work, we first 'put off the old man with his deceitful lusts,' and then, 'put on the new man,' Eph. iv. 22. We put off the rags of sin before we put on the garments of salvation. The plants of righteousness will not thrive in an unhumbled, proud, impenitent heart; therefore God's first work is the destruction of sin, and then the introduction of grace. The heart is purified for faith, as well as purified by faith. First, It must be purified for faith, that being the work of the Spirit of God; for John v. 44, 'How can ye believe that seek honour one of another?' As long as any fleshly lust remains unmortified, be it ambition, vain glory, affecting honour, reputation, esteem in the world, the heart is not purified. Secondly, The heart is purified by faith, Acts xv. 9; more and more this corruption is wrought out. And then the heart is purified for fear: 'I will give a new heart,' Jer. xxxii. 40. And then purified by fear, as Job feared God, Job i. 1. So the heart is purified for love and by love; for love: Deut. xxx. 6, 'And the Lord will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul.' A believer is to be considered in the act of conversion and in the state of conversion; in the act of conversion, so first we turn from evil by a sound remorse: true grace is first planted, first purified for grace, then purified by grace: Job feared God, then eschewed evil. Preparing grace is implanted in us, then it hath an exercise upon us for the weakening of sin more and more.

28

5. Keeping at a distance from evil; it must be as it is evil and contrary to the holy nature and will of God. I observe this, because David did not refrain his feet from evil upon any foreign and accidental reasons, for fear of men, or any sinister and by respect, but merely out of tender love and respect to the law of God, to testify his obedience to him: 'I refrained my feet from every evil way.' And what was his motive? 'That I might keep thy word.' A child of God hates sin, as it is contrary to his drift and purpose. If we do not love good for good's sake, it is not good we love, but some other thing that cleaves to it, the temporal benefit that we think will come thereby. So if we do not hate evil as evil, but because of the loss and detriment that attends the practice of it, it is not sin that we hate, but inconveniences. As Austin saith of the eternal reward, There are many *non peccare metuunt, sed ardere*—they are not afraid to sin, but are afraid to be damned. So a natural conscience may upon foreign and accidental reasons stand aloof from sin, as a dog may forbear a morsel for fear of the cudgel; convinced men may forbear sin out of horror of conscience, and not out of any serious dislike of heart against it. Briefly, there is custom, education, penalty of law, infamy, shame of the world, difficulty of compassing sin, shame in practising. These are but accidental reasons, these may make us refrain, they may breed a casual dislike, but not a natural hatred; for a gracious refraining must be upon a religious reason. David gives an account, not only

of his practice, but his motive: ‘I refrained my feet from every evil way.’ And why? ‘That I might keep thy word.’

6. This refraining must be from every sinful course. The grace of justification will teach this, and the grace of sanctification; the grace of justification, that pardoneth all sin, will teach us to deny all, Titus ii. 12; and the grace of sanctification will teach us to deny not one, but all, for that introduceth a settled hatred against sin in the soul. Now hatred is πρὸς τὰ γένη, to the whole kind; he that hates one sin as sin, hates all sin, as Haman thought scorn to lay his hands upon Mordecai alone, but sought to destroy all the seed of the Jews, Esther iii. 6. So this hatred is universally carried out against all sin. Indeed they do not mortify any sin that do not mortify every sin; one lust remaining unmortified keeps the devil’s interest afoot in the soul. Pharaoh, when the Israelites would have gone, would fain have a pawn of their return, their flocks, their herds, or their children, that they might be sure to come back again. So Satan, if a man be touched in conscience, and will bethink himself, and look after religion, if he can get but a pawn, a corner of the heart, one sin, he knows his interest is still kept. Herod did many things, but he had his Herodias, and that held him fast and sure to Satan. The young man had a sense of eternal life upon him, Mat. xix. 22, and he did many things, ‘All these have I kept from my youth,’ but he was worldly. There are certain tender parts in the soul that are loath to be touched; but now if we would be sincere with God, we must refrain from every evil way. Any one man entertained besides the husband, it breaks the marriage covenant; any one sin allowed in the soul, be it never so small, it. forfeits our privileges by grace.

29

But now, because particulars are more effective, and do strike upon the soul with the more smart blow than generals, briefly consider:—

1. We must refrain from every evil way; not only notorious sins, but those that are plausible and of more reputation in the world, that are not so rank in the nostrils of men, and expose us to such disgrace and dishonour. There are open sins that are found hateful, that have a turpitude in them, and bring shame: Gal. v. 19, ἔργα τῆς σαρκὸς, ‘the works of the flesh are manifest;’ such as murder, adultery, gross oppression, these are rank weeds of an ill savour, that stink in nature’s nostrils, and are accompanied with shame and disgrace. To refrain from these is little thanks, Luke xviii. 11. The Pharisee wipes his hand of these, ‘I am not an adulterer,’ &c. Ay! but he was proud, censorious, and covetous. There are pride, censoriousness, covetousness, and worldliness, cloaked sins that are not of such disgrace in the world, all these should be hated by you. Many times those sins that are *majoris infamiae*, of greater infamy, are not always *majoris reatus*, they do not leave the greatest guilt upon you. Un belief is not infamous in the world, neglect of the gospel of grace, want of love to Christ Jesus, these are great sins: and therefore you must not only abstain from notorious sins, but those which are more plausible, and are not of such ill fame in the world.

2. You must abstain from sins outward and inward, Isa. lv. 7. The sinner must not only forsake his way, but his thought; by his way is meant his outward course and practice, but he must make conscience of his thoughts, and secret workings of heart. Practices may be over ruled by by-ends, but thoughts and desires, these are the genuine immediate motions and issues of the soul, that do come immediately out of the fountain, and are restrained only by grace.

3. Sins profitable and pleasant, as well as those that have no such allurement and blandishment in them. There are many sins that have nothing of allurement in them, that are entertained only upon sin's account and evil custom, as rash swearing, blasphemy, malice and the like; but there other sins that allure and entice the soul by the promise of profit and pleasure, those two bastard goods that do make us often quit the good of honesty and duty. Now, you are to 'deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts,' Titus ii. 12; worldly lusts, whatever would endanger the soul, all inordinate inclinations that carry you out to these things of pleasing the flesh and gratifying worldly interests.

4. In refraining the feet from every evil way, that is, from sins against either table, Rom. i. 18. Mark, God hath owned both tables, not only revealed his wrath against ungodliness, breaches of the first table; but against unrighteousness, breaches of the second table. Many indeed will not be unjust, intemperate, unkind to their neighbours; ay! but they express no affection to God by worshipping him in their hearts, by faith, fear, and love, or in their houses by constant prayer morning and evening, and secret and familiar in closet converses with God; they are guilty of ungodliness though not of unrighteousness. And there are many that would be much in worship, in praying, fasting, and hearing, but they forget their neighbours; they are unrighteous, they do not make conscience in their dealings with men, and in the duties of their relations are unfaithful, many times to the great dishonour of God; they do things heathens would boggle at.

30

5. There are great sins and small sins. Many make not conscience of small offences, count these venial. Certainly he that would have a tender regard to God's law, no sin should seem little to him that is an offence to the great God. It is Satan's custom by small sins to draw us to greater, as the little sticks do set the great ones on fire, and a wisp of straw enkindles a block of wood; and by small sins we are enticed by Satan. The least sin allowed of is of a deadly and dangerous consequence: Mat. v. 19, 'Whosoever shall break the least of these commandments, and teach men so.' It is treason to coin a penny as well as a pound. To break the least of God's commandments, to make no conscience of them, because it is a small thing, argues a naughty heart. Bodkins may wound and stab as well as swords. Look, as we read of the prophet, he was devoured of lions, so we read of Herod, he was eaten up by lice. Small sins may be a very great mischief to the soul. Little sins are often the mother of great sins, and the grandmother of great punishments and of plagues from God; and therefore these lesser sins we must refrain from: 'I kept myself from every evil way.'

6. We must not commit anything that is evil out of a good intention, if it be an evil, but stand at a distance from it. Do not turn aside to any crooked path upon any pretence soever. Some have

a good action but a bad aim. Now these do, as it were, make God serve the devil; they do the action which God hath required, but their aim is that which gratifies Satan. There are others that have a good aim but a bad action. These make the devil serve God, as if God could not provide for his own glory well enough without their sin. Therefore, if it be an evil way, refrain it, though you think you may bring good out of it. Saul would be offering sacrifice, an unwarrantable action for him to invade the priestly office, 1 Sam. xiii. 13, 14, He was loath to go to battle until he had sacrificed, and would not tarry till Samuel came. What then? See what Samuel saith, 'Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God which he commanded thee.' Here was a good aim, but a bad action, and you see how severe judgment fell upon him. I say, he forfeited his kingdom by doing an undue action, though for a good end. Uzzah he put forth his hand to stay the ark, which was an undue circumstance; he had a good aim in it, that the ark of God might not be shaken, that it might not fall and be shattered in pieces, and the mysteries of their religion prostituted: 2 Sam. vi. 7, 'And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error, and he died.' Many think to bear out themselves by good intentions that are drawn into an evil way; they hope to bring things to a better pass. It is dangerous to step out of God's way; God's ends can best be brought about by God's way. The judgments of the Lord upon these nations have been mainly for unwarrantable actions upon good intentions; and though usually we have committed one sin to help another, yet there hath been a pretence of a good intention, a good aim.

7. We are not only to avoid such sins as seem to lie remote from our temper and course of our business and interest, but our own special sins; those sins which suit better with our condition, constitution, calling, employment: Ps. xviii. 23, 'I was upright before thee, and kept myself from mine iniquity.' Every man hath his iniquity; as every man hath his particular temper, so he hath his particular sins, and if he belong to God he hath his particular graces. The saints have their particular graces; Timothy for abstinence and temperance, Job for patience, Abraham for faith, therefore styled the father of the faithful; Moses was eminent for meekness. So there are particular sins; men are passionate, worldly, voluptuous, ambitious, and as the channel is cut, so corrupt nature finds a vent and passage: Isa. liii. 6, 'All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way.' We are all out of the way, but every man hath a particular way of sin. Look, as in the natural body, every man hath all the faculties of a man, yet some this faculty more vigorous and lively than other, some for memory, judgment, invention, quickness of wit, so it is as to particular sins. Now these should be most resisted and most opposed by us. The scripture requires of us, Mat. v. 19, 'To cut off our right hand, and pluck out our right eye;' these, if they be not watched, will run into scandal; our particular sins make us dishonour God, dishonour our profession, and become a reproach to the gospel. It is notable, when our Saviour dissuaded from giving scandal, Mat. xviii. 8, 9, he revives those sentences of cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye. These sins will make you a dishonour to the gospel if you do not watch over them.

8. There are the sins of the times wherein we live, *vitium seculi*. Indeed it is hard to keep our ground in a great flood; when a stream is strong it is ready to carry us away; but he that would be punctual with God should keep from the sins of the times. Peter dissembled with the Jews, and the godly Jews fell a-dissembling of their religion, insomuch that Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation, Gal. ii. 13. When sin seems to be authorised by a general practice, it concerns you to stand at a distance, to have nothing to do there. Noah was an upright man, feared God, and served him in a corrupt age, Gen. vi. 9. They are dead fishes that are carried away with the stream. We are not to walk κατὰ τὴν αἰῶνα, 'according to the course of this world,' Eph. ii. 2, but 'to walk according to the rule,' Gal. vi. 16. In many ages there are certain sins, until light disprove them, and the Lord clears up his will, that men run into, and are carried away by violence of the stream, while the stream runs that way in their age. But this will be no excuse, you are to be upright, and not carried away by *vitium seculi*, the evil way of the times.

9. We are not only to refrain our feet from evil, but from all the occasions and appearances of evil; and not to stand so much as within the scent of a temptation; as crows and ravens, when they are beaten away from the carrion, will stand within the scent. We are to stand at a great distance from all that seems to tend to sin, not only from evil, but the appearance of it, 1 Thes. v. 22. Sin should be so hateful to us, that the very picture of it should be abhorred. Many times some sins are the occasion of others, as covetousness is occasioned by distrust there certainly we are to avoid occasions as well as sins themselves. Ay! but if the thing be lawful, and we know our weakness, we should not easily ride into the devil's quarters, and run into the mouth of temptation. Look, as Solomon in that particular sin adviseth the young man, Prov. v. 8, 'Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house.' He would not have the young man venture upon the occasion. And God's strictness to the Nazarite is very notable, Num. vi. 3, 4, as he was to drink no wine or strong drink, so no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, nor drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried; and afterwards he was not so much as to eat either the husk or kernel of the grape. Thus God would have us stand at a distance. This was a typical figure, to show at how great a distance we should stand from sin, and refrain ourselves from all evil; as the apostle saith, 'Hate the garments spotted with the flesh,' Jude 23, an allusion to those that touched an unclean thing. Bushing upon snares and occasions of evil, we hazard the surprisal of our souls. As Caesar said of his wife, *Oportet Caesaris uxorem non solum castam esse, &c.*—she should not only be chaste, but free from all suspicion; so God will have his people to be void of suspicion, and to be clear and innocent from all kind of transgressions. Thus you see how we are to refrain from every evil way.

32

The reasons of this are two—(1.) Because sins will weaken our graces; (2.) They will weaken our comfort; both which are necessary to the keeping of God's law. Therefore, if we would keep the law, and be punctual and close with God in a course of obedience, we must stand at a great distance in heart and practice from all sin.

1. Sins will weaken our graces. There are several graces necessary to the keeping of God's law, as faith, fear, love, hope. You know, at conversion God puts a vital principle into us, that is diversified and called by these several names. These graces are planted in us as principles of operation, and as these decay, our acts of obedience will be more or less; a sickly faith can produce but weak operations; as if the root wither and decay, the branches will not long flourish. So when our fear and reverence of God is lessened, as it is by every act of sin, the spiritual life will not be carried on with that exactness and care. So when our love waxeth cold, we will not be so diligent and serious, for these are the principles of operations, Rev. iii. 3. When they left their first love, they left their first works. If there be a decay and diminution of our graces, then there will be an intercession of acts and operations; these graces will suffer a shrewd loss; they are qualities, and therefore capable of increase and remission, being more or less. As love may wax cold, Mat. xxiv. 26; fear may be greater or less; so faith; though there be some seed of grace, remains to preserve the interest of the soul, yet things may be ready to die and faint. How do they decay? By sins. Gal. v. 17. These things are contrary—flesh and spirit; that is, always warring upon one another and weakening one another; and here lies the Christian's advantage, to observe which is up and which is down. By every act of deliberate sin the flesh is strengthened and grace weakened; these are up and down in a renewed heart; therefore it is good to see which prevails, that you may not weaken your strength. If you gratify the flesh, you hearten your enemy, and strengthen your clog, and so grace languisheth.

33

2. It weakens our comfort. Comfort is necessary to make us lively and cheerful in God's service. The Lord knows we drive on heavily when we have not that peace of conscience, serenity of mind, and want the comforts of God's Spirit. The more our hearts are enlarged the more we run the way of God's commandments, Ps. cxix. 32. What is an enlarged heart? Chiefly by joy and comfort; it is joy that enlargeth the heart. Now sin weakens this joy, this comfort which is our strength. When Adam sinned, his soul was filled with horror, Gen. iii. 10; and David, when he had been tampering with sin, lost his comfort: Ps. li. 8, 'Make me to hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice;' and ver. 12, 'Restore to me the joy of thy salvation.' He that pricks himself with a needle or sharp thing must needs feel pain; so whosoever gives way to sin. certainly will have trouble of soul, confusion, grief, fear, sorrow, and loseth his sense of salvation for a time, and sins away his peace. Always the more exact our walking, the more is our peace of conscience: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience,' &c. Well, then, if we would be punctual with God, we see how much it concerns us to stand at a distance from every evil way.

Use 1. To show how far they are from a course of obedience that live under a full power of their sins. Never think you seek after that which is good while your evil scent remains with you, and your former evils are in life and strength to this very day. All those that wallow in brutish sins of drunkenness and adultery, so those that are guilty of common swearing, Sabbath-breaking, and such like gross sins, these have good thoughts of themselves, they have sincerity towards God; but such have a spot that is not the spot of God's people. Twice there is a caution interposed that such

should not be deceived, 1 Cor. vi. 9; Eph. vi. 6. You will say, Where lies the danger of any deceit? The worst are apt to deceive their own hearts. There is a world of these deceivings in the hearts of men; the best of saints have fallen into as great sins. They think these are but petty slips and human infirmities, and God's patience will suffer all; grace will pardon all at length, and no man is perfect; therefore they have some hopes to even those that are drunkards, adulterers, and abusers of themselves with man kind; though their sins be as Sodom, those that fall into the grossest sins; they are apt to be deceived. Be not deceived; these things are not consistent with grace.

2. It shows how far they are from the temper of God's children that are not punctual with God in a course of obedience, that hate one kind of evil, not another. Many hate prodigality, yet not covetousness; hate covetousness, and are given up to sensuality; hate an epicure, and such a one as squanders away his estate, think as evil of him as can be, but not hard hearts, such as shut up their bowels, and do no good in their places j and some hate sensuality, but not pride, but cherish that; there is some sweet bit under his tongue, as Zophar speaks, Job xx. 12. Christians! though we can subdue no sin as we should, yet we are to resist every sin, and especially to bend all the force and strength of your souls against your sins, that sin which is most apt to prevail with you: this is a sign of uprightness, Ps. xviii. 23. And therefore, if you would know whether you have given up yourselves to walk with God, to keep his word, what labouring hath there been with your own hearts? what pains have you taken to set against your own sins? are you most jealous of it, pray most against it, often turn the edge of the word upon it? are you observing the decays, or do you keep it under the tongue? Reason with yourselves upon the world to come; is it reserved corruption or remaining corruption? Have you never been dealing with your hearts to suppress such a corrupt inclination as you have been often foiled with?

34

Use 2. To press those that would be exact with God, to stand at a distance in heart and practice from every known sin; whatever urging and solicitations you have within yourselves, though it would break out, yet have you refrained. To this end let me commend two graces and two duties. The two graces are love to God and his word, and fear to God and his word.

For the graces:—

1. A love to God, a love to the word of God. A love to God: Ps. xcvii. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.' It is as natural and as kindly to the new nature to hate the chiefest evil, as it is to love the chiefest good. Do you talk of love and communion with God, and never exercise yourselves in refraining your feet from every evil way? Certainly if you have any love to God, you will hate that which God hates; for *idem velle et nolle*, to will and nill the same things, that is true friendship; therefore if God be your friend, you will hate as he hates, that which makes a breach between you and God, and makes you grow shy of God, and lose your familiarity with him. As love to God, so love to his word: Ps. cxix. 113, 'I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.' Certainly if a man hath a love to the law, he will not only hate sin in practice, but vain thoughts, what tends to breaking the law in his thoughts, any lesser contrariety, contradiction, or defiance of God's law; for our

hatred is engaged by love. Well, get this love, set it a-work, improve it by reason (for every affection is fed by discourses of the mind). All sins are set a-work by some discourse, so graces are set a-work by discoursings of our minds. Now set this love a-work. Oh! shall I, that have tasted so much of the love of God, or that do pretend to love God and Christ, and enjoy communion with him, yield to follow sin? Ezra ix. 13, 'What I after such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandment?' When God hath delivered us, not only out of Babylon, but, you may say, out of hell, how should we set love a-work? The great instance of God's love was the giving his Son: 1 John iv. 9, 10, 'Herein is love,' &c. Now, then, if God hate and resist sin, reason and argue from this love: What! shall God give his Son for me, and I not spare a lust for God? When God did not stand upon his Son, that was so dear and precious to him, shall I stand upon my sin? What! shall Christ die for me, to ransom me from hell? is this my kindness to my friend? Cyprian brings in Satan pleading thus, as vaunting against Christ: I never spilt one drop of blood, my back was never mangled with whips and scourges, I never had a heaven to bestow upon them; yet among all thy beneficiaries, show me any so busy, painful, diligent, exact in thy service, as these are in mine. Thou hast shed thy blood, and endured a painful and an accursed death for them; yet they are not so dutiful to thee as to me. You see whereto this tends; and shall Christ do so much for us, and we not deny our lusts for him? Surely if we have any sense of the love of Christ Jesus, it will work this hatred, this abhorrency and refraining ourselves from every evil way. Thus set love a-work.

35

2. Another grace is a fear of God and his word. A fear of God: Prov. viii. 13, 'The fear of the Lord is to depart from evil;' Job i. 1, 'Job feared God, and eschewed evil.' Surely a fear of God will make you refrain yourselves from every evil way. And not only so, but a fear of his word, that is useful: Prov. xiii. 12, 'He that feareth a commandment shall be rewarded.' It is not said he that fears a judgment, but he that fears a commandment. If the word stands in his way, it is more than if all the inconveniences in the world stand in his way. This also should be improved by holy reasoning and discourse. You may reason as Joseph: The Lord seeth me, and 'how can I do this wickedness and sin against God?' Gen. xxxix. 9. Shall I break the Lord's laws before his face? What! when my heavenly father hath forbidden me? The sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab, Jer. xxxiv. 5, 6, they were afraid to drink wine when the prophet brought pots before them. No, we dare not; our father hath commanded us the contrary. Their father was dead, and could not take cognisance of their actions, to call them to account for breaking the rule of the institution; but there was an awe upon them. But our Father's eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth. Therefore when you are tempted to sin and folly, say, I dare not; God hath commanded me in his word to the contrary. Set fear a-work; here is a commandment stands in my way; the great God he sees all things, and will one day call us to an account.

The two duties into which these graces do run and issue themselves are watchfulness and resistance. Watchfulness; we are poor creatures, in the midst of snares, very easily may miscarry, partly through our constitution; there is flesh as well as spirit, and the flesh doth always stir, and not lie idle. Old sins, that seemed to be laid asleep, may easily waken again. The devil suits the bait

to the season and affections we are under, as angels furnish their hook with a proper bait. Oh! saith Bernard, here are fears, there snares; that which pleases is apt to tempt me, that which frightens is apt to terrify me. What should a poor creature do? Be watchful, stand upon your guard, that you be not surprised by the craft of Satan, that you may not swallow the hook when he sets the bait to your appetite. And then powerful resistance of evil, that sin may not prevail, and we more and more drawn off from God. Do not yield a little; smaller sins make way for greater; when the gap is once open, it is wider and wider; if sin be not stifled at first, it will increase.

SERMON CVIII.

I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.—VER. 102.

IN the former verse he had spoken of his vigilancy against evil, as the result of that wisdom which he got by the word; now he speaketh of his constant adherence to God's direction. Here you may take notice of two things—(1.) David's exactness and constancy in obedience, *I have not departed from thy judgments*. (2.) The reason of it, *for thou hast taught me*.

Branch 1. By *misphalim, judgments*, is meant God's law, for thereby he will judge the world. And the word *departed not* intimateth both his exactness and constancy; his exactness, that he did not go an hair's-breadth from his direction: Deut. v. 32, 'Ye shall observe to do what the Lord your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.' And his constancy is employed in it; for then we are said to depart from God and his law when we fall off from him in judgment and practice, Jer. xxxii. 40.

Branch 2. God's institution and continual instincts. The Septuagint, ἐνομοθέτησάς με; and thence the vulgar, *Legem posuisti mihi*—thou hast given me that law; and so the reason would be drawn from God's authority; but rather it is meant of his internal illumination and constant direction. Observe—

1. A man that would show love to the word must show it by a constant and exact adherence to the directions thereof, whatever temptations he meet with to the contrary. David produceth this as one evidence of that affection in the first verse of this section or part: 'Oh, how I love thy law!' I shall show you—

1. What temptations there are to the contrary.

2. What reason there is to be exact and constant. First, What temptations to the contrary.

1. From the natural instability of our own hearts; nothing is so changeable as man. We have certain heats for the present, but we soon cool again; and when temptations arise, are carried off from God, and that exactness and care that we were wont to show in our obedience to him. What was said of Reuben is true of every man in some degree, Gen. xlix. 4, 'Unstable as water.' It is carried hither and thither, in various and uncertain motions. So are we up and down, off and on, ebbing and flowing, not steadfast in any good frame; some times seen to have strong motions towards God and holiness, but anon grow cold and careless, or as a bird is now upon the top of a tree, by and by upon the under branches, and then upon the ground. Such a different posture or spirit may every one observe in himself, and some times in the same duty. God is always the same, and so are his ways; they have the same loveliness which they had before, but we are not; always the same. The rock standeth where it did, but the waters flow to and again. The least blast of a temptation maketh us break off our course. Now this natural levity of spirit is a great hindrance to us. We do not always see with the same eyes, nor have we the same degree of affection. 'You did run well, who hindered you?' Gal. v. 7. There may be a ready forwardness, and yet a great defection afterwards. This uncertainty is not only at first, before, we are settled by grace, or have any sound acquaintance with God's ways. Then it is most, James i. 8. But after conversion it remaineth with us in part. Those measures of affection and zeal which we once obtained are not constant with us, but suffer some notable decay, and our edge is often taken off and blunted. Especially our first love is not of long standing, and our after-carriage not answerable to our promising beginnings. Now, there is no satisfying reason for this change, why we should make a halt, and grow remiss and lag in the profession of godliness, and leave off our first works; nothing but our changeableness of spirit.

37

2. From the furious oppositions and malice of Satan and his instruments.

[1.] Satan pursueth after men that would cleave to God's ways, as Pharaoh did after the Israelites; either to bring them back again, or to weary them and vex them, and make their present course uncomfortable to them. Now, the violent assault of multiplied temptations is apt to make us stagger and depart from that good course that we have propounded to ourselves; as the Israelites were running back to Egypt because of the inconveniences of the wilderness. But it should not be so; a Christian should stand his ground, 'Whom resist, steadfast in the faith; knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world,' 1 Peter v. 9. They that make conscience of their duty, and are most set to serve and honour God, must reckon upon the hottest battle, and sorest conflict from Satan, to hinder or discourage them therein: he watcheth all advantages, and is still in action against them. Now this should not shake us, or loosen our adherence to the truths of the gospel; for so it is with every one that goeth to heaven: he must be watching, praying, striving. Yielding is not the way to be quiet, but resisting; if you yield to him in the least, he will carry you farther and farther, till he hath left thee under a stupefied or terrified conscience: stupefied till thou hast lost all thy tenderness. A stone at the top of a hill, when it beginneth to roll down, ceaseth not till it come to the bottom. Thou thinkest it is but yielding a little, and so by

degrees art carried on, till thou hast sinned away all thy profession, and all principles of conscience, by the secret witchery of his temptations: and of the other side, terrified, till thy peace, comfort, and sweet sense of God's love be gone; and thou brought under the black horrors of a dreadful despair. Therefore a stout and peremptory resistance is the only means of safety. Consider, your case is not singular, your lot is no harder than the rest of God's children therefore do not depart from God.

[2.] Satan's instruments may rage against us, and yet we must not depart: Ps. xliv. 17, 18, 'All this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant: our heart is not turned back, neither hath our steps declined from thy way.' All this! What? Scorn, disgrace, bloody, cruel, reproved, maligned, butchered, yet steadfast with God in the profession of the faith. Hazards and troubles are no excuse; this is but a time to show our love to God, our duty to God is the same still.

3. From the example of others, especially who are of esteem for godliness. Example hath a mighty force upon men. Man is a ductile creature; like sheep, they run for company; not what we ought to do, but what others do. There are three reasons—of natural corruption, the flesh, the devil. But first, example of others: Eph. ii. 2, 'In time past ye walked according to the course of this world.' The universal corrupt course and custom of those among whom we live is a great snare. Te follow a multitude to do evil is a strong excitement, but no sufficient excuse, especially of good men. They that are gracious may stagger strangely in reeling times, and be overtaken with dangerous mistakes. Now their sins authorise others, and draw them into the snare: Gal. ii. 12, 'Carried away with their dissimulation.' A strong stream or current impetuously doth carry all things away with it. They take all for current that they do, without examining their actions, and so run away from the rule by their errors.

4. From the providence of God, which may seem to be against those that are exact right, or the sure way pointed out to us in his word, two ways:—

[1.] In the manifold disappointments as to his favouring a good cause; their endeavours blasted, many troubles befall them. God's people are often put to trials by God himself, to try the sincerity of their love. Blind Bartimeus rebuked by the disciples: Mark x. 48, 'Many charged him that he should hold his peace, but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me.' And so Christ to the woman of Canaan, Mat. xv. 22-27, puts her off. And are not we put to such trials in these latter times? When we own him, God seemeth to put us off; providence appeareth with a doubtful face. They that take to the better part may be reduced to great straits; therefore sometimes it may 'happen to the righteous according to the work of the wicked, and to the wicked according to the work of the righteous,' Eccles. viii. 4. So variously doth God dispense external good and evil, and may seem to frown upon those that are faithful now; yet we should not depart from his judgments: Job xiii. 14, 'Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him.' We should wrestle through many disappointments here, or hereafter God will not own us.

[2.] By giving success to a wrong party, that layeth claim to him, to his favour in an evil way, and interpret when his providence seems to be an approbation of an evil course. It is a great temptation. God's choicest servants have been staggered by it; yet it is but a temptation: Ps. l. 21, 'I kept silence, and thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.' God may hold his hand, though they strangely transform him in their thoughts, and entitle their actions to his patronage. God trieth you: Deut. xiii. 2, 3, 'The Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your soul.' God's word is so clear and satisfactory, that by a righteous judgment he may permit it, to try our steadfastness and obedience, not as chaff, but as solid grain. But must we not regard providences? Yes, but not interpret them against the word, but with it. It is comfortable to see the word backed with a providence, Rom. ii. 18; Heb. ii. 2; and Hosea vii. 12; when the word is made good, and they feel that which they would not believe. Not interpret it against the word. Providence is never against the word; it is an exact comment upon it, if we had eyes to see it; and when we see it altogether we shall find it so. But now we view it by pieces, and so mistake: Rom. viii. 28, 'For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to purpose;' Ps. lxxiii. 17, 'Until I went into the sanctuary, then understood I their ends.' When we look to the end of things, all hazards are over.

39

Secondly, The reasons why we must be exact and constant, not withstanding these temptations. 'I will name but two, implied in the two words of the text, 'Thy judgments'—(1.) It is God's word; (2.) God's word is judgment.

1. It is God's direction, who cannot deceive or be deceived; you may venture your soul's temporal and eternal estate, and all upon it, upon God's bare word; for it is impossible for him to lie in his promises, Heb. vi. 18, or to be deceived in his directions. The word of the Lord is a pure rule: 1 John ii. 27, 'The unction teacheth you all things, and is truth, and is no lie.' There is no erring while we walk by this direction, the Spirit of God teaching us by his word; and in deed this is the effect of that great faith, to believe God upon his bare word, to believe what he hath spoken is true, and to act accordingly. If this were rooted in our hearts, we should not be so unstable, so easily foiled by Satan, discouraged by the oppositions of evil men, or live by example, but by rule, and would interpret the providence of God to the advantage, and not the prejudice of obedience: 'Whom resist, steadfast in the faith,' 1 Peter v. 9. Adhere to the truth of the word: I know here is my direction, and in the issue will be my safety and happiness. But either we do not believe this is God's word, or do not urge the heart with God's authority and veracity, and therefore we are up and down. But now, when we determine this is God's word, and so receive it, 1 Thes. ii. 13, 'When ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.' And then it is my rule; whatever it cost me. There you urge the heart with the authority of God, Mat. xvi. 24: a resolute giving up ourselves to God's direction, and to receive the law from his mouth. And it is a certain rule, whatever cross accidents fall out, it should be received with such certainty and absolute authority as nothing should move us. So assured of it, 'that if an angel should preach any other doctrine, let him be accursed,' Gal. i. 8; 2 Tim. iii. 16;

and 2 Peter i. 2. When it is believed to be the Lord's mind, it is a sure ground for faith to rest upon; it is not a doctrine found out by the wit of man, no private invention of others, but God's inspiration. God hath wisdom to direct me the safest way, and goodness and faithfulness enough not to mislead me: 'Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way,' Ps. xxv. 8. It is not the devices of their heads that wrote it, but the public mind of God. And saith the apostle, 'Knowing this first;' this is the first and supreme principle: he had said, ver. 19, that we should consult with the word for direction and comfort before we can get any saving light or true comfort.

40

2 It is judgments. Every man's doom is contained in the word, and if you can but stay a little, you shall see it verified by sensible and plain experiences. Do but wait and observe how God maketh good his promises, and accomplished his threatenings, and you will see no cause to depart; you will find you have done right in the issue, and that close obedience is the only way of safety and happiness here and hereafter. David did so as to his own case: Ps. xviii. 21, 'I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God.' And was he a loser by it? No; 'God hath recompensed me according to the cleanness of my hands.' On the other side, those that depart from God are destroyed; his word will be made good against them: Ps. cxix. 119, 'Thou puttest away the wicked of the earth like dross.'

Use 1. Direction to us both in public and private cases. Be sure you follow such ways as God's word doth allow, for otherwise it is not constancy, but obstinacy; and then whatever troubles and discouragements you meet with, this will be a comfort to you, that you are in God's way.

First, As to your private case, be not discouraged by the instability of your heart and the temptations of Satan. You will be up and down with God; but observe these two rules:—

1. It is necessary to watch against your first declinings, lest by little and little the heart be stolen away from God. When you lose your savour of holy things, lessen your diligence, and are not so exact and watchful, you begin to depart from God. The gap once made in the conscience groweth wider and wider every day. The first declinings are a cause of all the rest; remitting your watch and spiritual fervour, by degrees you do not walk with such a straight foot: he that looketh to the house to keep it tight and in constant repair, prevents the fall of it.

2. If through our infirmity we miscarry at any time, we must not persist in a wrong course, but reclaim speedily, not depart wickedly, Ps. xviii. 21, not lie in the dirt when we have caught a fall. There is a departing out of infirmity, and a departing wickedly. A candle sucketh light if presently kindled again; the longer we lie in our sins the worse; the more care, the more speedy, the more likely to succeed, when there is any breach between us and God; not lie in it.

Secondly, As to public actions. We live in changeable times, but it is well that we have a sure rule; this may stablish your hearts. If governed by sense and interest, with what a gracious face shall we appear to the world? Though you meet with troubles for being exact and punctual as to

principles of conscience, and many disappointments from God, yet in the issue that will be found to be the best course for you and yours. Now, when you see your duty, for which you must consult both with word and Spirit, take heed of two things:—

1. Unbelief: Heb. iii. 12, ‘Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.’ The cause of apostasy is unbelief; they do not look upon God’s directions as judgments. Men that look to the present face of things cannot see things to come, and so miscarry. Hezekiah, in the midst of dangers and difficulties, was steady to God: 2 Kings xviii. 5, 6, ‘He trusted in the Lord God of Israel: he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses.’ Every duty hath a sanction, invested with promises and threatenings; therefore, as there needeth obedience to make conscience of the precept, so faith to believe the sanction, which doth enliven the duty, and keep our hearts under the awe of it.

41

2. Mortification; for till there be an indifferency to all events in temporal things, we shall ever be departing and turning off from God; sometimes allured out of our obedience, sometimes affrighted out of it; therefore, till dead to worldly accidents and interests, we are easily turned out of the way: Heb. xii. 13, ‘Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way;’ that which is lame, feeble, and fearful. Good men may be carried away thus, as Peter. Too weak and inconstant are the best of men; the least blast of temptation will make them leave off the course of well-doing, and, without respect had to conscience or credit, openly desert it. For fear of man’s offence Peter slipped from his duty. Fear of losing applause, or incurring hatred with men; maketh us venture on God’s dishonour; unmodified lusts make us more tender of ourselves than of God.

Second point. That divine teaching causeth constancy; for therefore David saith, ‘I departed not, for thou hast taught me.’ Here—

1. What it is to be taught of God; it is often spoken of in scripture: Isa. liv. 13, ‘All thy children shall be taught of the Lord’; John vi. 45, ‘All taught of God.’ Now God teacheth outwardly by his word, but inwardly by his Spirit; these two must not be severed. Our hearing is necessary: Eph. iv. 21, ‘If so be ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus;’ the ordinary means of hearing him preached, and set forth in the gospel and public ministry, and by that means doth Christ make use of it to teach us by his Spirit. So John vi. 45, ‘Heard and learned of the Father;’ it doth not seclude a teaching ministry in the gospel; but it is said, 1 Thes. iv. 9, ‘Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another;’ and 1 John ii. 27, ‘But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie; and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.’ It is a rhetorical insinuation, the negative to be understood comparatively; man’s teaching is nothing to what you have already by the Spirit. On the other side, much more doth it not exclude the Spirit, upon whom the efficacy dependeth. God teacheth by men, but the effect is from his grace: Mark xvi. 20, ‘They went forth preaching the word, the Lord working with them;’ 1 Cor. iii. 6, ‘Paul may

plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase.' The internal efficacy worketh by external means: *Docet Spiritus Sanctus, sed per verbum*, saith Ferus, *docent apostoli; sed per co-operationem Spiritus Sancti*—God worketh in and by the means.

2. Inwardly God teacheth two ways—(1.) By common illumination; (2.) Special operation.

1. Common illumination, barely enlightening the mind to know or understand what he propoundeth by his messengers. So Rom. i. 20, God showed it to the heathen, '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; so that they are without excuse.'

2. But then, by way of special operation, effectually inclining the will to embrace and prosecute duties so known: Jer. xxxi. 33, 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' This way of teaching is always effectual and persuasive. Now in this sense they are taught of God, that they do not only get an ear to hear, but a heart to understand, learn, and practise.

Secondly, Why this teaching is the ground of constancy.

1. They that are thus taught of God see things more clearly than others do: God is the most excellent teacher. One man seeth a thing by candlelight, another by daylight; he seeth most clearly that seeth by noonday. The light of the Spirit doth clearly manifest things, both object and faculty. The unction teacheth us all things, 1 John ii. 20, 2 Cor. iii. 18.—a distinct, clear, abiding light. Carnal men are blind, 2 Peter i. 9. How sharp-sighted soever in other things, yet blind; they do not see so as to affect their hearts.

2. They know things more surely, and with certainty of demonstration; whereas others have but dubious conjectures, and loose and wavering opinions about the things of God: John vi. 69, 'We believe, and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God;' John xvii. 8, 'Known surely that I came out from thee.' The many temptations and assaults we meet with need such a certain apprehension.

3. This teaching is so efficacious and powerful, as that the effect followeth: Ps. lxxxvi. 11, 'Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth;' 1 Cor. ii. 4. It is a lovely teaching, causing us to cleave to what is taught.

4. God reneweth this teaching, and is always at hand to guide us, and give counsel to us, which is cause of our standing. We need this continual teaching to keep us mindful, that we may not forget things known. The Spirit puts us in remembrance, because of the decay of fervency, and dulness of spirit that groweth upon us; therefore are truths revived to keep us fresh and lively, that we may not neglect our duty. Because of incogitancy and heedlessness we mistake our way, and are apt to run into sin in the time of trial and temptation. Therefore we need a monitor on all occasions, Isa.

xxx. 31, that we may not be carried away with the corrupt bent of our own hearts. Well, then, this abiding in us is the cause of perseverance, 1 John ii. 27.

Use. To show the reason of men's fickleness and inconstancy, both in opinion and practice. He that is led by man unto man, both as to opinion and practice, may be led off by man again, when we take up truth upon tradition and human recommendation. Oh! seek it of God: Isa. xlviii. 17, 'I am the Lord your God, that teacheth you to profit.' Not our own ability, but the light of the Holy Ghost; wait upon God, learn something of him every day, and give God all the glory.

SERMON CIX.

How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.—VER. 103.

IN this verse you have another evidence of David's affection to the word, and that is the incomparable delight which he found therein, as being suitable to his taste and spiritual appetite. This pleasure and delight he found in the word is propounded—(1.) By way of interrogation or admiration, 'How sweet are thy words unto my taste!' As if he said, So sweet that I am not able to express it. (2.) By way of comparison, 'Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.' To external sense nothing is sweeter than honey; honey is not so sweet to the mouth and palate as the word of God is to the soul. It is usual to express the affections of the mind by words proper to the bodily senses, as taste is put here for delight, and elsewhere eating is put for believing and digesting the truth: 'Thy word was sweet, and I did eat it,' Jer. xv. 16. Again, in all kind of writers, both profane and sacred, it is usual to compare the excellency of speech to honey. The poet describes an eloquent man, that his speech flowed from him sweeter than honey. And the like we may observe in scripture: Prov. xvi. 24, 'Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.' He means words of wisdom, such words as come from a pure heart; now these are sweeter than honey. So the spouse; because of her gracious doctrine, it is said, Cant. iv. 11, 'Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb:' and Ps. xix. 10, 'More to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb.' For profit, he esteemed them more than gold; for pleasure, more than honey or the honeycomb. And David saith here, 'Thy words are sweet unto my taste.' He doth not say in general, They are sweet unto *the* taste, but sweet unto *my* taste. Holy men, that have much communion with God, such as David was, they that have his Spirit, find this delight in the word of God; nothing so sweet, or so full of pleasure to the soul. Two points:—

1. That there is such a thing as spiritual taste.

2. That to a spiritual taste the word of God is sweeter than all pleasures and delights whatsoever.

Doct. 1. That there is such a thing as spiritual taste.

I shall show *that* it is, and *what* it is; the use of it, and what is requisite to it.

First, It appears that there is such a thing; the soul hath its senses as well as the body. We do not only know, but feel things to be either hurtful or comfortable to us; so the new nature doth not only know it, but doth seem to feel it, that some things are hurtful, and others are comfortable to it; and hence the apostle's expression, Heb. v. 14, 'Such have their senses exercised, to discern both good and evil.' Christians, if there be such a thing as spiritual life, certainly there must be spiritual sense; for all life is accompanied with a sense of what is good or evil for that life, and the higher the life the greater the sense. Beasts feel more than a plant when hurt is done to them, because they have a nobler life, and a man than a beast; and the life of o-race being above the life of reason, there is a higher sense joined with it and therefore the pain and pleasure of that life is greater than the pain or pleasure of any other life; for spiritual things, as they are greater in themselves, so they do more affect us than bodily: A wounded conscience, who can bear it?' Prov. xviii. 14. What a sense doth the evil of the spiritual life leave upon the soul! And then for the comforts of the spiritual life, the joys and pleasures of it are unspeakable and glorious, 1 Peter i. 8, such joy as no tongue or words can sufficiently express. A taste of the first-fruits of glory, how sweet is it! Briefly, let me tell you there are three internal senses spoken of in scripture—seeing, tasting, and feeling. Sight implies faith: John viii. 56, 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day;' and Heb. xi. 27, 'By faith Moses saw him that was invisible.' There is a seeing not only with the eyes of the body, but with the eyes of the mind, things that cannot be seen with the outward sense: 'Abraham saw my day,' at so great a distance. As there is sight, so also taste; which, if we refer it to good, is nothing else but spiritual experience of the sweetness of God in Christ, and the benefits which flow from communion with him: Ps. xxxiv. 8, 'Oh, come, taste and see that the Lord is gracious.' Do not only come and see, but come and taste. The third sense is feeling or touch; that relates to the power of grace: Phil. iii. 10, 'That I might know him, and the power of his resurrection,' &c. There is a sense that a Christian hath of the power of grace and of Christ upon his soul; so 2 Tim. iii. 5, 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.' When men resist the force and virtue of that religion which they profess, then they are said to deny the power of those principles. Well, then, there are spiritual senses.

Now, that we might know what they are, let me show—

1. How these spiritual senses differ from the external.

2. That in some sense they differ from the understanding.

1. These spiritual senses differ from the external sense; that I shall prove by three arguments:—

[1.] Because in those things that are liable to external sense, a man may have an outward sense of them when he hath not an inward.

[2.] There are certain things that cannot be discerned by external senses, yet a Christian may have a feeling of them by internal sense.

[3.] The outward senses sometimes set the inward senses awork.

[1.] Because in those things which are liable to external sense, a man may have an outward sense of them when he hath not an inward, as in seeing, tasting, touching.

In seeing: Deut. xxix. 2, compared with ver. 4, ‘Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt; and yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day.’ They saw, yet had not a heart to see; they saw those wonders with the eyes of their body; they had a sense out ward and natural, but not a sense inward and spiritual.

So for taste; there is a taste of God’s goodness in the creature; all taste it by their outward senses: Ps. cxlv. 9, ‘The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.’ The wicked are not excepted from his taste; for the creatures are as useful for the preservation of their lives, as the lives of others. They do not mind God’s love in it, and so do rather taste the creature, than God’s goodness in the creature; but the child of God tasteth his love therein. The fly finds no honey in the flower, but the bee doth. A fleshly palate relisheth only the gross pleasure of the creature, not that refined delight which a spiritual palate hath, who hath a double sweetness; it doth not only receive the creature for its natural use, but it tastes God, and feels the love of God in the conscience as well as the warmth of the creature in his bowels.

45

So for feeling: Jer. iii. 25, ‘We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God.’ Men may feel the blows of his providence, and be sensible of the natural inconvenience, yet they have not a spiritual feeling so as to be affected with God’s displeasure, and have a kindly impression left upon the soul, that may make them return to God.

[2.] It differs from the outward senses, because they can by a spiritual sense discern that which cannot be discerned by the outward sense; as in that place, Heb. xi. 27, ‘By faith Moses saw him that was invisible;’ see the invisible God, and are as much affected with his eye and presence as if he were before the eyes of the body, as others are awed by the presence of a worldly potentate; this is matter of internal sense. So for taste; they have meat which the world knows not of, invisible comforts, John iv. 37. They have hidden manna to feed upon, and are as deeply affected with a sense of God’s love, and hopes of eternal life, as others are with all outward dainties. Then as to feeling; many things the outward sense cannot discern; sometimes they feel spiritual agonies, heartbreakings: when all is well and sound without, a man would wonder what they should be troubled about, that abound in wealth and all worldly comforts and accommodations. They have an inward feeling, they feel that which worldly men feel not; when they are afflicted in their spirits, carnal comforts can work nothing upon them; when they are afflicted outwardly, spiritual comforts ease their heart. And as they feel soul agonies and soul comforts, so they feel the operations of the

spiritual life; they have a feeling of the power of the Spirit working in them; they live, and know that they live, Now no man knows that he lives but by sense; therefore if a child of God knows he lives, he hath internal sense as well as external. We know we live naturally by natural sense, and we know we live spiritually by spiritual sense: Gal. ii. 20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;' he lived, and knew that he lived. They have a life which they feel within themselves, the operations and motions of the spiritual life; they feel its impulsions to duty, its abhorrences from sin; tendency of soul to God, and spiritual supports; and they feel the stirrings of the old nature, workings of heart towards sin and vanity, which the out ward senses cannot discover.

[3.] The outward senses sometimes set the inward senses awork. The sweetness of those good things which are liable to sense, puts us in mind of the sweetness of better things; as the prodigal's husks put him in mind of the bread in his father's house; or as the priests of Mercury among the heathen, when they were eating figs, they were to cry, Truth is sweet, because the god whom they worshipped was sup posed to be the inventor of arts, and the discoverer of truth. So Christians, when by the outward taste they find anything sweet, the inward sense is set awork, and they have a more lively feeling of spiritual comforts; as David, honey is sweet, but the word of God was 'sweeter than honey to him, or the honeycomb.' Thus Christ, when he was eating bread, 'Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God,' Luke xiv. 15; and they that have Christ's spirit, they act suitably.

46

2. This sense differs from a bare and simple act of the understanding. Why? For a man may know things that he doth not feel. Simple apprehension is one thing, and an impression another. An apprehension of the sharpness of pain is not a feeling of the sharpness of pain. Jesus Christ had a full apprehension of his sufferings all his life-long, but felt them not until his agonies, therefore he said, John xii. 27, 'Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?' We have notions of good and evil, when we neither taste the one nor the other. It is one thing to know sin to be the greatest evil, and another thing to feel it to be so; to know the excellency of Christ's love, and to taste the sweetness of it, this doth not only constitute a difference between a renewed and carnal man, but sometimes between a renewed man and himself.

[1.] Between renewed men and carnal men; they know the same truths, yet have not the same affections. A carnal man may talk of truths according to godliness, and may dispute of them, and hold opinions about them, but doth not taste them; so he does but know the grace of God in conceit, not in truth and reality, as the expression is, Col. i. 6. As a man only that hath read of honey may have a fancy and imagination of the sweetness of it, but he that tastes it knows it in truth and in effect; they know the grace. of God, and the happiness of being in communion with God, by the light of nature, in conceit, but not in reality; but the other they taste it: 'If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious,' 1 Peter ii. 3. There is an impression of sweetness left upon the soul, and real experience of the goodness of God in Christ, so as to make them affect him with all their hearts, to choose him for their portion, and to make his will their only rule, and obey and serve him,

whatever it cost them. They have such a taste of this sweetness, as doth engage their hearts to a close and constant adherence to Christ. Carnal men have only a naked knowledge of these things, weak and ineffectual notions and apprehensions about them; and if the sublimity, reasonableness and suitableness of these truths to soul necessities cause any taste, it is but slight, slender, and insufficient. So indeed temporaries and hypocrites are said to ‘taste the heavenly gift, the good word of God, and powers of the world to come,’ Heb. vi. 4. They have some languishing apprehensions, but they do not so taste them as to relish and feed upon them. They do not relish Christ himself, but only some benefit which they hope to get by him upon slight and easy terms; have not such experience and sweetness of God in Christ, as that their souls should constantly cleave to him. It may be their fancy may be pleased a little in a supposition and possibility of salvation by Christ, or in some general thought of those large promises and great offers which God makes in the gospel, not as it enforceth duty and subjection to God; well, then, it differs from a bare understanding of the goodness of God’s ways.

47

2. This constitutes a difference sometimes between a renewed man and himself, as to some things; his inward senses are not always alike quick and lively; he is still like-minded as he was, but yet not alike affected; his sight is not so clear, nor taste so acute, nor his feeling so tender; though he hath the same thoughts of things he had before, yet his spiritual sense is benumbed, and is not at all times affected alike, while he keeps his spiritual eye clear from the clouds of lust and passion; he is otherwise affected with things to come than he is when his eye is blinded with inordinate passion and love to present things; and while he keeps his taste, how sweet and welcome is this to his soul, the remembrance of Christ, and salvation by him! And so, while he keeps his heart tender, he is sensible of the least stirring of sin, and is humbled for it; and the least impulsion of grace, to be thankful for it. Those instructions, reproofs, consolations, which at some times either wound or revive their spirits, at other times do not move them at all; their senses are benumbed, not kept fresh and lively. And thus in the general I have proved that there is such a thing as spiritual taste.

Secondly, What is this spiritual sense? It is an impression left upon our hearts, which gives us an ability to relish and savour spiritual things; but it cannot be known by description so much as by these two questions:—

1. The use of it, what doth this taste serve for?

2. What are the requisites that we may have such a taste and relish of divine and spiritual things?

1. What doth this taste serve for? There is a threefold use of them:—

[1.]. To discern things good and wholesome from things noxious and hurtful to the soul; that is the use of spiritual sense in general, to discern things good and evil, Heb. v. 14; Job vi. 30, ‘Is there iniquity in my tongue? Cannot my taste discern perverse things?’ God hath given all sensitive

creatures a taste, whereby they may distinguish between things pleasant or bitter, sweet or sour, wholesome or unwholesome, savoury or unsavoury, that they may choose what is convenient to nature; so the new creature hath a taste to know things, things contrary to the new nature, and things that will keep it in life: Job xii. 11, 'Doth not the ear try words, and the mouth taste his meat?' or, as it is more plain, Job xxxiv. 3, 'For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.' Spiritual taste distinguisheth between what is salubrious and profitable to us, that which is the pure word, milk agreeable to the new nature; and what is frothy, garnished out with the pomp of eloquence, it is tasteless to a gracious soul, if it suiteth not with the interests of the new nature: they have a faculty within them, whereby they distinguish between men's inventions and God's message. A man of spiritual taste, when reason is restored to its use, he comes to a doctrine, and many times smells the man; saith he, this is not the breast-milk that must nourish me, the pure milk of the word by which I must grow in strength and stature; and if he finds anything of God, he owns God; he discerns what is human and what is divine.

48

[2.] The use of this taste is also to refresh and comfort the soul m the sweetness of spiritual things: Cant. ii. 3, 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste;' the taste of Christ's fruit in the comforts of redemption; the fruit that grows there is sweet and pleasant to the new nature. When the love of God to sinners in Christ is not only heard but believed, not only believed but tasted, it ravisheth and transports the soul with sweet delight and content, that excels all the pleasures of the world.

[3.] It serves for this use, to preserve the vitality of grace, that is, to keep it alive and in action. *Omnis vita gustu ducitur*—every life hath its food, and the food must be tasted. This grace quickeneth us to look after that food; it keeps the new creature free for its operations, helps it to grow: 1 Peter ii. 3, 'As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' The truths of the gospel are as necessary and natural for the cherishing and strengthening the spiritual life as the milk of the mother is to the new-born babe, and taste is necessary that we may relish it. They that have a taste have an appetite, and they delight in the word more than in any other thing; whereas those that have no taste or appetite, grow not up to any strength, they thrive not.

2. What is requisite to cause this taste? (1.) Something about the object; (2.) Something about the faculty.

[1.] Something about the object, which is the word of God. Eating, or taking into the mouth, that is necessary before tasting; for the tongue is the instrument of taste; the outward part of the tongue that serves for meats, the inward part, towards the root, for drink. So for this spiritual taste there is required eating, or taking in the object, therefore we read often of eating the word of God: Jer. xv. 16, 'Thy word was sweet, and I did eat it;' and Ezek. iii. 3, we read of eating the roll; it is interpreted spiritually, 'I did eat it;' then follows his taste, 'it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.' So Rev. x. 10, 'I took the little book and ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as

honey.' There was somewhat of prophetical vision in these things, but generally it is carried not an outward and literal eating, but a spiritual taste, relishing the sweetness of it. Well, then, the word must not only be read and heard, but eaten. What is this spiritual eating of the word? Three things are in it, and all make way for this taste. (1.) Sound belief; (2.) Serious consideration; (3.) Close application. He that would have a taste of spiritual things, these three things are necessary.

(1.) That there be a sound belief of it. Men have not taste, because they have not faith; we cannot be affected with what we do not believe: Heb. iv. 2, 'The word profited not, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' What is the reason men have no taste in the doctrine of God, and in the free offers of his grace? It is not mingled with faith, and then it wants one necessary ingredient towards this taste. So 1 Thes. ii. 13, 'Ye received the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.' If you would have spiritual sense, faith makes way for it: we must take the word as the word of God. When we read in feigned stories of enchanted castles and golden mountains, they affect us not, because we know they are but witty fictions, pleasant fables, or idle dreams; and such atheism and unbelief lies in the hearts of men against the very scriptures, and therefore the apostle seeks to obviate and take off this:. 2 Peter i. 16, 'We have not followed cunningly devised fables;' intimating there is such a thought in man's heart. Certainly if men did believe the mystery, that is without controversy great, that God hath indeed sent his Son to redeem the world, and would indeed bestow heaven and eternal happiness upon them, they would have a greater taste; but they hear of these things as a dream of mountains of gold, or rubies falling from the clouds. If they did believe these glorious things of eternity, their hearts would be ravished with them.

49

(2.) As faith is necessary, so serious consideration, by which we concoct truths, and chew them, and work them upon the heart, that -causeth this sweetness; by knocking on the flint the sparks fly out: those ponderous and deep inculcative thoughts of divine and heavenly things make us taste a sweetness in them. When we look slightly and superficially into the word, no wonder we do not find this comfort and sweetness; but when we dig deeply into the mines of the word, and work out truths by serious thoughts, and search for wisdom, when we come to see truth with our own eyes in its full nature, order, and dependence, this is that which gets this taste: 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.' When men are serious, look into the nature, and see all truths in their order and dependence, then they will be like honey and the honeycomb; this makes way for this sweet taste.

(3.) There is necessary to this taste close application; for the nearer and closer things touch one another, the greater their efficacy; so the more close you set the word home upon your own hearts, the more it works: Job v. 27, 'Know it for thy good;' break out thy portion of the bread of life, look upon these promises and offers of grace as including thee, these commands speaking 'to thee, and these threatenings as concerning thee; look upon it not only as God's message in common, but urge

it upon thy soul: Jer. xv. 16, ‘It was unto me the rejoicing of my heart.’ There must be a particular application of these things. These things are necessary to this taste with respect to the object; as there must be eating, a taking into the mouth, if we would taste, so there must be a digesting or working upon the word, by sound belief, serious consideration, close application.

[2.] As to this taste, there is somewhat necessary as to the soul or faculty; we must have a palate qualified for these delicates. Now there is a double qualification necessary to this taste—a hungry conscience and mortified affections.

(1.) A hungry conscience. Without this, a man hath a secret loathing of this spiritual food, his taste is benumbed; but to a hungry conscience the word is sweet, when he is kept in a constant hungering after Christ and his grace: Prov. xxvii. 7, ‘The full soul loatheth the honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.’ Cordials, they are nauseous things to a full stomach; oh but how reviving, comfortable, and sweet are they to a poor broken heart! The first time that we got this taste, it was when we were under the stings of a guilty conscience, then God came and tendered his grace to us in Christ; he sent a messenger, one of a thousand, to tell us he hath found a ransom, and that we shall be delivered from going down into the pit; that he will spare us, and do us good in Christ Jesus, then the man’s flesh recovers again like a child’s, Job xxxiii. 25. When men have felt the stings of the second death, and God comes with a sentence of life and peace by Christ, how sweet is it then! Now, though we have not always a wounded conscience, yet we must always have a tender conscience, always sensible of the need of gospel support; we came to this first relish of the doctrine of eternal life and salvation by Christ when we lay under the sentence of eternal death.

50

(2.) The heart must be purged from carnal affections; for until we lose our fleshly savour we cannot have this spiritual taste: Rom. viii. 5, ‘They that are after the flesh, do savour the things of the flesh;’ the word may be translated so. A carnal heart relishes nothing but carnal things, worldly pleasures, worldly delights; now this doth exceedingly deaden your spiritual taste. Spiritual taste is a delicate thing, therefore the heart must be purged from fleshly lusts; for when fleshly lusts bear sway, and you relish the garlic and onions and fleshpots of Egypt, your affections will carry you elsewhere, to the vanities of the world, and contentments of the flesh. Look, as sick men have lost their taste, and that which is sweet seems sour and ungrateful to a distempered appetite, so a carnal appetite hath not this taste from the word of God; to a carnal heart it is no more savoury than the white of an egg; yea, it is as gall to them, but now to others it is exceeding sweet, it is their joy, the life of their souls. Well, then, you see what is this spiritual taste, that relish which a renewed soul hath for spiritual comforts.

Use. To persuade you to get this taste; and when once you have got it, take heed you do not lose it.

1. It concerns you very much to get this taste; take these arguments:—

[1.] It is a good evidence of the new nature; it is a sign you have gotten that other heart, that new spirit, which must have new comfort, new supports: 1 Peter ii. 3, 4, ‘As new-born babes you desire the sincere milk of the work; if so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.’ Hereby we may know the new man, by his appetite and savour. Life is known by this, as much as by any one thing else.

[2.] This will give you a more assured knowledge of the truth and worth of spiritual and heavenly things, whereas otherwise we shall but talk of them by rote, until we experiment the comfort and sweetness of them in our own souls; then we will see there is more than notions in promises, the word of God is not a well-devised fable and golden dream, for our taste will be our confirmation. The greatest demonstration is from the senses, 1 John v. 10, the believer hath a testimony of the truth of religion within himself, in his own heart. Oh! it is a great advantage to have our remedy there where our danger lies, in the heart; where atheism and disbelief lurks, to have spiritual sense there: when you have a real experience of them, then Satan cannot have such advantage, and atheistical and unbelieving thoughts such advantage, for you have felt the benefit of spiritual things. It is a great advantage against temptation, when you have had a sense, when you do not only know by hearsay and guess that the word is sweet, but you have had a taste, as a man that hath been at the fire knows it warms; when we cannot only say with him, ‘We have heard the kings of Israel are merciful kings,’ but, with the men of Samaria, ‘We have seen him ourselves.’

51

[3.] The life of grace mightily depends upon it; all your liveliness in grace depends upon this taste, therefore get it. When you have no taste, you lose your appetite; and when you lose your appetite, you lose your strength; and when you lose your strength, all goes to ruin in the soul; sin’ prevails, and deadness increaseth upon the soul. All the strength, comfort, and vitality of your lives depend upon your taste.

[4.] It is this taste that will make you more useful to others. That which we have seen, heard, and tasted, that we commend to others. A report of a report and tradition, it may be or not; that is a cold thing, this is not a valid testimony. Ay! but when you can speak of that which you ‘have felt and tasted, your eyes have seen, and hands handled of the word of life,’ 1 John i. 1; when it is matter of sense, then we can speak boldly and affectionately, as the apostle, 2 Cor. i. 4, ‘That we might comfort them which are in trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.’ When we ourselves are comforted of God, and that which we speak is the result of our own experience, it makes us more useful in our Christian converse. The prophet Ezekiel was to eat his own prophecies, and St John to eat the book; the meaning is, they must digest it. What we communicate to others, we must digest it ourselves, that, finding it sweet, we may speak the more effectually for God.

2. Do not lose this taste. Oh! it is a sad thing to lose these spiritual senses. Hypocrites, their taste doth lightly come and lightly go; they have a little vanishing sweetness now and then, but it is soon gone; it. is a sad thing to lose our spiritual taste. It may be lost in a great measure; sometimes

a Christian hath it, and sometimes he hath it not, at least not in such a degree as formerly. Experience shows it may be lost too too often; all the business will be to discern the first tendencies of this evil when we begin to lose our taste and spiritual senses. This may be discerned with respect to the threefold object of this taste—heavenly gift, the good word of God, and powers of the world to come.

[1.] Heavenly gift, that is Christ Jesus. When we do not so highly value the love of God in Christ, and prize his blood, and the precious effects of it; when we do not so earnestly beg pardon of sin, and hunger and thirst after his righteousness; when we have not that former earnestness and strength of desire to enjoy Christ. Time was when thou thoughtest no terms too dear for him, when thy heart made hard pursuit after him; but now thou art grown cold and careless, and so pass him by lightly, as a full stomach with meat, with which it is cloyed; when you are not so earnest and zealous for Christ, it is a sign you have lost your taste.

52

[2.] Your tasting of the good word of God. When you slight the word, either in not reading, hearing, meditating in it so frequently as you were wont to do. Oh, time was when you could say, No honey or honeycomb so sweet as this to my poor soul! Ps. xix. 10; when you could hardly call off your thoughts. Now you are more infrequent in these godly exercises, or else, if conversant about it, not with that life and that affection; in a more customary manner you can read of the love of God and sufferings of Christ Jesus, without any love to him again; can read the promises, and they seem to be but like dry chips and withered flowers, and not yield that marrow and fatness to you. You can read the promises of eternal life, and have not that joy, thankfulness, and blessing of God. You could hardly contain yourselves before, but cry out, ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and blessed be God that hath visited and redeemed his people.’ Now your affections are more flat and cold, and have not that relish in holy conference, sweetness in hearing, and that contentment of soul in meditating.

[3.] You may lose your taste in the powers of the world to come, when you grow more mindless of God, and eternal blessedness, when you have not such fresh and warm thoughts as you were wont to have; when your desires, hopes, expectations of the life to come is abated, you have not that lively hope, 1 Peter iii. 3, to quicken you for the attaining of eternal blessedness. While this taste is fresh upon the hearts of Christians, they are for heaven, for God, carried on with vigour and strength in the way of holiness; but when your hearts are carried out to worldly vanity, and you relish more the honour, applause, fulness of estate, worldly increase, and you are grown more cold in heavenly things, you have lost this taste of the powers of the world to come, Heb. vi. 4.

The causes of this. One is, want of a due esteem, not an esteem in an idea, naked or abstract notion from those thoughts out of a temptation. No man is so unreasonable, but, if he be a little enlightened with Christianity, will say, the favour of God is better than all things. Ay! but want of that practical esteem, when they can forfeit this taste for every trifle and flesh-pleasing vanity; or when they carelessly look after him, are indifferent as to communion with God, and think it not

much whether they are accepted of God, yea or no; or manifest himself to you in Christ, when the comforts of the Spirit are things you can spare, and the consolations of God seem to be small, it is all one to you whether you have experiences from God in duty or no, your souls are satisfied; this is a cause of decaying. Then negligence in duties; pray lazily, hear carelessly, not meditate often. Inordinate savour of carnal pleasure, that is another cause. What is the reason the temporary seems to be so affected? He loseth his taste altogether; carnal things have the first possession of his heart, and being confirmed there by long use and custom, being so suitable to us, and so long rooted in us, and we have such a vanishing glance of things to come, this will work out that taste, the love, the sense we have of better things. Godly men, when they turn out to the contentments of the flesh, they lose their taste, it becomes dead. This is a considerable loss as to the vitality of your graces; for without a taste of good or evil, we shall neither eschew the evil, nor follow that which is good, with that serious constancy and diligence that is necessary. A man that hath tasted of the poison of asps, and the bitterness of the gall and wormwood that is in sin, will be afraid of it, Rom. vi. 21. So a man that hath tasted of the sweetness of communion with God in Christ, he is quickened and carried on with life, courage, and constancy. That is a dreadful place, Heb. vi. 4, 5; the loss of their taste is a degree to final apostasy. Oh, how many lose their taste, their relish of Christ, the good word of God, the powers of the life to come, and are fallen foully, some forward into error, some backward into a licentious course, so that it is impossible to recover themselves by repentance!

53

SERMON CX.

Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.—VER. 104.

IN the former verse, the man of God had spoken of the pleasure that was to be had by the word, now of the profit of it. There is a great deal of pleasure to spiritual sense; if we could once get our appetite, we should find a world of sweetness in it; and there is as much profit as pleasure. As the pleasure is spiritual, so also is the profit to be measured by spiritual considerations. To escape the snares of the devil, and the dangers that waylay us in our passage to heaven, is a? great advantage. Now the word doth not only warn us of our danger, but where it is received in the love of it, breedeth a hatred of all these things that may lead us into it: ‘Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.’

In which sentence, the prophet seems to invert the order set down, ver. 101. He had said, ‘I refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word,’ where the avoiding of evil is made the means of profiting by the word. Here his profiting by the word is made the cause of avoiding evil. In the one verse you have an account of his beginning with God, in the other of his progress.

In this verse there is—

1. The benefit he received by the word, and that is sound and saving *knowledge*.

2. The fruit and effect which this knowledge produceth in his heart, *therefore I hate every false way*.

Mark, first, The firmness of this effect, *I hate*. He doth not say *I abstain*, but *I hate*.

Secondly, The note of universality, *every*.

Thirdly, The object, *false way*. It is not said *evil* way, but *false* way; or, as it is in the original, 'every path of lying and falsehood.'

Falsehood is either in point of opinion or practice. If you take it in the first sense, for falsehood in opinion, or error in judgment, or false doctrine, or false worship, this sentence holds good. Those that get understanding by the word are established against error; and not only established against error, or against the embracing or profession of it, but they hate it.

1. They are established. All error cometh from ignorance, or else judicial blindness.

[1.] From ignorance, or unacquaintedness with the word of God; so Christ said to the Sadducees, 'Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures,' Mat. xxii. 29. When men study not the word, which is the rule of truth, no wonder if they lie open to every fancy; they take up things hand over head, and by a fond credulity are led away by every suggestion presented to them. So it is said, 2 Peter iii. 16, that 'the unstable and unlearned wrest the scriptures to their own destruction.' By *the unlearned*, is meant not those that are unskilful in human literature, though that be a great help; but those that are unskilful in the word of righteousness, poor deluded souls that lie under a great uncertainty.

[2.] Judicial blindness. For men that have great parts, and a presumption of their own wit, are given up to be blinded by their own lusts; and though they know the scriptures, yet they wrest them to speak according to the sense of their carnal interest, 1 Thes. ii. 12. And so they see not what they see, being given up to the witchery and enchantment of error: Gal. iii. 1, 'O foolish Galatians! who hath bewitched you?' So that all false ways proceed from the want of reason and the pride of reason. The one is the cause of the simple's erring, who believeth every word; the other of those that are knowing, and are otherwise of great parts, but they make their wit their idol, and so would be wise above the scriptures, or else are swayed by their own lusts. They do not fix themselves in the power, love, and practice of truths revealed in the scriptures, and so are given up to hellish delusions. Now, in this sense, I might speak with great profit of these words, especially now when so many errors are broached, and all the errors of Christianity come abreast to assault it at once; and such changeable times as produce several interests, whereby men are blinded, and such levity in the professors of religion. Why, then, study the word with a teachable heart; that is, renouncing your own wit, and giving up yourselves to God's direction, and practise what is plain, without being swayed with the

profits and pleasures of the world, and you may come to know what is the mind of God. Men think all is uncertain in religion, and are apt to say with Pilate, 'What is truth?' John xviii. 38. No; the scriptures are not obscure, but our hearts are dark and blind with worldly lusts. Otherwise the counsel is plain, and you might say with David, 'Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.'

(1.) Where the Spirit of God doth affect men with an earnest desire of knowledge, and so affect them as to desire to know the will of God, for no other reason but that they may avoid what is displeasing to God, and do what is pleasing in his sight; and therefore hear, pray read, meditate, and study the holy scriptures; they are sure to be right for the main.

55

(2.) Not only avoid the belief and profession of falsehood, but hate it: 'I hate every false way.' Not the persons, but pity them: Phil. iii. 19, 'I tell you weeping.' It should be the grief of our hearts to see them misled; but as for the error, hate it, whatever is not agree able to the rule of truth, or dissenteth from the purity of the word. There is too great a coldness and indifferency about the things of religion, as if truth were not to be stood upon. Carnal men hate the truth: Ps. l. 17, 'They hate instruction, and cast my laws behind their backs.' Truly we have much more reason to hate error, without which we cannot be safe, it is so catching with our natures.

2. In point of practice, and so every falsehood may be applied—

[1.] To craft, or carnal wisdom. I hate fraud and deceit; true understanding makes us hate false wisdom. A simple, honest conversation suits best with Christians: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'In simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.'

[2.] Carnal or worldly vanities, and flattering or fallacious pleasures, these entice us with a fair outside, and promise a great deal of happiness and comfort to us; but when we neglect better things, and run after them, they deceive us in the issue. They are called 'deceitful riches,' Mark iv. 19. And 'beauty' is said to be 'deceitful,' Prov. xxxi. 30. And those that run after these things are said to 'run after lying vanities,' Jonah ii. 8; those that fail when we hope to enjoy them.

3. I take it more generally for all sin. Sinful ways are false ways, and will surely deceive those that expect good from them or walk in them: Heb. iii. 13, 'Deceitfulness of sin;' and 'deceitful lusts,' Eph. iv. 22; and 'sin hath deceived me, and slew me,' saith Paul, Rom. vii. 11. Sin is false and deceitful many ways—

[1.] It presents itself in another dress than its own, proposing evil under the name of good, calling light darkness, and darkness light, Isa. v. 20, or shadows of good for that which is really good, gilded trash for perfect gold.

[2.] As it promiseth happiness and impunity which it never performeth or maketh good, Deut. xxix. 19, 20; and so the poor sinner is led as an ox to the slaughter, Prov. vii. 22, 23. And we do

not see the danger of it till it be too late to help it, and it appeareth in its own colours in the foulness of the act and the smartness of the punishment. Esau, when he had sold the birthright, bewailed it with tears when it was too late, Heb. xii. 16, 17. The foolish virgins tarried till the door was shut, Mat. xxv. 11, 12. It is good to have our eyes in our head, to see a plague when we may prevent it, Prov. xxii. 3. The foulness of the act terrifieth, as it did Judas when he betrayed his master, Mat. xxvii. 4. Their hearts give evidence against them, Rom. ii. 15 'Excusing or accusing one another;' as Cain, Gen. iv. 14, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.' The unclean person shall 'mourn at the last, when his flesh and his body shall be consumed,' Prov. v. 11. Adam and Eve were sensible too late, when their eyes were opened.

Doct. By the word of God we get that true, sound wisdom which maketh us to hate every false way.

Four things are implied in the point and in the text:—

1. A *hatred* of sin.

2. The universality of this hatred, *every false way*.

3. That this is a part and fruit of wisdom, *I get understanding, therefore I hate*.

4. This wisdom and understanding is gotten *by God's precepts*.

First, That it is our duty to hate sin. It is not enough to reform our practice, or to abstain from the act, or to avoid the occasions that may lead to it, but it must be hated: Ps. xcvii. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.' He doth not say forbear it, but hate it. Love to the chiefest good is fitly accompanied with hatred of the chiefest evil. God, he is our chiefest good: you love the Lord, and you must also hate evil. The one is as natural to grace as the other; for the new nature hath its slight and aversation, as well as its choice and prosecution. As it inclines us to choose God for our portion, and to pursue after things that lead to God, so it hath a disposition to make us avoid that which is evil. There are things hurtful to the new nature as well as any other being; now hatred is to arm us against it. In short, this hatred is required—

1. Because this is the true principle of resistance against sin. Until a man hate sin, he is never truly set against it; as a man is never thoroughly gained to that which is good until he loves holiness for holiness' sake. His affections may be bribed with other considerations, but then he is rooted in holiness when he loves holiness for its own sake. So a man that is not resolved against sin, that will not hate it for its own sake, may be frighted out of sin for a fit, or by the interposings of conscience put out of humour, but his heart falls in again with his old lusts, until there be an envy and detestation of sin; but when it comes to this hatred, then temptations cannot easily overcome—examples draw not, nor difficulties compel us to that which is evil Persuasions and allurements formerly were of great force; straightway they followed; but when the bent is another way, they are not so easily

drawn by force and examples, which seem to have such cogency. Before men did easily swim with the stream, but here is a counter motion when they hate that which is evil. This is the fence of the soul, and draws us to an indignation, Hosea xiv. 8.

2. Partly because this is a true distinctive evidence between those that are good and those that are evil. Many may forbear sin that yet do not hate it; they forbear it out of restraint, out of fear of punishment, shame, worldly ends, yet they 'regard iniquity in their hearts,' Ps. lxvi. 18; as a dog loves the bone, yet fears the blows. God judgeth not as man; man is blameless, he abstains from sin, but God hateth sin. Man judgeth according to the action, but God judgeth according to the frame of the heart, 1 Sam. xvi. 7; for he is able to look to the inward springs, and poise our spirits. So on the other side, good men may slip into an evil action, but their hearts are against it; it is the evil which they hate, Rom. vii. 15. They may be foiled, but their hearts are bent another way.

But what is this hatred of sin?

1. It implies a universal repugnancy in every part of a man against sin, not only in his reason and conscience, but will and affections. There is not a wicked man, but in many cases his conscience bids him do otherwise; ay! but a renewed man, his heart inclines him to do otherwise; his heart is set against sin, and taken up with the things of God: Rom. vii. 22, 'I delight in the law of God according to the inner man.' It is in the whole inward man, which consists of many parts and faculties. Briefly, then, it notes the opposition, not from enlightened conscience only, but from the bent of the renewed heart. Reason and conscience will take God's part, and quarrel with sins, else wicked men could not be self-condemned.

57

2. Hatred; it is a fixed rooted enmity. Many a man may fall out with sin upon some occasion, but he hath not an irreconcilable enmity against it. The transient motions of the soul are things quite distinct from a permanent principle that abides in a renewed heart; he hath that same 'seed of God remaining in him,' 1 John iii. 9. A habit notes a habitual aversation. A brabble many times falls out between us and sin upon several occasions, when it hath sensibly done us wrong, destroyed our peace, blasted our names, or brought temporal inconvenience upon us. In time of judgment and fears, and present troubles and dangers, men think of bewailing their sins and returning to God. but they fall out and fall in again; this is anger, not hatred; like the rising of the heart against a drawn sword, when it is flashed in our faces, whereas afterwards we can take it up without any such commotion of spirit.

3. Hatred; it is an active enmity, warring upon sin by serious and constant endeavours, manifested by watching, striving, groaning; watching before the temptation comes, resisting in the temptation, groaning under it, and bemoaning ourselves after the temptation hath prevailed over us.

[1.] There is a constant jealousy and watchfulness before the temptation comes. They that hate sin will keep at a distance from what ever is displeasing unto God: Prov. xxviii. 14, 'Happy is the

man that feareth alway.' A hard heart, that knows not the evil of sin, rusheth on to things according to the present inclination. Ay! but a man that hath a hatred against sin, that hath felt the evil of it in his conscience, that hath been scorched in the flames of a true conviction, will not come near the fire. A broken heart is shy and fearful, therefore he weighs his thoughts, words, and actions, and takes notice of the first appearance of any temptation; they know sin is always present, soon stirred, and therefore live in a holy jealousy. Certainly they that walk up and down heedlessly in the midst of so many snares and temptations wherewith we are waylaid in our passage to heaven, they have not this active enmity against sin, and therefore hatred is seen by watching.

[2.] It is seen by striving, or serious resistance in the temptation. A Christian is not always to be measured by the success, but by conflict; he fights it out: Rom. vii. 15, 'The evil which I hate, that do I.' Though they be foiled by sin, yet they hate it. An enemy may be overcome, yet he retains his spite and malice. Sin doth not freely carry it in the heart, neither is the act completely willing: Gal. v. 17, 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh; for,' saith he, 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would;' that is, you cannot sin with such proneness and full consent and bent of heart as others; they have a principle of opposition, a rooted enmity in their souls against sin.

58

[3.] By a bitter grief after the temptation; as Peter, when he had fallen foully, 'he went out and wept bitterly,' Mat. xxvi. 75. They do not lie in sin, but recover themselves by a kindly remorse; it is the grief of their souls that they have fallen into God's displeasure, grieved his Spirit, and hazarded their communion with him. Oh! sin is grievous to a gracious heart, and this makes them groan and complain to God, 'O wretched man!' &c.

4. It is such an enmity against sin as aims at the utter extermination and expulsion of it, that endeavoureth to destroy it both root and branch. Hatred is all for mischief; annihilation, that is that which hatred aims at. Anger worketh trouble, but hatred mischief. It is an implacable affection, that continues to the death, that will not be appeased till the thing which we hate be abolished. So where there is this hatred of sin, it follows sin close till it hath gotten the life of it. As by the grace of justification they have obtained such favour with God, *ne damnet*, it shall not damn; by the grace of sanctification, *ne regnet*, sin shall not reign; and still they are aspiring and looking after the grace of glorification, *ne sit*, that sin may no longer be; therefore they are longing and groaning under the relics of corruption: Rom. vii. 24, 'O wretched man!' &c. Many scratch the face of sin, but they do not seek to root it up, to destroy the body of death; it is their constant grief that anything of sin is left in the heart, as enemies are not satisfied till they have the blood of each other. Where there is hatred it is not enough to stop the spreading, weaken the power of sin, but labouring to destroy the being of sin; as David said of his enemies, 'I pursued them till they were destroyed;' so when we set against sin with an aim not to give over till we have the life of it; or as God said concerning

the Canaanites, Deut. vii. 23, 'I will destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed;' so doth a renewed heart war against sin, that he may leave neither root nor fruit within them.

Use. If this be to hate sin, how few can say with David, 'I hate every false way'! how few are of David's temper! Some love sin with all their heart, that 'hide it as a sweet morsel under their tongue,' Job xx. 12. The love of sin, that is the life of it; it dies when it begins to be hated; but when you have a love to it, it lives in the soul and prevails over us. And as they testify their love of sin, so they misplace their hatred. What do they hate? Not sin, but the word that discovers it. They 'hate the light, because their deeds are evil,' John iii. 20. They do not hate sin, but God's messengers that plead against it: 1 Kings xxii. 8, 'I hate him,' saith Ahab concerning Micaiah, 'for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.' They hate the faithful brother that reproves them; he is hated because he will not hate his brother, to see sin upon him. They hate the magistrate that would reform, the faithful Christian that condemns them by his exact walking: John xv. 19, 'Because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' They hate God's image in his people, and cannot endure to be condemned by the light that shines out from their conversations. Godly men are objects reviving guilt, therefore they hate them. Thus shamefully are a man's affections transposed; we love where we should hate, and hate where we should love. And then if we come to the other sort of men, a degree above these, many are frightened out of their sins by slavish fear, but yet their hearts are in league with them still; and as they get out of the stocks of conscience they enlarge themselves in all manner of carnal liberty: these are not changed, but awed; sin is not mortified, but only lurks to watch a safe opportunity when it may discover itself with more advantage.

59

SERMON CXI.

Therefore I hate every false way.—VER. 104.

THE second proposition is the universality of this hatred, *every false way*. They that hate sin must hate all sin.

1. This doth necessarily follow upon the former; for if we hate sin especially as sin, for the intrinsic evil that is in it, not upon foreign accidental reasons, then we will hate all sin, for hatred is εἰς τὰ γένη, to the whole kind; as Haman, when he hated the Jews, he thought scorn to lay his hand only on Mordecai, but would have destroyed all the Jews, Esther v. 6. It is but a casual dislike, and not a hatred. Certainly if we hate sin as sin, we shall hate all sin. The same reasons that incline us to hate one sin will incline us to hate all. Why! what is it to hate sin as sin? As it is a violation of God's law, as it is a contempt of God's authority, a breach of spiritual friendship, it grieves the Spirit; these are the reasons to incline us to hate one as well as another. Well, then, private reservation

and indulgences, or setting up a toleration in our own hearts, will not stand with the hatred of all sin. Some sins may shame and trouble us more, but all are alike contrary to the will of God; therefore if we hate them upon reasons of duty to God, we should hate them universally, ‘every false way.’

2. Every sin is hateful to God, therefore every sin should be hateful to us. The reason of this is, we should hate what he hates, and love what he loves. There is a perfect friendship between God and those in covenant with him. Now that is true friendship, to will and nill the same thing; it is built upon likeness, and suitableness of disposition. This argument is urged by the Holy Ghost: Prov. viii. 13, ‘The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the fro ward mouth, do I hate.’ This is friendship with God, to hate what God hates: I hate it, therefore they hate it. Sins of thought are intended by pride and arrogance, for that puts us upon vain musings and imaginations; and sins of word by the froward mouth; and sins of action by the evil way, outward practice. All this God hates, so should we: Rev. ii. 6, ‘Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.’ If we be in the same covenant with God, we will have the same love, the same hatred. Nay, as we have the same nature with God, the saints are ‘made partakers of the divine nature,’ 2 Peter i. 4. The divine nature shows itself by suitable dispositions.

60

3. From our covenant relation with God, which implies an entire surrender of soul, which is without any reservation. When you give up yourselves to God, he will have all. If you say, God be merciful to me, and spare me in this, then you forfeit all the blessings of the covenant. God will have all or none; therefore all sin, without exception, must be hated by us, for otherwise God is not our chief good: if anything be loved besides him, or against his will, it is love above him. One man allowed besides the husband is a violation of the marriage covenant; so one sin allowed in the heart breaks all the covenant between God and us: James ii. 10, ‘If a man keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.’ That sentence is not a legal sentence belonging to the covenant of works; that were a mistake of it: it is not only true in the sense of the covenant of works, one sin undoes us for ever, but it is true in the evangelical covenant. Thus one sin allowed with full consent of heart makes void the gospel covenant, as one article not consented to disannuls the whole treaty and agreement between us and God. It is not consistent with sincerity that we should bring down the gospel covenant, to allow any one sin.

4. From the damage and mischief that it doth to our souls. One sin keeps up the devil’s interest; it is like a nest egg, left there to draw a new temptation. You continue his empire in you; this is his great design, to keep a part. Conscience begins to work, they must have something; all then that he pleads for is but a part, and he knows that will bring the whole; as Pharaoh would have a pawn, either their flocks, herds, or children, that this might bring them back again. One sin reserved gives Satan an interest; one leak in the ship, though all the rest be stopped, if that be neglected, will sink it in time.

Use. Let us lay this branch also to heart. There is something usually wherein we would be excused and expect favour. We all have a tender part of our soul, and loathe it should be touched;

some vain fashions, customs, or ways, and outgoings of soul, which we are unwilling to leave, though we have often smarted for them. Consider, it is not consistent with your obedience and your love to God, nor with the power of grace in your hearts, to allow any false way. Herod did many things, yet perished for all that. A man may do many things that are good, upon sin's account, When you allow any one thing, it is only to hide and feed your lusts with greater pretence; so many religious things may be fuel of lusts, as well as carnal comforts. It is not for the interest of the flesh or indwelling corruption that men should have no religion; sin cannot be served in such a cleanly way, unless there be something done in compliance with God's will, under some disguise, or conformity to the will of God. Say then, Shall I do and suffer so many things in vain? Bring your hearts thus to hate every false way.

Thirdly, This is a part and fruit of true wisdom.

1. That this is a chief part of wisdom and understanding, to hate every false way, appears from Job xxviii. 28, 'The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding.' So much as we hate sin, so much of spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding. Certainly to hate sin is wisdom; I prove it from the nature of sin. All disobedience is the greatest folly that can be in the world; and therefore, if to sin be to do foolishly, to hate sin is to be wise; and not to have understanding certainly is a fruit of folly, for a man to do that which will condemn himself, if ever he comes to himself. Now, when a man comes to himself, as when he dies or repents, oh! how will his heart condemn and reproach him for the vanity of his worldly course, when he is filled with his own ways! Especially repentance, that is a coming to ourselves. As a man when he hath slept out his drunkenness and excess, and begins to look back upon his follies committed under that distemper; such is repentance, it is an after-wisdom, and therefore it argues that there was an imprudence and inconsideration of the things we repent of, and therefore we condemn ourselves. That is folly which gratifies those that are our utter enemies. Now sin it gratifies the devil, which seeks our ruin: he 'goes about, seeking whom he may devour,' 1 Peter v. 8. You please him that seeks your utter destruction; and will you grieve God and please the devil? That is folly which brings no disadvantage upon him whom you disobey, but upon you it brings the greatest mischief imaginable. God is not hurt by your sins; he is above our injury: Prov. ix. 12, 'If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.' There is no hurt done to God; all the hurt is to our own souls: Prov. viii. 36, 'He that sinneth against me, wrongs his own soul; and he that hateth me, loveth death.' Every sinner is his own murderer and his own destroyer. All those arrows we shoot up against heaven, they fall down with more violence upon our own heads. That is folly for a man to hazard a jewel for a trifle, to stake his soul, and heaven, and eternal happiness, against a little flesh-pleasing and carnal satisfaction: Jonah ii. 8, 'They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies.' Poor fugacious comforts, lying vanities, to follow after, and forsake their own mercy; that is, all that happiness which might have been their own. A sinner is a mad gamester, that throws away the kingdom of heaven at every cast for a little momentary short delight and vain contentment. That is folly to break with him upon whom our all depends, our life, being, comfort, happiness; so

doth sin make us break with God: Isa. lix. 2, ‘Your iniquities have separated between you and your God.’ Well, then, if sin be to do foolishly, to depart from sin, this is wisdom, this is understanding. Certainly he that provides against the greatest mischief doth escape the greatest danger; he is the wise man, and not he that provides against temporal inconveniences only, as poverty and disgrace. He that escapes sin, escapes hell, the wrath of God, the extremest misery that can light upon a poor creature: Prov. xv. 24, ‘The way of the wise is above, to avoid hell beneath;’ and therefore it is a high point of wisdom to hate sin.

2. As it is a high point of understanding, so it is a fruit and effect of understanding. According to the degree of understanding that we have, so will our hatred of sin be; for he saith, ‘Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. To prove this by two reasons:—

[1.] Our affections follow our apprehensions. There is no way to come to the heart but by the mind, by the understanding. Look, as there is no way to come to the bowels to purge our distempers that are there but by the mouth, stomach, and other passages that lead to the bowels, so there is no way to come to the heart and affections but by the understanding. Knowledge begets all other affections, those which belong to choice and pursuit, or those that belong to slight or aversation. Those that belong to choice and pursuit, desire, delight. There is no desire of that which is unknown; so in those things that belong to slight and aversation, those affections, be it grief or shame for sin already committed, or fear or hatred that sin may not be committed. Grief or shame: Jer. xxxi. 19, ‘After I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.’ It is light which humbles, and the soul is affected according to the sight it hath of things; or go to those affections which serve to prevent the commission of sin, as hatred and fear. Hatred in the text; a good understanding goes before, a thorough hatred will follow.

[2.] Second reason; that when the mind is fraught with truths, and gotten a good stock of knowledge by God’s precepts, then it will be checking and urging the soul to caution against sin; and therefore the more understanding you yet by God’s precepts, the more are you warned and put in mind of things: Ps. cxix. II, ‘I have hid thy word in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.’ When the word hath laid up in the heart a good stock of knowledge, there will be one thought or other that will be rising up and defying all temptations wherewith you are assaulted: Eph. vi. 17, ‘Take unto you the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.’ In the spiritual conflict we need weapons not only defensive but offensive; not only the shield of faith, but the sword of the Spirit, that we may destroy and slay sin, and withstand temptation, and chase away Satan from us. What is this sword of the Spirit? The word of God. The more seasonable relief the more fresh thoughts you have to withstand temptations which are apt to come in upon you: Prov. vi. 21, 22, ‘Bind them upon thine heart: when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.’ This will always be urging him to duty, and warning him of his danger.

A word of *use*. (1.) Get understanding; (2.) Never count yourselves to understand anything but as you increase in hatred of sin.

1. Get understanding. Partly—(1.) Because there are many false ways you will never discern without much understanding. There are many false ways that are palliated and represented under the show of good, and we are easily ensnared unless we have light to choose our way: 1 Cor. ii. 8, 'Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.' A man will be carried on with a great deal of life and activity in a way contrary to God: Acts xxvi. 9, 'I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.' Oh! the tyranny and madness of an erring conscience and an ignorant zealot! What a ready prey is a man to Satan, and is carried headlong to destroying courses, when a man hath more zeal and earnestness of spirit than knowledge to guide him! How will he stumble and dash upon things that are very contrary to the will of God. (2.) If they can discern them, they shall not have a heart and skill to remedy them without understanding. We shall not have a heart, for light will be urging, calling upon us, minding us of our duty, warning us of danger; whereas otherwise we shall go on tamely, like an ox to the slaughter, and like a fool to the correction of the stocks. We shall not have this restless importunity of conscience, which is a great restraint of sin; and then we shall not have the skill, for all is misapplied and misconceived by an ignorant spirit, for the whole business of his religion is making cordials instead of purges, and potions instead of antidotes, catching at promises when threatenings belong to him, lulling his soul asleep with new strains of grace, when he should awaken himself to duty.

63

2. Never count yourselves to have profited in anything till your hearts are awakened into a further hatred of sin. Christians! they are but notions; it is not saving knowledge unless it be in order to practice; men have no understanding that have not this active and rooted enmity against sin: Ps. cxi. 10, 'A good understanding have all that they do his commandments;' they that hate sin more, and are more weary of corruption. He is made wiser by the word that is made better by it. It is not the talker against, but the hater of iniquity that is the wise man. If wisdom enters upon the heart, and breaks out in our practice, by that is our thriving in knowledge to be measured: 1 John ii. 3, 'Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.'

This was God's scope in giving the word, not to make trial of men's wits, who could most sharply conceive, or of their memories, who could most faithfully retain, or of their eloquence, who could most nimbly discourse; but of the sincerity of the heart, who could most obediently submit to the will of God. Jer. xxii. 16, when he had spoke of hating of sin, and doing good, 'Was not this to know me? saith the Lord.' This is to know God to hate sin. Outward things were not made for sight only, but for use, as herbs, plants, and stars. So our reason, and the scriptures the Lord hath given us; it is not only for sight, but for use, that we may be wise to salvation; not that we may please our selves with acute notions about the things of God, but seriously set our hearts to practise.

The fourth thing in this general point is, that this wisdom and understanding is gotten by God's precepts. Mark, 'I hate every false way.' Why? 'Because by thy precepts I get understanding.' Where have we it? 'By studying God's word,' Rom. iii. 20, 'By the law is the knowledge of sin.' How is the knowledge of sin by the law? Three ways: according to the nature of the sin, according to who is the sinner, and according to the guilt and dreadful estate of them that lie in a state of sin. So the knowledge of sin, that is, the nature of it, and where it lives, and where it reigns, and what will be the effects of it, all this knowledge is by the law.

1. By the law is the knowledge of sin, *quoad naturam peccati*. There are many things we should never know but by the law of God, though we have some general notions of good and evil. Rom. vii. 7, saith the apostle, 'I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.' Those first stirrings and secret lingerings of heart and inclinations to that which is cross to the will of God, that they go before all consent of will, and all delight, these things we could never discern by the light of nature.

64

2. *Quoad subjectum*, what is the sinner, and who is guilty of it? So Rom. vii. 9, 'I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' He saw his lost, miserable, undone condition by the law of God. The acts of sin are discovered by the word of God; it discovers the thoughts and intents of the heart, Heb. iv. 12, and state of sin; our natural face, the condition wherein we are, is to be seen in this glass.

3. *Quoad realum et magnitudinem peccati*, what will be the effects of it? Rom. v. 20, 'The law entered, that the offence might abound.' Therefore the law was given, that it might work a deep sense of the evil consequents of sin, and what wrath man was bound over to for violating the righteous law. The law represents the heinous nature of sin as it is ἀνομία, a transgression of the law, as it strikes at God's being or at God's authority, seeks to jostle him out of the throne; as it contradicts his sovereignty, and plucks the sceptre out of his hand and the crown from his head, and makes men to say, 'Who is lord over us?' As if we had nothing to guide us but our own lusts. The word of God discovers this pride of heart, and then the manifold mischiefs of sin are discovered; we get this understanding by the word. It is better to know these mischiefs of sin by the threatenings of the word, than by our own bitter experience. It is sin that separates from God, and renders us incapable of all blessings.

Use 1. Study yourselves, and take a view of the case and state of your souls by the glass of the word; see what you gain by every reading, hearing, every time you converse with him, what is given out to convince you of sin, or awaken your soul against sin.

Use 2. When you consult with the word, beg the light of the Spirit, which is only lively and efficacious. The apostle speaks of knowing things in the evidence and 'demonstration of the Spirit and of power,' 1 Cor. ii. 4. There is the same demonstration of the Spirit. There is a manifest difference between the evidence of reason and arguments held out from a natural understanding,

and between the illumination or the demonstration of the Spirit. There are many that may have a full knowledge of the letter and the sense of the words, as they lie open to the evidence of reason, yet be without the light and power of those truths, for that is a fruit of the demonstration of the Spirit, the lively light of the Holy Ghost that goes along with the word.

SERMON CXII.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.—VER. 105.

THE present world, as much as it suits with our carnal nature, it is but like a howling wilderness with respect to Canaan, in which there are many crooked paths and dangerous precipices, yea, many privy snares and secret ambushes laid for us by the devil and his instruments; so that unless we have a faithful guide, a clear, full, and sure direction, we shall certainly miscarry, and every day run into the mouth of a thousand mischiefs. Now God, out of his abundant mercy, hath given us a light, a rule to walk by, to set us clear from these rocks and precipices, and to guide us safe to true happiness. And what is this light? It is his word; so David acknowledged in this verse, *thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

65

Here you may observe—(1.) The double notion by which the direction of the word is set forth. (2.) You have the object, or the matter wherein we are directed; that also is expressed by a double notion, 'It is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.' Let me explain these a little.

1. The two notions whereby the direction is expressed, it is *a light*, that is a more general expression; the other is more particular, it is *a lamp*, possibly with allusion to the lamp of the sanctuary. The use of a lamp is to light in the night, and the light shines in the day. The word of God is both a light and lamp; it is of use to us by day and night, in all conditions, in adversity, in prosperity, in all the conditions we pass through in this world. Chrysostom hath an observation, but I doubt a little too curious, ὁ νόμος λύκνος ὀνομάζεται, ὁ Κρίστος υἱος[4] τῆς δικαιοσύνης, saith he—The law shineth in narrow limits, within small bounds, therefore that is called a lamp; but Christ, in the gospel, is called a son[5] of righteousness.

2. Let us come to the term by which the object is expressed, *path* and *feet*. By *path* is meant our general choice and course of life; the law will direct to that; not only so, but it is a light to our *feet*, that is, will direct us in every step, in every particular action.

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4 Qu. ἥλιος, and 'sun'?—ED.

5 Qu. ἥλιος, and 'sun'?—ED.

Doct. That the word of God is a clear and a full rule to direct us in all the conditions and affairs of the present life.

It is a clear rule, for it is called a lamp; and it is a full rule, for it is a lamp not only for our path, but for our feet. I shall speak of both severally, that it is a lamp and a light.

First, It is a clear rule, and therefore called a light, and that in three regards:—

1. By reason of its direction, as it shows us the right way to our desired end. He that would come to his journey's end needs a way, and needs a light to see and find it out. Our end is eternal life, and that to be enjoyed in heaven: Prov. vi. 23, 'The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.' God hath stated the way that leads to eternal happiness by his wisdom and justice, and revealed it in the scriptures. See that place, Ps. xliii. 3, 'Oh, send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.' We should have wandered up and down in various uncertainties, and have neither pitched upon the right end nor way, but have lost ourselves in a maze of perplexities, if God had not sent forth his light and truth. Austin reckons up two hundred and eighty-eight opinions about the chiefest good. Men are seeking out many inventions, looking here and there to find happiness, but God hath showed the true way.

66

2. It is a light in regard of conviction, as it convinceth of all errors and mistakes both in judgment and practice—*Verum est index sui et obliqui*. In this respect it is said, Eph. v. 13, because of this convincing light that is in the word, 'All things that are reproved, are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.' It discovereth to us our sins as well as our duties; light doth manifest itself, and make all other things manifest. Now this convictive power of the world is double by way of prevention, and by way of reproof.

[1.] By way of prevention. The word of God shows us our danger, pits, precipices, and stumbling-blocks that lie in our way to heaven; it shows us both our food and our poison, and therefore he that walks according to the direction of the word is prevented from falling into a great deal of mischief: 1 John ii. 10, 11, 'He that abideth in the light, there is none occasion of stumbling in him: but he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.' The meaning of that place is this, he that walks according to the light of scripture, and lives in obedience thereto, avoids stumbling; but he that is blinded by his own passion, he wants his light, knows not whither he goes, neither in what way he goes—*respectu viae*, *et respectu termini*. What will be 'the end of his going? He mistakes the way, sins for duties, and good for evil; or he mistakes the end, thinking he is going to heaven, when he is in the highway to hell.

[2.] By way of humiliation and reproof, it discovers our sins to us in their own colours, so as to affect the heart, yea, our secret sins, which could not be found out by any other light: 1 Cor. xiv.

24, ‘When he that believeth not, or is unlearned, comes in, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all.’ The light of the word it brings a sinner upon his face, makes him fall down, acknowledging the majesty of God in his word. God’s word it hath his signature upon it, it is like himself, and bewrayeth its author by its convictive power and majesty. So it is notable, Heb. iv. 12, 13, ‘The word of God is quick and powerful, &c., and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.’ Mark what he had said of the word. He proves the proper ties of the word by the properties of God; that God searcheth all things, God’s word is like himself.

3. It is light in regard of comfort: Eccles. xi. 7, ‘Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;’ especially to those that have been shut up in darkness, and kept in a dungeon. Oh, it is a pleasant thing to behold the light again! So is the word of God light in this sense, to relieve us in all the dark and gloomy passages of the present life.

[1.] In outward darkness. When all outward comforts fail, and have spent their allowance, the comforts of the word are left; there is enough to support and strengthen our hearts in waiting upon God: Ps. xxiii. 4, ‘When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.’ The staff and rod they are instruments of a shepherd, and Christ is our spiritual shepherd, so that this staff and rod are his word and Spirit, they are the instruments of the spiritual shepherd; and this comforts us when we are in the shadow of death; in our crosses, in confusions and difficulties, when we have nothing else left but the promises, this is a reviving to the soul.

[2.] It is a comfort and refreshing to us in spiritual troubles, that arise from the guilt of sin, and want of the sense of God’s love: Isa. 1. 10, ‘Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.’ What shall he do? Shall he compass himself about in his own sparks? Oh, how miserable are we then! No; but let him depend upon God according to his promise. The word of God is a great part of his name; let him stay his heart upon the word of God, when he walketh in darkness, and seeth no light.

Now, that the word of God is such a light, such a sure and clear direction, I shall—(1.) Give a direct proof of it from scripture; (2.) Some types of it; (3.) Prove it by experience; (4.) By reason.

1. For the proof from scripture, you have the notions of the text. So Prov. vi. 23, ‘The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light.’ It is that which keeps us from stumbling. So 2 Peter i. 19, ‘We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.’ The world is a dark place. Ay! but now here is a light that shines in a dark place, and that is the Holy Scripture, ‘the sure word of prophecy;’ it showeth us our way to heaven, and prevents us from stumbling into hell.

2. To prove it by types. Two types I shall mention; one is, Israel being directed by the pillar of a cloud; the other is, the lamp of the sanctuary.

[1.] The type of Israel's being directed by the pillar of the cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night, till they came into the land of Canaan, Exod. xiii. 21. Still they moved up and down, hither and thither, as the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire went before them. Thus our whole course is to be ordered by God's direction. See how this type is expressed, Neh. ix. 19, 'The pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day to lead them in the way, neither the pillar of fire by night to show them light, and the way wherein they should go.' Mark, when they were in the wilderness, the pillar of cloud and fire showed them the way where they were to go; this is an emblem of the safe conduct the church may expect from Christ Jesus in all ages; God's pillar departed not from them by night nor day. So while we are travelling in the wilderness of this our pilgrimage, his word and Spirit is continued to us. When they entered into Canaan, that was a type of heaven, then this pillar of cloud was removed. It is notable, Josh, xiv., when Israel passed over Jordan, we do not read the pillar went before them, but the ark of God was carried before them. So when the church comes to heaven, the resting-place, then this conduct ceaseth; the word hath no more use. Jesus Christ, as the great shepherd, leads his flock into their everlasting fold.

[2.] The other type was the lamp of the sanctuary; we read of that, Exod. xxvii. 20, 21. There was a great lamp hung upon the veil, to distinguish the holy of holies from the other part of the tabernacle, and was fed with pure oil-olive, and this lamp was prepared and trimmed up by the priest daily. Now what did this lamp signify? Mark the application. This pure olive-oil signified God's pure word; without the mixture of human traditions; this hung up in the veil, shined in the church, and every day it was prepared, furnished, set forth by them that are called thereunto, for the use of the faithful.

68

3. Let me prove it by experience, that the word is such a sure direction.

[1.] Because natural men have a sense of it, and upon that account fear it. See John iii. 20, 21, 'Every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' Natural men will not come to the word, they fear it as discovering, and therefore never feel it as refreshing. Evil-doers hate the light; they are afraid of the word lest it should convince them, and discover them to themselves; therefore they stand off, and shun all means of closing with it; there is such conviction in the oar,[6] a secret jealousy of the searching power that is in the word of God.

[2.] Godly men do find a great deal of comfort and satisfaction from this light as to all the doubts and fears of the soul: Ps. xix. 8, 'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.' All their scruples vanish; here is an apt

6 Qu. 'ore'? That is, in a rudimentary state.—ED.

and fit doctrine accommodated to the heart of man. A man hath never true and rational delight till he is fully satisfied in point of religion, till he can have rest for his soul, and commodious notions of God. Now, if you would have rest for your souls, Jer. vi. 16, here it is, the children of God find it. There is a fair compliance in this doctrine with all those natural principles and ingrafted notions within us concerning God and his will; they find satisfaction in it to conscience, though not to fond curiosity; the one is necessary, the other dangerous and unprofitable. Christians! there is a great deal of difference between these two, satisfying conscience and satisfying curiosity, as much as between quenching the thirst of a sober man and satisfying the lust and appetite of a drunkard. Here is enough to satisfy conscience, a fair accommodation of excellent truths to a reasonable nature, truths becoming God, truths suiting with the heart of man, and therefore here they find it to be light, that is a sure direction. The wicked feel the discovery of it, and the saints feel the impression of it.

[3.] We have this external and outward experience to assure us of our rule and light that shines in the word of God, because those that go against this light and direction do sensibly miscarry, and are sure to split themselves upon some rock or other. Our first parent, Adam, when he hearkened to the voice of the serpent rather than the voice of the Lord, destroyed himself and all his posterity. As long as he obeyed the word of God, he remained in a blessed estate in paradise, but when he gave heed to other counsels, he was cast out of paradise, and rendered liable to many sorrows, yea, eternal death. So all that walk in the imagination of their own hearts, and have not light from the word, they presently run themselves into sundry mischiefs. The young prophet is an instance of this, 1 Kings xiii. 21. To go to particular instances would be innumerable, every day's experience will furnish us with enough of this; they that will not take the light of God's word, stumble upon dark mountains, for God hath owned his word to a tittle, owned both the tables: Rom. i. 18, 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven,' &c.; from heaven, by the effects of his wrath. If men be ungodly and unrighteous, they are punished; nay, not only in the general, but in particular: Heb. ii. 2, 'For if the word spoken by angels were steadfast'—why?—'for every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.' By every transgression he means a sin of omission; by every disobedience, a sin of commission. And as he will do so for sins against the law, so sins against the gospel; that place where the gospel was first propounded smarted for the neglect of it: 1 Thes. ii. 16, 'Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost,' for despising the gospel. And still God secures the certainty of our direction by new judgments; those that will go contrary to the word, turn aside to paths of their own, they perish in their devices.

69

4. Let me prove it by reasons that certainly the word must needs be light, that is, a clear and sure direction. I prove it from the author, the instruments, and penmen, and from the ends why God hath given the word.

[1.] From the author of it, it is God's word. Everything that comes from God hath some resemblance of his majesty: 'God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all,' 1 John i. 5. His word is light. If God would give us anything to direct us, it must needs be clear and sure, it must

have light. As at first God gave reason to direct man: John i. 4, ‘That life was the light of men;’ as it came from God, before it was weakened by the fall, it was a full direction, it discovered its author; and now since the fall, still it discovers its author. Conscience, which remains with us, it is called ‘the candle of the Lord,’ Prov. xx. 27. From a glorious sun now it is dwindled to a candle, yet it is called the candle of the Lord; it is a candle lighted by God himself. The understanding and conscience that is privy to our most secret motions, thoughts, and actions; though it may be maimed and lessened by sin, it is sensible of some distinction between good and evil, and acts God’s part in the soul, sometimes condemning, sometimes approving, accusing and excusing by turns, Rom. ii. 15. But, alas! if we were only left to this light, we should be for ever miserable. The light of reason is too short for us now, and there is a double reason; partly, because our chief good and last end being altered by sin, we shall strangely mistake things, if we weigh them in the balance of the flesh, which we seek to please. Now our chief good is altered, or rather we are apt to mistake it; all our business is to please the flesh, and to gratify lust and appetite, Ps. xlix. 12. Therefore go to a man led by carnal and unsanctified reason, he shall ‘put light for darkness, and darkness for light; good for evil, and evil for good,’ Isa. v. 20. He shall confound the names and natures of things, so miserably grope in the dark, and not find out the way to true happiness, either stumbling, dashing his foot against a stone, or wander out of the way in a maze of a thousand uncertainties; therefore it is a blessed thing not to be left to this candle of reason, the light within us, for that will not guide us, but God heath drawn a straight line for us to heaven, which if we follow we cannot miss. Again, partly because man’s condition since the fall is such that he needs a supernatural remedy; before he can be happy, he needs a redeemer. Now the gift of a redeemer depending upon the free grace of God, cannot be found out by natural light, for that can only judge of things necessary, and not of such things as depend upon the arbitrary love of God, therefore this light cannot guide, John iii. 16. Well, then, because the candle of the Lord that is within us is not enough to direct us, God hath set up a lamp in the sanctuary to give us light, and to guide us in the pursuit of true happiness, and that is the scripture. Now, if they have God for their author, surely they must needs be clear and full, for nothing indited by his Spirit can be dark, confused, and inconveniently expressed, either with respect to the things revealed, or to the persons to whom this revelation is made. For if God should speak darkly (here is my argument), especially in necessary things, it is either because God could not speak otherwise, or would not. The former is direct blasphemy; he that made the eye, cannot he see? and he that made the mouth, cannot he speak plainly and intelligibly to his people, so as to be understood by them? And the latter cannot be said, that God would not, for that is contrary to his goodness and love to mankind: Ps. xxv. 8, ‘Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will he teach sinners in the way.’ If this be true, that God is a just good God, he will teach us plainly; the Psalmist infers it, he is just, and will not lead us wrong; he is an upright God, and he is a good God; and therefore, though we have fallen from the state of our creation, though the candle of the Lord burn dim in our hearts since the fall, yet he is a good God, therefore he will show us the way. Now it is not to be imagined that there should not be light in the word of God, that that should be dark, confused, and unintelligible; that the most powerful and wise monarch, and most loving of

all, that he should write a book to teach men the way to heaven, and do it so cloudily, that we cannot tell what to make of it. Therefore if God be the author, this book must be true; here must be light, a clear and sure direction to guide us in all our ways.

[2.] I prove it by reason again, from the instruments used in this work. Shall I take those words for my groundwork? 2 Peter i. 21, 'For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;' that is, it is not the fancies or dictates of men, but the word of God; for they were holy men, and holy men guided by the Holy Ghost, and so guided as that they were moved, borne up by the special motion of the Spirit. Let me reason thus: those that God hath employed to deliver his mind to the world, look either to the prophets of the Old Testament or apostles of the New, and you will find them to be holy men, burning with zeal for God and love to souls; and it is not to be imagined that they would deliver God's mind so darkly that nobody could understand their meaning. Christians they were, not men that were to act a part of their own upon the stage of the world, not men that aimed at ostentation of wisdom and curiosity of science; but they were holy men, they were free from ambition and envy, and other such vile affections, which are wont to make writers to affect obscurity; therefore in all simplicity of style, plainness of heart, and faithfulness to their message, they minded their master's honour and the people's good; they renounced pomp of words and lofty speculations, minded that people might understand the mind of God published lay them. As they were holy men, so they were acted by the Spirit of God. Now the Spirit of God is not a spirit of darkness but a spirit of light, which gives understanding to all men, therefore they spake luminously and clearly. Nay, they were not only acted by the Spirit, but they were borne up by the Spirit, carried by the Holy Ghost while they were employed in this work, publishing the mind of God to the church; they were carried beyond the line of their natural spirits, by an extraordinary impulse infallibly borne up, so that they could not err and miscarry. Now from such holy men that were not swayed by ambition and private aims, so guided, so acted by the Spirit, what can be expected but what is sure, clear, and plain?

105

[3.] I argue and reason again from the end of God in giving us the scriptures; all which doth clearly infer that here is a sure and plain direction that will lead you to heaven. There is a fourfold end wherefore God hath given us the scriptures:—

(1.) That by this means heavenly doctrine might Be kept free from corruption, that men might not obtrude articles of faith upon us and fancies of their own brain, that heavenly doctrine might be put into a stated course and kept pure from corruption. When mankind sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, it was necessary that one way or other they should have light, that God by some way or other would reveal his mind to them, either by word of mouth or by writing. Now God did it by oracles and extraordinary messages at first, while there were but few truths revealed, and such as did not much burden the memory, and while men were long-lived, and so could a great while avouch their message from God, and while they were of great simplicity, and the church was

confined to a few men, to a few families, within a small compass of ground, not liable to those miseries and changes now in latter days. Before Christ came it was fit God should send his messengers; but now in these latter days, when he hath spoken to us by his Son, Heb. i. 1, it is fit the rule of faith should be closed up. It is not for the honour of the Son of God that after him should come any extraordinary nuncio or ambassador from heaven, as if he had not fully discovered his Father's mind. Well, then, therefore God hath put all his messages into writing for the use of after-ages, and for this end that there might be some public standard for trying of things by. Now God's end would not be accomplished if this writing were not clear. Here is the argument, the world would be left at great uncertainties, far more than in old time, and so this end for preserving truth for the use and direction of the church would be wholly lost. Well, then, if God will make a writing serve instead of extraordinary messages, which brought their own evidence with them, certainly he will not put it into words liable to mistake, but that are intelligible. Wisdom saith, Prov. viii. 9, 'They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.' Certainly they that come in simplicity of heart, with a mind to learn God's will, not to cavil, they may know.

72

(2.) God's end in setting forth the scripture was that it might be read of all ages and of all sexes, as the book of the law was to be read in the congregation before the men, women, little ones, and strangers, Deut. xxi.; from day to day it was read in the synagogue, Acts xv. 21; and God would have them teach their children, Deut. vi. 6; and Timothy is commended for reading the scriptures from his youth, 2 Tim. iii. 5. And the apostles do express themselves to be 'debtors both to the wise and unwise, to Greeks and barbarians,' Rom. i. 14, to speak wisdom to the wise and plainness to the simple; and St John he writes to children and young men and fathers, 1 John ii. 13. Well, then, here is my argument, if God would write a book to be read by men, women, children, all sorts, surely it is that all might understand, not that they might repeat it by rote, and toss the words of it in their mouths as parrots do words they understand not; surely, then, they are compiled to profit all.

(3.) God's end in giving the word was for converting of men, or leaving them without excuse. Now take either end, and it shows there must be a plain direction. If for converting of men, then it must be so plain that it may be understood by them, for there is nothing gets to the heart but by the understanding: 'After I was instructed I smote upon my thigh.' And all influences are conveyed by light, and if God gains any heart it is by teaching and by light. Or if it were for leaving them without excuse, it must be by a clear revealing of his will, otherwise they might pretend obscurity. The apostle pleads this, 2 Cor. iv. 2-4; saith the apostle, there is such plain truth in the gospel that every man's conscience may take it up if he will; and if they cannot see the majesty of God in this doctrine they are blinded by Satan; the fault is not in gospel light, but in their own eyes; they cannot complain of God, but of themselves.

(4.) The end is, that it might be a rule of faith and manners by which all doctrines are to be tried. A rule of faith: 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.' And Acts xvii. 11, 'They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.' So to be a rule of manners: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule,' &c. There are many actions which God requireth of us that expose us to great difficulty and hazard. Now, before the heart be gained to them, we had need have a plain proof that it is the will of God; for who will venture his all unless he have a clear warrant, that knows whither he goes, and whither to look for amends, if he suffer the loss of all things? Thus there is light in the word.

Secondly, But now it is a full direction, for David speaks it of his feet and path.

1. In general observe this: it is not a light to our brains to fill us with empty notions, but a light to our feet to regulate our practice and to guide our actions, Jer. vi. 16. He doth not say, *hearken after* the true religion, but *walk therein*. For a man to study the scripture only to satisfy curiosity, only to know what is right and good, and not follow it with all his heart, is but to make a rod for his own back, and doth but cause his own condemnation to be sore and terrible, Luke xii. 47. To be able to dispute for truth and not lie under the power of it, to avoid heresy and live in vice, will never bring him to heaven, Gal. vi. 16. It is not them that are able to talk of it, but to 'walk according to this rule;' not to play with it, but to work with it. Knowledge and practice must be joined together; they do never well asunder, but excellent together.

2. In our practice.

[1.] Our path, our general choice. A man that consults with God's word, 'The Lord will teach him the way that he shall choose,' Ps. xxv. 12. Everything appointed to an end must have all things absolutely necessary to that end, else it is not perfect in its kind; though perfect to guide us to eternal life; therefore it must contain all things that belong or conduce to that end. It is not a rule given us to be rich or safe, but to be eternally happy.

[2.] As it is a light to our path, so to our feet. How? In the particular actions that we perform, and in the particular conditions that we pass through.

(1.) In the particular actions that we perform. Every action we go about must be guided by the word. Why? Because obedience in particular actions we are most apt to miscarry in. Many are wise in generals, but in particulars they quite mistake their way. We have general notions that we must be holy; ay! but we are not 'holy in all mariner of conversation,' 1 Peter i. 15. In every creek and turning of our lives, in all our actions of eating, drinking, sleeping, and waking, we are to be mindful and respect the command of God in all these. No path of a Christian's conversation but ought to savour of grace and holiness; not only his religious, but his common and civil actions. Every action is a step to heaven or hell, for this life is compared to a walk, and in a walk every step brings us onward in our way. Briefly, in every act, either sin or grace interposeth, therefore we had need look to every step, and still to walk according to rule.

(2) It guides us in all the conditions that we pass through. In every age; here is milk for the weak, and strong meat for men of ripe age. In every calling, from the king to the lowest beggar. In every state of life, adversity, prosperity, still here is light for you.

There are two parties whose interest it is to decry the clearness of scripture, papists and libertines. Papists, they are afraid to stand to this trial, they would bring all to the judgment of the church; therefore, it is for their interest that the scriptures were not a clear, safe, and a full direction. Libertines, they decry the clearness of scripture upon several grounds. Those that plead for a boundless toleration, what is their great argument? Nothing is certain in religion. If the word be a clear rule, then, &c.

74

SERMON CXIII.

The word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.—VER. 105.

HERE I shall answer five objections that are made by cavillers.

Object 1. First, If it be so clear a light, why do men so often mistake that have the scriptures, and consult with them? yea, why is there such differences among good men?

Ans. I answer, in general, there is light in the scriptures, but there is darkness in men that are conversant about them. The object may be well represented when the faculty is not well disposed. There are defects in them to whom this discovery is made; though they have light, yet they want eyes. The sun giveth light enough, though blind men cannot see it; the word doth whatsoever is necessary on its own part. To the beholding of anything by the outward sense, there must not only be light to make the object conspicuous, but also a faculty of seeing in the eye; blind men cannot see at noonday, nor the sharpest-sighted at midnight. There is light in the scriptures surely, for God would not deal hypocritically with us that are his people; if he hath given us a rule, he would not wrap it up in darkness, so as we should not know his meaning; so that the defect is in us. This in general.

But, secondly, there are many causes of men’s mistake.

1. Some come to the word with a presumption of their own wit, and leaning upon their own understanding, as if that should discover the whole counsel of God, and these God never undertook to teach: Ps. xxv. 9, ‘The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way.’ Those that, in a humble sense of their own nothingness, depend upon his direction, them will he teach: James i. 21, ‘Receive with meekness the ingrafted word of God.’ We have caution given us, and admonitions against pride and arrogance and self-dependence, Prov. iii. 3-6.

2. Many bring their prejudicate opinions along with them, and are biassed and prepossessed before they come to the word of God, and so do not so much take up the sense which the scriptures offer, as seek to impose their own sense on them, and regulate the scriptures to their own hearts, not regulating their hearts and principles and senses according to the word of God. *Optimus ille lector est*, saith Hilary, *qui dictorum intelligentiam expectat*, &c. That mind which is preoccupied with evil opinions, and enslaved to preconceived conclusions, they do not take anything from the word, but impose something upon it which God never revealed there. If the weights be equal, yet if the balance be not equipendent, wrong may be done. They come with an idol in their own hearts, Ezek. xiv. 2, as those that would ask counsel of the Lord, that were resolved beforehand, Jer. xlii. While we look through the spectacles of our own fancies and preconceptions, the mind, poisoned with error, seemeth to see what we see not.

3. Some search the scriptures not out of any love to the truth, or to know the mind of God, but to oppose it rather, and so seek a pretence from thence to justify their private faction in way of opposition against God. The devil gets scripture to wrest it to his own purpose, Mat. iv. 6. They read not to be better, but to cavil, and put a greater varnish upon the devil's cause, as Julian did search the scriptures to pick an advantage against the true religion, and scoff at them that professed it; and Herod inquired after the place where Jesus was born, not to adore him, but to kill him, Mat. ii. 8. Our great rule is, John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.' When you come to study the scriptures, to be the better for them, and not to cavil, then you are in the way to find profit from them.

75

4. Some come to the word leavened with some carnal affections, and so their hearts are blinded by their lusts and passion: 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.' There is evidence enough in the truth, but their hearts are wedded to their sins, and so cannot see it; they are ambitious, and seek after honour and worldly greatness; and the whole bent and scope of the scripture being against their design, they can never have a perfect understanding of it; their hearts are full of avarice, earthly-mindedness, and some other beloved sin that they cherish, which doth defile all that they touch, even the very word of God. Hag. ii. 13, A man that was unclean by a dead body, whatsoever he. touched was also unclean, even holy things; and, Titus i. 15, 'To the impure all things are impure;' and so by the just judgment of God are blinded and hardened in their own prejudices, for the light they have hindereth them from discerning the truth.

5. Some content themselves with some superficial apprehensions, and do not dig deep in the mines of knowledge, and therefore no wonder they mistake in many things: Prov. ii. 4, 5, 'If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.' No excellent things are to be had without pain and industry and search; certainly the knowledge of God's word must cost us great pains.

6. Where men are right in the main, and give diligence to know God's mind, there will be mistakes in lesser things. All have not parts alike, and gifts and graces alike, and therefore there is some variety of opinions and interpretations of scripture among the godly wise. Every man is not so happy to be so well studied, nor hath not that ability to understand, nor so furnished with acquired helps of arts and tongues, nor such a degree of the Spirit. There is a difference in age, growth, and experience among good men; some are babes, and some grown in years in Christianity, Phil. iii. 15. Grace is bewrayed in knowledge, as well as in holiness.

Object. 2. If there be such a light in the scriptures, what need is thereof the Spirit?

Ans. I answer—The scriptures are the means of light, the Spirit is the author of light, both together enlighten the eyes, Ps. xix. 8. These two must be taken in conjunction, not in exclusion. To pretend to the Spirit and neglect the scriptures, makes way for error and fond conceits: 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.' Light is not contrary to light; so to study the scriptures, and neglect the Spirit, who 'searcheth out the deep things of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 11, leaveth us in darkness about God's mind. The object to be known is fixed in the scriptures, but the faculty that knoweth must be enlightened by the Spirit. There is a literal understanding of the scriptures and a spiritual understanding, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Now, as to the spiritual understanding of them, there needs the Spirit, 'for the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit;' so that here is a fair correspondence between the word and the Spirit.

76

Object. 3. If the scriptures be so plain, what need of the ministry?

Ans. 1. I answer—It is God's institution, and we must submit to it, though we could see no reason for it. That it is God's institution is plain, for he hath set some in the church, not only apostles and prophets, but pastors and teachers, to apply scriptures to us; and, 1 Cor. i. 21, 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' If there were no reason but this, because it is God's institution, we should submit to it.

2. The use of the ministry is to explain and vindicate truth. Men darken counsel with words, and render plain things obscure by their litigations and unprofitable debates. Now they are set for the defence of the truth, εἰς ἀπολόγιαν, Phil. i. 7. And the ministry must be ἀντεχόμενος, Titus i. 9, 'Able to convince the gainsayers;' good at holding and drawing; it is the human help for weak understandings. The eunuch was reading, and could not tell what to make of it, then God sent him an interpreter, Acts viii. Now God's help should not be despised; when he will employ men to solve doubts, to guide us in our way to heaven, we should thankfully accept of it, rather than quarrel at the institution.

3. They are of use to apply generals to particular cases, and to teach us how to deduce genuine inferences from those truths laid down in the scriptures. Mal. ii. 7, in this sense it is said, 'The

priest's lips should preserve knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.' God hath appointed this office to some, to solve the doubts that do arise about particular exigencies and cases, and to make out the mind of God to his people, otherwise they need go no farther than the tables and books of Moses to seek the law; but God hath appointed some in the church that are skilled m consequences and deductions, to raise matter therefrom, so that it is a minister's work to open and explain scripture.

4. There is a use of the ministry to keep doctrines still afoot in the church, and to keep us in remembrance. Ministers are the Lord's remembrancers; it is a great part of their office to mind people of their duty. The word is a light, but it must be set in the candlestick of the church; they are to hold out the light for our direction and guidance.

5. There is a peculiar blessing and efficacy to a Christian from their calling: Mat. xxviii. 20, 'Lo, I am with you to the end of the world.'

Object. 4. It is said, 2 Peter iii. 16, that there are some things hard to be understood, therefore how should it be a clear rule to us? There upon many take occasion to tax the scriptures of obscurity, and cry out that nothing is certain in religion, and so hinder and discourage men from the study of the word.

77

Ans. 1. I answer—The apostle saith there are δυσνόητα, some things *hard* to be understood, but doth not say there are ἀνόητα, things that *cannot* be understood; not there are things impossible to be understood, but there is some difficulty in them, to exercise our diligence, to subdue our pride, for the humbling of us, for the prevention of the contempt of things easy and plain, that are soon despised, to excite us to prayer for knowledge, to avoid satiety in this holy banquet.

2. The second thing that I answer is this; he doth not say there are πολλὰ, but τίνα; *many* things, but *some*. Though there are some things propounded which are difficult, to exercise our diligence, yet other things are plainly delivered, to invite our search. *Multa sunt aperta et manifesta* (saith Austin) *unde aperiuntur*, &c. Though there are some things obscure, there are many things will help to clear them, and whatsoever is necessary to salvation is clear. There are some things hidden like spots in the moon and stones in the earth, things that serve for plenitude of knowledge and curiosity. He saith these things are hid, but now things necessary to salvation are made obvious to us; as water and bread, they are not hard to come by, but gold and silver is hid in the bowels of the earth; and therefore though there be some things hard to be understood, he doth not say they are not to be understood. Now the question between us and the papists is not, whether some things in the scripture be obscure, but whether they be so obscure as that people ought not to read them, or cannot with any profit, and that there can be no certainty thence deduced? As to the defining things controverted in matters necessary to salvation, we say there are some things hard to be understood, to keep us humble, to quicken us to pray for the Spirit, yet for the most part God's mind is plain

and easy to be understood by them that humbly depend upon Christ teaching in the use of the appointed means.

Object. 5. Another objection is from experience; a poor Christian complaineth, as Job xix. 8, 'He hath set darkness in my path that I cannot pass.' They would fain know the mind of God in some particular cases, but they cannot see it.

Ans. I answer—This darkness of ours should not be urged to the disparagement of the word. We are under many doubts, we are divided between light and interest, we puzzle and grope, and would reconcile the light of the scriptures and our interests together, but this should not disparage the word. The scriptures complain of our darkness, not of its own, and the saints always say, Lord, do not make a plainer law; but open our eyes, in the 18th verse of this psalm; this is Chrysostom's gloss upon that place. When a man walketh in the way of his own heart, his way may be darkness, and he may stumble, and know not whither he goeth. But you that give up yourselves sincerely to the directions of his word, he will make your path clear and plain before you; that is, when you seek nothing but God's glory, and your own eternal salvation for your end, and come with a humble meek mind to seek God's counsel, being free from the preoccupations of self-conceits, being resolved to follow God's directions whatever they, be, and use that diligence which is necessary; you will not be long kept in the dark.

78

Use 1.—[1.] To inform us how to answer this question, how to know whether the scriptures be the word of God. It shows itself, and evidenceth itself to be so; for it is a light that discovers itself, and all things else, without any other testimony. When the sun is up, there needs no witness and proof that it is light. Let the least child bring a candle into a room, and as it discovers other things, so it discovers itself. So the word of God is that which discovers itself to us, yea, it hath a self-evidencing light.

[2.] If the word be a light, it informs us, then, there is none that are above the scriptures. There is a fond conceit that men take up, that the scriptures are for novices and young beginners, not for strong Christians. David was no novice, yet he saith, 'Thy word is a light.' And Daniel was no novice, yet he got understanding by the prophecy of the prophet Jeremiah, Dan. ix. 2. Timothy was no novice, who was to 'give attendance to reading, and exhortation, and doctrine,' 1 Tim. iv. 13. Aye! but what is meant by that place, 2 Peter i. 19? 'We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.' From thence many gather that as soon as Christ is revealed in us, we should not look after the scriptures, for it is said, 'until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.' Some understand this place of the light of glory, and others of the light of the gospel; you do well to take heed to the Old Testament light, till you have the New Testament light, which is most agreeable to the mind of God. For my part, I pitch upon the former, and shall understand it of the dawning of eternity, or Christ's second coming, which is called in scripture a day which shall then begin and never be ended, after which there is no night, nor any other day, but a blessed eternity; and sometimes it is called 'the day,' 2

Tim. iv. 8, and ‘that day,’ 1 Thes. v.4; and Christ is called ‘the bright morning star,’ Rev. xxii. 16, and ‘the glorious[7] shall shine like the morning stars,’ Dan. xii. 3, and Rev. ii. 28. Our happiness is expressed by a day-star; so that the meaning is, take heed unto this word until the day of eternity dawn upon you, till you come to the light of glory, till you have a greater light than that of the gospel.

Now, I rather pitch upon this interpretation, because they to whom the apostle wrote were converted Jews, and did not only own the Old Testament, but had already received the gospel light, the day-star was risen upon their hearts, so that he bids them take heed to the sure word of prophecy, till the light of glory was revealed to them. I know there are some divines understand it of a more clear and plentiful knowledge of the gospel, who take prophecy to be the scriptures of the Old Testament that they were to take heed to, till the gospel light did arise upon them; and the times of the Old Testament were called night, Rom. xiii. 12, but now the gospel time is called day. But if it be understood thus, then some say that the law must be cast off when the gospel appeared to them, because it is said, ‘until the day.’ Those divines explain themselves safely enough herein, for, say they, until doth not always note *terminum temporis*, the end of time, but *continuationem actus*, the continuation of the act, until the time, and afterwards, as it is spoken in other scriptures, ‘their sin shall not be blotted out till they die,’ that is never; but for the former reason that I have given before, I think it is meant of the light of glory.

79

Use 2. Reproof.—[1.] Of those that walk in the midst of this light, and yet perceive no more of the things of God, than if they were in darkness, these lose the benefit which God vouchsafeth to them: John i. 5, ‘The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not;’ and John iii. 19, ‘The light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.’ It had been better for them they had never heard of the scriptures, and that God had never set up such a lamp in the church. These men believe the word of God is a light and a lamp, yet never take care of, nor give heed to it; they are careless, and never measure their actions according to this rule.

[2.] It reproves those that set up another rule, and look for an infallible interpreter.

(1.) Those that set up reason instead of the word of God. Alas! this is an imperfect rule; these men would bring down all things before the tribunal of their own reason; these are not disciples of Christ, but masters; they will not be taught by the directions of the word, but by their own dark hearts. I have told you the candle of the Lord did burn bright within us; but alas! now it is weakened by sin, it is an imperfect irrational thing, we can never be saved by it.

(2.) Others are guided by their passions and lusts; this is their direction and their lamp; this will surely lead them to utter darkness: ‘If you live after the flesh, you shall die,’ Rom. viii. 13.

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7 Qu. ‘wise’?—ED.

(3.) Some take the counsel and example of others, this will leave them comfortless, and make them fall into the snare.

(4.) Some go to witches in straits, as the prophet reproves such, Isa. viii. 19, 20, ‘Should not a people seek unto their God?’

(5.) Others expect new revelations from heaven to counsel them; they would converse, with angels now God hath spoken to us by his Son: Gal. i. 8, ‘If an angel from heaven should bring another gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.’

Use 3. Caution to enterprise nothing but what you have a warrant for out of the word of God. When you are going about any action, say, Where is my warrant? If I do it upon my own brain, I must stand to my own hazard; and ail the evil that comes upon me, it is the fruit of my own counsel. Num. xxvii. 21, the priest was to ask counsel of the Lord, who shall go out, and who shall go in; and 1 Sam. xxiii. 9. 10. To do things with a doubting conscience, with an uncertainty, whether it be good or bad, it is a sin; for ‘whatsoever is not of faith, is sin;’ still seek your direction from the word.

Use 4.—[1.] It exhorts us to bless God, and be thankful for this light: Isa. ix. 2, ‘The people that sat in darkness saw great light.’. There is the same difference between the church and other places, as there was between Egypt and Goshen, Exod. x. 23. Here is light, and in other places thick darkness. What a mercy it is that we have present direction, a light to guide us here in grace, that will bring us to glory. Give thanks to God for so great a benefit.

[2.] Walk according to the directions of the word; walk in the light,’ Eph. v. 8; believe it, Heb. iv. 2, the true and infallible truth that came out of God’s mouth; and then apply it; say, This truth which is spoken is spoken to me, Mat. xiii. 37, and urge thy heart with the duties of it; this was spoken for our learning, be persuaded of this truth, and so walk and so do, and you shall not find any miscarriage, 1 Cor. xv. 58. Here is my warrant and my direction, I will keep to it, though it expose me to many hazards and straits, I know it will be made up at last, it will not be lost labour to do what God biddeth thee to do.

80

SERMON CXIV.

I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.—VER. 106.

IN the former verse David had commended the word for a sure direction; it is a light and a lamp. How so? Not only by God’s designation and appointment, but by David’s choice, ‘It was a light to my feet, and a lamp to my steps.’ Now, in this verse, he speaks of his firmness and constancy

to that choice; I have taken thy word for my guidance and direction, and there he did resolve to stick. His constancy was grounded upon a vow, or upon a promissory oath, which he saw no cause to retract or repent of: 'I have sworn, and I will perform it,' &c.

In which words you may observe—

1. The strength of David's resolution and purpose, expressed in his oath; not I must, or I will keep, but *I have sworn,* '&c.

2. The matter of this purpose or oath, and that was to *keep God's judgments*.

3. One great motive and reason that inclined him so to do, in the word, *thy righteous judgments*; the marvellous equity that was to be observed in the things commanded by God.

4. The conscience that lay upon him of observing this oath, *I will perform it.* As if he had said, I saw a great deal of reason to make the promise so solemnly to God, and I see no reason at all to retract it.

Four points I shall observe:—

1. That it is not only lawful, but good and profitable, to bind our selves to our duty by a vow, solemnly declared purpose, and holy oath; so David, *I have sworn*.

2. That this help of an oath or vow should be used in a matter lawful, weighty, and necessary, 'I have sworn,' saith David; but what hath he sworn? *To keep thy righteous judgments*. A great duty which God had enjoined him in his covenant.

3. Those that are entered into the bond of a holy oath must religiously observe and perform what they have sworn to God: I have sworn, *and I will perform*.

4. That we may perform our oaths, and lie under a sense and conscience of our engagements to God, it is good that they should be often revived and renewed upon us; for so doth David here recognise his oath, *I have sworn that,* &c.

81

Doct. 1. That it concerns us sometimes to bind ourselves to God, and the duty that we owe to him, by an oath.

1. That it is lawful so to do appears from God's injunction, and the practice of the saints.

[1.] From God's injunction. He hath commanded us to accept of the gospel covenant, and not barely so, but to submit unto the seals and rites by which it is confirmed, which submission of ours implieth an oath made to God. Baptism is our *sacramentum militare*, sacramental vow, our oath of allegiance to God; and therefore it is called, 1 Peter iii. 21, ἐπερώτημα. 'The answer of a good conscience towards God,' an answer upon God's demands in the covenant. God does, as it were,

in the covenant of grace, put us to the question, Will you renounce all your sins, and all the vanities you have doted upon? And we answer to God, enter into a solemn oath, that we will renounce sin, that we will accept of Christ as our Saviour, and will walk before him in all holy obedience. Among the Romans, when any soldier was pressed for war, he took an oath to serve his captain faithfully, and not to forsake him, and then he was called *miles per sacramentum*, a soldier by sacrifice or by oath; and sometimes one took an oath for all the rest, and the others only said, The same oath he took, the same do I; and these were called *milites per conjurationem, et milites evocati*. Thus every Christian is a professed soldier of Christ; he hath sworn to become the Lord's, to cleave faithfully to him; and this oath, that it may not be forgotten, is renewed at the Lord's supper, where again we solemnly engage, by the public rites that are there used, to stand to our covenant. We do not only come and take God's enfeoffment, take a pledge out of God's hands, to be assured of the privileges of the covenant, but we bind ourselves to perform the duty thereof; for as the blood of the beast. Exod. xxiv. 7, 8, that was offered in the sacrifice, which is called there the blood of the covenant, was sprinkled not only upon the altar, to show that God was engaged to bless, but sprinkled half upon the people, to show they were engaged to obey; there was a confirmation of that promise made to God, 'All that the Lord hath commanded us, that will we do.' Well, now, if God thought such a course necessary and profitable for us, certainly we may upon occasion use the like means for our confirmation, for our strengthening in the work of obedience. That there is such a vow expressed or implied in every prayer may be easily made good in the whole tenor of our Christianity; therefore certainly it is lawful so to do, to make our duty more urgent and explicit upon our souls, by solemn vow and serious oath of dedication of ourselves to God's use and service.

[2.] The practice of the saints, who have publicly and privately engaged themselves to God, do show the lawfulness of it. Public instances: 2 Chron. xv. 12-14, 'They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart and soul; and they sware unto the Lord,' &c. So in Josiah's time: 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31, 'And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord, and keep his commandments,' &c. So Neh. x. 29, 'They entered into an oath to walk in God's laws.' And for private oaths, we have David's instance here in the text; and Job xxxi. 1, 'I made covenant with mine eyes.' He had bound himself by a holy vow and purpose to guard his senses, and take heed his heart did not take fire by the gazing of his eye, that it was not inflamed with lust and sin.

2. That it is convenient so to do.

[1.] To answer God's love and condescension to us in the covenant. God thinks he can never be bound fast enough to us, and therefore interposeth by an oath. An oath is properly conversant about a doubtful matter, of which there is some question or scruple, which cannot otherwise be decided; then the law saith, he should give his oath to his neighbour. Why then doth the Lord swear? Is there any doubtfulness in his promises? No; the apostle saith, Heb. vi. 18, the Lord swears, being willing over and above to give 'the heirs of promise 'ample satisfaction. Now for God, that cannot

lie, and whose word is above all assurance, to stoop to us, and put himself to an oath, certainly this should work upon our hearts, and draw from us some answerable return on our part, there being great and visible danger of our breaking with God, none of God's breaking with us; therefore, that we may not play fast and loose with him, we should come under this engagement to him of vow and public promise to God.

[2.] To testify our affection to his service, we should put ourselves under the most high and sacred bonds that can be found out. Many have some slight and wandering motions towards God, and cold purposes of serving him, which soon vanish, and come to nothing; but now it argueth the heart is more thoroughly bent and set towards God, and that we have a deep sense of our duty, when we seriously confirm our purpose by a vow and holy oath. There are divers sorts of men in the world, some that are of that spirit as to break all bonds, cast away all cords, and think they can never be loose enough in point of religion, Ps. ii. 3. They seek to deface and blot out of their conscience the natural sense which they have of religion and of their duty to God, and so give up themselves headlong to all manner of impiety. There are others have some cold approbation of the way of God, and which manifests itself by some faint, weak, and wavering purposes, and slight attempts upon religion, but are soon discouraged, and never come to a fixed resolution, or serious dedication or surrender of themselves to the Lord's use. Now, a gracious heart thinks it can never be bound fast enough to God, therefore doth not only approve the ways of God, or desire to walk therein, but issues forth a purpose, a practical decree m his soul. Besides the approbation of conscience, there is a desire of heart, _and this desire backed with a purpose, and this promise backed with an oath, which is the highest way of obligation; and thus doth he dedicate himself to the Lord and his service, in the strictest way of expressing his consent, for an oath binds more than a promise.

3. It is very profitable so to do, because of our backwardness, laziness, and fickleness.

[1.] Because of our backwardness; we need to thrust forth the heart into the ways of obedience, for we hang off from God. Though we are his by every kind of right and title, yet we are very slow of heart to do his will, and therefore an oath is profitable to increase the sense of our duty; a threefold cord is not easily br6ken. Now there is a triple tie and bond upon a man.

(1.) There is God's natural right that he hath over us and to our service, the sovereignty and dominion that he hath over us. We are not free as to obedience before the oath, but are bound by creation; for God hath created us, not only as he created other things, ultimately and terminatively, but immediately, for his service. All things were created for his glory, so that ultimately they are for his use; but the proper end and use wherefore man was created was for the immediate service of God. He that planteth a vine expecteth fruit from it. By continual preservation; he giveth us maintenance, and therefore justly expecteth service. By redemption, as having bought us with a dear price, 1 Cor. vi. 20. From all which there resulteth a natural duty which we owe to him as our sovereign, and he may command us what he will.

(2.) There is the bond of voluntary consent, that our duty may be more active and urging upon our hearts. God doth not only inter pose his own authority and command us to keep his laws diligently, Ps. cxix. 4, but requires a consent on the creature's part. All the treaties and tenders of grace are made to draw us to this consent, that we may voluntarily and by the inclination of our own hearts present our selves before the Lord, and yield up ourselves to his service, Rom. vi. 13.

(3.) Besides this there is the bond of an oath, which is the strictest way of voluntary resolution and highest engagement that a man can make; therefore when the heart is so backward, and hangs off from God and duties we owe to him, it is good to declare our assent in the most solemn way. That the saints have made use of purposes thus solemnly declared in case of backwardness appears in scripture. David, when his heart was shy of God's presence, and had sinned away his liberty and peace, and so could not endure to come to God, what course doth he take? He issues forth a practical decree in his soul, and binds his heart by a fixed purpose that he would come to God, Ps. xxxii. 5. So Acts xi. 23; he exhorteth them with full purpose of heart to draw nigh to God; it should be the fixed resolution of the soul. And Jer. xxx. 21, 'Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord.' We should lay the strongest bonds and engagements we possibly can, whereby God's authority may be backed, and his right confirmed, by the most solemn assent that we can make.

[2.] In regard of our fickleness and inconstancy; we are slippery, off and on with God: 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways,' James i. 8. We have unsettled hearts, and when we meet with temptations from without we shall soon give up at the first assault, and so be now for God, anon for Satan; therefore this is a lawful and sanctified means to help us to constancy. Indeed, before we come to this fixed settled purpose we lie open to temptation; and when our first heats are spent we tire and wax weary in the Lord's service, therefore we had need make the most sacred engagements to God, that we may keep to God and persist in our duty. Now a solemn oath seems to be the most serviceable for this use. Why? For it implies a severe and dreadful imprecation. In an oath God is not only invoked as a witness but as a judge. We appeal to his omnisciency for the sincerity of our hearts in making promise, and to his vindictive power as a judge if we shall act contrary to what we have sworn. Saith Plutarch, Every oath implies a curse, or a desire of vengeance, in case of the breach of that oath; therefore it is said, Neh. x. 29, 'They entered into a curse to walk in God's law;' that is, a curse in case of disobedience. And this was supposed to be the meaning of that rite by which they were wont to confirm their covenants. Jer. xxxiv. 18, when the calf was cut in twain they did as it were devote themselves thus to be cut in twain and torn in pieces, and to be destroyed as that creature was, if they violated the covenant thus solemnly sworn; and though this imprecation or execration should not be expressed, yet every promissory oath necessarily implies a curse in case of unfaithfulness. Well, now, this is a good means to keep us constant when we have bound ourselves to God upon such strict terms; therefore some derive ὅρκος from εἴργω, to hedge, because it is as a hedge to keep us within the compass of our duty, and confirm our hearts in that which is good. Well, then, because of our fickleness it is not enough to leave the soul to the

mere bonds of duty, but confirm our resolution by an oath. I may illustrate this by that passage, when Hooper the blessed martyr was at the stake, and the officers came to fasten him to it, saith he, Let me alone; God that hath called me hither, he will keep me from stirring; and yet, because I am but flesh and blood, I am willing; tie me fast, lest I stir. So we may say in this case, though the authority of God commanding his right in us and sovereignty over us is reason enough to enforce the duty we owe to him, and bind the heart and sway the conscience, yet because of the weakness of our hearts we should make this bond the more urging upon us by a solemn consent, thus ratified and confirmed by the solemnity of an oath, vow, or promise made to God.

[3.] It will be very profitable because of our laziness; by resolution we are quickened to more seriousness and diligence. When a man hath the bond of an oath upon him, then he will make a business of religion, whereas otherwise he will make but a sport and a thing he only regards by the by. Oh! but when his heart is fixed this is the thing he will look after, Ps. xxvii. 4. When our heart is set upon a thing we follow it close; and when it is so set upon a thing as that we have bound ourselves by the strictest bonds we can lay upon our heart, it will engage us more seriously.

Doct. 2. That this help of an oath or holy vow should be used in a matter lawful, weighty, necessary.

1. In a matter lawful. There is a vow and covenanting in that which is evil; as those that ‘bound themselves with a curse that they would not eat nor drink until they had killed Paul,’ Acts xxiii. 12. And many will make a vow and promise with themselves that they will never forgive their neighbour such an offence. Arid we read of a covenant made with death and hell: whether it be meant of the king of Babylon or no, as he is called death and hell by the prophet, some evil covenant is intended thereby; and thus a vow is made the bond of iniquity, and must be broken rather than kept, or indeed it must not be made. To vow that which is sinful, this is like the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog offered to the Lord for a vow, Deut. xxiii. 18.

85

2. It must be in a matter weighty, necessary, and acceptable unto God. There are two things come under our vow and oath:—

[1.] That which is our necessary work, religious obedience to God in the way of his commandment; for this is not a rash and unnecessary vow, but that we were sworn to in baptism; this is that which David promiseth here, ‘I have sworn, and I will perform it, to keep thy righteous judgments.’ And this is the vow which Jacob made, though there was something of a particularity he adds to it, Gen. xxviii. 20, 21; but the substance of it was this, ‘If the Lord will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go, then shall the Lord be my God.’ There are many that will vow and promise trifles, and so infringe their own Christian liberty, and needlessly bind themselves in chains of their own making, where God hath left them free. This help is for the weighty things of Christianity, not for by-matters. Those monkish by-laws have filled the world with superstition,

not with religion, while they have been only conversant about some indifferent things, as pilgrimages, abstinences from meats and marriages, wherein they place the height of Christian perfection.

[2.] Helps to obedience. Such things as we shall find to be helps, and do conduce to the removal of impediments, such should come under a vow and solemn promise to God: Job xxxi. 1, 'I made a covenant with my eyes;' that was a help to the preserving of his chastity, that he would not allow himself to gaze, to take a view of the beauty of others. And the apostle, when it was for the glory of God, makes a vow or kind of solemn promise that he would take no maintenance in Achaia, 2 Cor. xi, 10; he solemnly binds himself, that he might not hinder the progress of the gospel. So when we find our heart ready to betray us by this or that evil occasion, we may in this case inter pose a vow and promise, but then with this caution, that we do not unreasonably destroy our Christian liberty, and so occasion a snare to our souls, and that we do not think this to be a perfect cure of these distempers, while we neglect the main things; as many will make a vow to play no more at such a game, or drink no more at such a house, or use such a creature, or come into such a particular company, and so place all their religion in these things; this is but like cutting off the branches when the root remains, or stopping one hole in a leaky or ruinous ship and vessel, when everywhere it is ready to let in water upon us, and to be broken in pieces. Therefore when you rest in those by-matters, without resolving to cleave to God in a course of obedience, it but like mending a hole in the wall of a house when the whole building is on fire, or troubling ourselves with a sore finger when we are languishing of a consumption; it is but stopping this or that particular sin when the whole soul lies under the power and slavery of the kingdom of Satan.

Object. But here is a doubt may arise, How can I promise to keep God's law, since it is not in my power to do it exactly? it is impossible.

Ans. I. When David saith, 'I have sworn,' &c., he speaks not from a presumption of his own strength, but only declareth the sense of his duty, and useth his oath as a sanctified means to bind his heart to God; and therefore it is not to exclude the power of God's grace, or to presume of his own strength: God's assistance is best expected in God's way.

2. Such vows and promises they are always to be interpreted to be made in the sense of the covenant of grace, for no particular voluntary or accessory covenant of ours can take away the general covenant wherein we stand engaged to God, but rather it must be included in it. Therefore when David saith, 'I will keep thy righteous judgments,' he means according to the sense of the covenant of grace, that is, expecting help for duties and pardon for failings.

[1.] As expecting help from God, for so the new covenant gives strength to observe what it requires. *Lex jubet, evangelium juvat*—the law enforceth duty, the covenant of grace helps us to perform the duty required of us. The gospel it is a 'ministration of the Spirit,' 2 Cor. iii. 8, and therefore promissory oaths, according to the sense of the new covenant, are made with a confidence upon the Lord's strength and assistance.

[2.] Seeking pardon for his failings. Infirmities may stand with the covenant of grace, provided we crave mercy and recover ourselves by repentance, and so make no final breach with God; therefore this is a keeping according to the measure of grace received, and as human frailty will permit.

Briefly, then, when are sins to be looked upon as infirmities, and not as perjuries and breach of covenant?

Ans. When we would not voluntarily yield to the least sin; but in case of great sin, we grow more watchful, more humble, more holy; when our falls are such as David's when he had fallen foully: Ps. lvi. 6, 'Now thou shalt make me to know wisdom.' When upon our failings we are more ashamed of ourselves, more afraid of our weakness, more earnest to renew our former resolutions, more careful to wait upon God for grace to perform what he hath required of us, more watchful, more circumspect; when we begin to grow wise by our own smarting, in such cases an oath is not broken. Look, as every failing of the wife doth not dissolve the marriage covenant, so every failing on our part doth not dissolve the covenant between God and us; and therefore, though there will be some infirmities, but yet when we are careful to sue out our pardon in the name of Christ Jesus, and you shall by your failings be more watchful, circumspect, then we keep the covenant in a gospel sense.

Doct. 3. That when we have sworn obedience to God, we must religiously perform and observe what we have sworn to God.

So Ps. lxxvi. 11, 'Vow and pay unto the Lord.' When we come under the bond of a vow, we must be careful to make payment; it is a binding upon the heart. See how it is expressed, Num. xxx. 2, 'If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word.' When we have bound ourselves with a bond, that is, when we have increased our bonds (for the ingeminating words in the Hebrew doth exceedingly increase the sense). When a man is bound upon a bond he should not play fast and loose with God, but be very careful to perform what he hath sworn. God, on his part, hath sworn to the covenant, and he is constant in all his promises, and he certainly expects the like constancy from us, especially when we are so deeply bound, not only by his laws and obligation of his mercies, but by the solemn consent of our own vows. We have bound ourselves, then, to keep them, whether we will or no. Now, what reasons are there why we must perform?

87

1. The same motives that inclined us at first to take our oath should persuade us to keep it whatever falls out. After trial we shall see no cause to repent of our resolution, for God is ever the same that he was, and his commands are ever the same in all his righteous judgments, holy, just, good, profitable to the creature. Christians! if we meet with any change in our outward condition, any new impediments, oppositions, and discouragements that we were not aware of when we first entered into our oath, it was our rashness, for we should sit down and count the charges, we should

allow for it. The first article of the new covenant was that we should deny ourselves, Mat. xvi. 24; and after vows we should not make inquiry, but before, Prov. xx. 25. When we are bound we must take our lot and hazard, and whatever comes we must perform them to God.

2. Because our oath is a further aggravation of our sin, therefore better never swear than not to keep it: Eccles. v. 5, 'Better it is that thou shouldest not vow, than vow and not pay.' God is mocked by an oath and a covenant when it is not observed. A man that refuseth to be listed doth not meet with the like punishment as he that runs from his colours; so he that never came under the oath of God, doth not sin so much as he that hath sworn to his covenant. That which is but simple fornication in the Gentiles, in Christians it is adultery, breach of vow. Indeed, in things that are absolutely and indispensably necessary to salvation, we are bound to consent. Ay! but when a consent thus solemnly made is broken, it aggravates the sin; but when we shall be like the man in the Gospel that was possessed with the devil, whom no chains could hold fast, when neither the bond of duty, nor the bonds of our own oaths and engagements will hold us, but we break all cords, the greater is our rebellion and disobedience to God.

3. Therefore must we perform the obedience that we have sworn to God, because God hath ever been a severe and just avenger of breach of covenants. By way of argument, *à minori ad majus*, those made with man; and therefore certainly he will avenge his covenant so solemnly made with himself, and everywhere in scripture you will find it is propounded as a sure mark of vengeance. When one man hath sworn to another, and hath called upon the most high God to confirm that covenant that he makes with him, if there be a failure, a trespass, though it be in point of omission, God hath avenged that covenant. An instance for this you have Amos i. 9, 'For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant.' Tyrus and Judah they were in covenant one with another, a mutual league offensive and defensive that were solemnly sworn. Now though God had many causes of his vengeance, and many quarrels with Tyrus because of their idolatries, but chiefly because of breach of covenant, they forgat the friendship that was between the children of Israel and Judah, and did not assist the people of Judah as they should, and were bound to do, but suffered them to be led into captivity, and spoiled by the Edomites and other nations. So for a sin of commission; it is spoken of as a mark of sore vengeance: Ps. lv. 20, 'He hath put forth his hand against such as be at peace with him; he hath broken his covenant.' In those federal transactions and oaths that pass between man and man, God takes himself to be specially interested, and will see that the breach of them be severely punished. The next step is, not only between equals, but when a covenant hath been made with servants and poor underlings, and would not set them free at the year of jubilee, see how severely God threatens them, Jer. xxxiv. 16-18, for the breach of it; nay a covenant made with enemies, Ezek. xvii. 18, 19. Nay, carry it one gradation higher, though the covenant were extorted by fraud, as the covenant made with the Gibeonites, Josh. ix. ID, 20. They were part of the Canaanites, and God severely enjoined the Israelites that they should cut off all those nations; yet when they craftily got them into covenant, when this people

88

were wronged by Saul, the Lord takes notice of it, 2 Sam. xxi. 1-3. See how God judgeth for them; there were three years' famine and pestilence, which was not appeased until Saul's sons were hanged before the sun. Now the Lord hath ever been such a severe avenger of an oath between man and man, between his people and their servants, between his people and their enemies, and when extorted from them, certainly in such a solemn covenant as he hath made between us and himself, and that in things absolutely necessary, in things enjoined before the covenant was made, it is not safe to break with God. Ananias, when he vowed a, thing to the Lord, though he was free before, God strikes him dead. It is not free with us, whether we will obey, yea or nay, what is enjoined upon us; therefore when we will break with God, what shall we expect but that he should avenge the quarrel of his covenant?

SERMON CXV.

I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.—VER. 106.

DOCT. 4. I now come to the fourth point, that our oath of obedience to God should be often revived and renewed upon us.

David recognises and takes notice of the oath wherein he was bound to God, and here he renews it again, 'I will perform it.' It should be so:—

1. Because we are apt to forget, and not have such a lively sense of a thing long since done, so that we either break the oath, or perform our duty very negligently. Our old baptismal covenant we are apt to forget it, especially by being under the bond of it in innocency, and dedicated to God by the act of another, viz., our parents. The apostle instanceth in those that were baptized in grown years, 2 Peter i. 9; he intimates they were apt to 'forget they were purged from their old sins.' I suppose it relates to baptism in that clause, forgotten his baptismal vow and obligation of renouncing his sin, and giving himself to the service of the Lord; and therefore there should be a purpose to revive it upon our heart, and the obligation should ever and anon be made new and fresh to quicken us to our duty.

89

2. This forgetfulness it will cost us dear, it will be an occasion of many and great troubles. Jacob had forgotten his vows of building an altar at Bethel; God quickens him to his duty by sharp affliction: Gen. xxxv. 1, 'Arise, go up to Bethel,' &c. God was fain to quicken him with a scourge. Samson, when his vow was broken, how many dangers is he thrown into? taken, and bound, and made a sport of by the Philistines. God will rub up the memories of his servants by some sharp and severe dispensations of his providence, when they are not sensible of their vow and faith plighted

to God. Never forget your obligation to God: Deut. iv. 23, ‘Take heed to yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God.’

Quest. But when should we renew our covenant, or our oath of allegiance to God?

1. Partly when we stand in need of some special favour from God, or when we draw nigh to him in some special duty; as Jacob, when God manifested himself to him, and he had communion with him at Bethel, then he vowed a vow, Gen. xxviii. 21. So Num. xxi. 2, Israel vowed a vow to the Lord when they were in some distress; and Ps. lxvi. 14, ‘I will pay the vows of my distress, which I made when I was in trouble.’

2. Again, after some special mercy, when under some love pang of spiritual rejoicing, and we have a deep sense of God’s love to us, or a new pledge of his love to us either in spiritual or temporal benefits, and our soul melted out towards God in acts of spiritual rejoicing: Ps. cxvi. 8, 9, ‘For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling: I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.’ And when God breaks the force and power of enemies, when he makes the wrath of man turn to his praise, then Ps. lxxvi. 11, ‘Vow and pay unto the Lord your God.’ Those pagan mariners they made their vows to God when the Lord delivered them from the storm, Jonah i. 16.

3. When all things go to ruin, when the state of religion is collapsed, either in a nation or in our hearts, after some notable breaches of covenant by a people, or by a person, and we have warped from God, seem to have wrested ourselves out of his arms, then to bind ourselves to him again, and to renew our vows; for upon this occasion doth Josiah enter into covenant with God, and ‘cause the people to stand to the oath,’ 2 Chron. xxxiv.

4. When we are to draw nigh to God in the use of the seals of the new covenant, when a man is to revive his own right in the covenant of grace; so when we are to draw nigh to God in the Lord’s Supper, which is the New Testament in Christ’s blood, which is the seal of the covenant, then we should solemnly bind ourselves to the duty of it, and swear to the Lord anew.

Use. To press you with all earnestness to enter into covenant with God, and then to keep it and make it good; to be sensible of the vow of God upon you, and to keep firm in the bond of the holy oath.

90

First, To enter into solemn obligation to God, a purpose of holy and close walking with God. I shall press you hereunto:—

1. God’s laws are holy, just, and good, therefore certainly we should not be backward to swear to him; because we cannot bring ourselves seriously to give up ourselves to the Lord, they are righteous judgments. Suppose you could be free, yet subjection to God were to be chosen before liberty; therefore, when Christ invites us to take his yoke upon ourselves, he doth not so much urge

his authority, ‘All things are given to me of my Father,’ therefore come to me; but he urgeth the sweetness of obedience, and the pleasure we may find in coming to him: Mat. xi. 29, ‘My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’ If a man were free to choose whether he would be for God or no, yet the perfection or well-being of the reasonable nature being so much concerned in obedience to God, you should choose those laws before liberty. What doth the Lord require of you? To be holy, just, temperate, often praying, and praising his name; and are these things hard? A man is not a man if he do not yield to these things, Titus ii. 12. All our duties are comprised in those three adverbs, ‘soberly, righteously, godly.’ By being sober, a man delights himself; and by being just and righteous, a man delights others: without this, the world would be but like a den of thieves; and by being godly, he doth delight God. If we had only leave to love God and serve him, much more when we have a command to serve him, to be often in communion with him, it is the happiest life in the world. There is a great deal of pleasure, sweetness, and rational contentment doth accompany the exercise of these three graces, sobriety, righteousness, godliness.

2. We are already obliged by God’s command, so that whether you resolve or no, you are bound. There are some things that are left free in our own power before the vow passeth upon us; as, Acts v. 4, ‘Was it not in thy power?’ Ay! but there are other things that are not in our power. God’s right over the creature is valid, whether he consent to it or no; as the natural relation doth infer and enforce duty without consent. This is the difference between voluntary and natural relations. Look, as a father is a father, whether the child own him or no in that quality and relation, and without his consent; a father as a father hath a right to command the child. But there are duties that depend upon our consent, as in the choice of a husband or master. So here is a natural relation between God and us, he our creator, we his creatures, he our superior, and we his inferiors, by reason of his authority and eternal right; and God may urge this, ‘I am the Lord,’ though he do not urge that, ‘I am the Lord thy God.’ Sometimes, ‘I am the Lord,’ Lev. xviii. 5, his own sovereignty; sometimes, ‘The Lord thy God,’ ver. 2; which argues our choice and consent to choose him for our God; therefore thou art not free.

3. Actual consent and resolution on our part is required, that the sense of our duty may be more explicit upon our heart: 2 Chron. xxx. 8, ‘Yield yourselves to the Lord.’ In the original, Give the Lord the hand; that is, strike hands with him, enter into covenant with him, say, Lord, I will be for thee, and thou for me; choose him for your portion, and give up yourselves to be the Lord’s people: Rom. xii. 1, ‘Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.’ He alludes to the eucharistical sacrifices. All our offerings must not be sin-offerings, but thank-offerings; so present yourselves. Under the law, a man he brought his thank-offering, and laid his hand upon it, ‘Lord, I am thine.’ It was implied in your baptism, and it is but reason that you should own your baptismal vow when you come to years of discretion. A bargain that is made for an heir during his nonage, it is confirmed by him when he comes to age. You were dedicated to God’s service when you were young, and knew not what you did; now when

you come to choose your own way, and at years of discretion, you should stand to what was done in your name to God; therefore there must be a serious and solemn consent of your heart.

4. It is for your profit to choose the strictest engagements; not only to approve the ways of God, but purpose; not only purpose, but put it into a promise or declared resolution; and not only resolve, but bind this resolution by an oath. Why? For you have more reason to expect God's assistance this way than any other, because this is the appointed means practised by all the people of God when they expected the grace of the covenant. Surely God's blessing is best expected in his own way, and the greatest engagement to God the more apt to hold us to our duty than a looser engagement.

5. Consider the necessity as well as the profit.

[1.] Laziness is the cause of our backwardness and hanging off from God. We are loath to come to God, are off and on, hang between heaven and hell; we have many loose and wavering thoughts, until we come to a firm purpose and determination; but that engageth the heart—Jer. xxx. 21, 'Who is this that engageth his heart to draw nigh to me?'—when you lay a command upon yourselves. We are weak and wavering in our purposes and wishes, but it puts an end to this when we come once to a full and firm purpose: Acts xi. 23, 'He exhorted them all, that, with purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord.' Austin, in his *Confessions*, tells us how he would dally with God, and how long he struck[8] in the new birth, until he was resolved, until he bound himself firmly to shake off all his carnal courses, and mind the business of religion.

[2.] Because of our fickleness, and the strength of temptations that will draw us off from God. He that is not resolved cannot be constant: James i. 8, 'The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' Christians! when an unconstant and rebelling heart meets with temptation without, all our wishes and cold purposes will come to nothing, but we shall give out at the first assault, and be unstable in all our ways; but when we are firmly and habitually resolved, then Satan is discouraged. While we are thinking and deliberating what we shall do, the devil hath some hope of us, we lie open to temptation; but when he seeth the bent of the heart is fixed and settled, and we have firmly bound ourselves to God, his hopes are gone. He that is in a wavering condition is easily overborne when temptation comes, but a fixed man is safe. Papers, feathers, and things that lie loose upon the ground, are tossed up and down by every blast and puff of wind, but those things that are fastened to the ground, though the wind blows never so strongly, they remain. Many set out towards the ways of salvation, but are discouraged, and turn back again to a course of sin; but when you solemnly give up yourselves to God, then you will not have so many temptations as before. Look, as Naomi was ever dissuading Ruth that she should not be a companion with her in her sorrows, but go back to her own country; but when she saw she was resolved, and steadfastly

92

8 Qu. 'stuck'?—ED.

minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her, Ruth i. 18. Or let me take another instance, Acts xxi. 14. The disciples were persuading Paul that he should not go to Jerusalem, though they did even break his heart, they could not break his purpose; but when they saw that he was so set that he went bound in the spirit, then they said, 'The will of the Lord be done.' Thus will tempters be discouraged from importuning and setting upon us to draw us off from God, when once our bent is fixed. By resolution we are quickened to more seriousness and diligence, for when once we come under the bond of the holy oath, the awe of an oath will still be upon us, and quicken us to more diligence and seriousness, to make a business of religion, whereas otherwise we make but a recreation and sport of it, and but a business by the by: Ps. xxvii. 4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after.' When we have laid firm bonds upon ourselves, this makes us awe-ful, serious, and resolute in a course of obedience.

Thus it directeth us to resolve. For the manner of entering:—

1. It must be a resolution of heart rather than of the tongue: Jer. xxx. 21, 'Who is this that engageth his heart to seek the Lord?' Acts xi. 23, 'He exhorted them, that, with purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord.' Resolutions are not determined by the tenor of our language so much as by the bent of the heart; therefore empty promises signify nothing, unless they be the result of our very souls, and not only of a natural conscience. Deut. v. 29, the people did not dissemble certainly when the Lord appeared to them by the sound of a trumpet and those mighty earthquakes; but saith the Lord, 'Oh, that there were such a heart in them to fear me always!' That there were a heart, and such a heart; that is, that this were not merely the result of an awakened conscience, but the resolution of a renewed heart. So Ps. lxxviii. 37, 'Their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.' Surely they did not dissemble in their distress, but their heart was not right with him; that is, it was not a sanctified heart, it was only the dictate of an awakened conscience for the present.

2. When you thus engage yourselves to God, let it not be a weak, broken, but full resolution; cold wishes are easily overcome by the love of the world and a half purpose: Acts xxvi. 28, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' Carnal men, although they are not converted, yet they have a kind of half turn, almost, but not altogether. Upon a lively sermon, or in sickness, they have their purposes and wishes; but it is not a full strong bent of heart, and love must be a serious bent: 1 Chron. xxii. 19, 'Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.'

93

3. It must not be a wish, but a serious resolution, such as is advised, all difficulties well weighed. In a fit and pang of devotion men will resolve for God, but it will never hold: Josh. xxiv. 19, 'Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins;' and therefore you must reckon what it is to serve this holy God; you must sit down and count the charges, what it is likely to cost you, that this dedication of yourselves to God may be grounded upon serious consideration. Do you know what lust of the flesh you must renounce, what interest of yours you must lay at his feet?

4. It must be a thorough, absolute, and perfect resolution, whatever it cost, as he that sold all for the pearl of price, Mat. xiii. 46. A marriage even made may be broken off; some will take up religion by way of essay, to try how they like it, as men go to sea for pleasure, but will not launch so far into the deep but that they may be sure easily to get to shore again; but a man for a voyage resolves upon all weathers. So, whatever disappointment, here is my business, thus will I do; and 'though he should kill me, yet will I trust in him,' Job xiii. 15.

5. It must be a resolution for the present, not for the future; for all resolutions for the future are false: Ps. xxvii. 8, 'When thou saidst, Seek ye my face;' like a quick echo, 'My heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' And we must resolve so to engage presently, for what we do for hereafter it is but a cheat we put upon ourselves, merely to elude the workings of heart, to avoid the present impulse.

6. It must be a resolution according to the covenant of grace, in a sense of our insufficiency and dependence upon Christ, not in a confidence of our own strength. Peter went forth in a confidence of his own resolution, and how soon did he miscarry! Therefore we must resolve in the strength of God: Ps. cxix. 8, 'I will keep thy precepts; O forsake me not utterly.' If God forsake, all will come to nothing. Thus we should solemnly dedicate ourselves to his use and service.

Secondly, Having entered into such a solemn engagement to be the Lord's, keep this covenant and oath made with God. For motives:—

1. From the nature of such a solemn engagement; it hath more in it than a single promise. There is in every solemn dedication or vowing of ourselves to God an attestation or calling upon God to take witness, and there is an imprecation. An attestation, a calling God to witness of our serious intentions to perform, and will you call God to be witness to a lie? And an imprecation, a calling upon God to punish us if we do the contrary; therefore, being entered into the bond of such a holy oath, how should we tremble to break it! For lie that renews his oath of allegiance to God, he doth as it were dare God to do his worst, for you thereby wish some heavy plague to fall upon your heads if you do not fulfil the duty of your oath; that is, he that eats and drinks the body and blood of Christ unworthily, he is guilty of damnation, guilty of the Lord's blood, because these solemn rites do not only confirm the promises, but confirm the threatening; and there is implied not only an invocation of blessing, but an imprecation upon ourselves; that is, if you do not fulfil the duty of the covenant, you offer yourselves as it were to God's curse.

94

2. Consider the tenderness of God's people in case of any oath or solemn promise, though it concerned their duty to man. Josh. ix. 19, 20, it is spoken of the league with the Gibeonites, 'We have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them.' They looked upon it as horrible impiety to break an oath. Now much more doth this hold in our engagements to God. Shall we not look

upon it as a horrid impiety to break a solemn oath so solemnly renewed, and our faith so solemnly plighted? Every sin of ours is made the more heinous because of this oath.

3. Remember the great quarrel that God hath against the Christian world and all the professors of his name is about his covenant and oath taken. What is the reason God doth visit Christendom with famines, pestilences, inundations, and wars? Because they do not stand to the oath of God that is upon them. Every professor of the name of Christ, he is supposed to be in covenant with God: Heb. x. 29, 'Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing?' All visible professors of Christianity are under a covenant with God, to take God for their God, and to live as his people; now because of their looseness and profaneness, they do not stand to their engagement, therefore so many plagues are upon them: Lev. xxvi. 25, 'I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant;' that is, because they did not perform the duties sworn to him.

SERMON CXVI.

I am afflicted very much: quicken me, Lord, according unto thy word.—VER. 107.

HERE we have—(1.) A representation of his case and condition, *I am afflicted*; his condition was calamitous, and here is the degree of it, *very much*. (2.) His prayer, *quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word*; wherein we have the nature of his request, *quicken me, O Lord; then the argument, according unto thy word*.

For the first, 'I am afflicted;' it may be understood of outward pressures, or soul troubles. From thence note—

Doct. God's people are liable to sad and sore afflictions here in the world.

He doth not so fondly and delicately bring up his children but that he exerciseth them with sharp afflictions. David, a man dear to God, much in communion with him, ever and anon you hear him complaining of trouble. It is the church's name, Isa. liv. 11, 'O thou afflicted, and tossed with tempest, and not comforted.' God's people are sometimes afflicted in the outward, sometimes in the inward man. In the outward man, either by enemies, the more because they are godly: 2 Tim. iii. 12, 'All they that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.' They must not dream of worldly ease, and think to go to heaven upon a bed of roses, but sometimes their way is strewed with thorns, and they have fiery trials: 1 Peter iv. 12, 'Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you;' no more than you would to see a shower of rain fall, or a cloudy day succeed a fair: we would laugh at one that should be troubled to see a shower fall. So some times by sickness under God's immediate hand. In the 3d

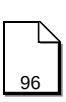
epistle of John, the apostle saith of Gaius, ‘I wish that thou mayest prosper, and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.’ It seems he had a healthful soul in a very sickly crazy body. And Paul’s thorn in the flesh notes some racking pain, stone or gout, which he alludes to thrusting up a stake in the body of slaves. The inward man, that hath its affliction too, anguish, sorrow of heart, sometimes by reason of God’s desertion. Christ Jesus drunk of this cup: Mat. xxvii. 46, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ And the cup goes round; his people pledge him in this bitter cup, and often complain of a withdrawing God, that they cannot find God as they were wont formerly. Many times perplexing lusts and prevalency of sore distempers: ‘O wretched man,’ &c., Rom. vii. 24, so Paul groans; and sometimes from temptations and assaults from Satan: Luke xxii. 31, 32, ‘Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.’ Christ did not pray to exempt him from it, but to preserve him in it.

If you ask why God’s children are thus afflicted, I answer—It is not heaven we now enjoy.

1. We are not in our eternal rest, therefore here we must be exercised, tried, afflicted. The world is a middle place between heaven and hell, therefore hath somewhat of both; their principles and actions are mixed, so their condition is mixed, intermixed with sorrows and joys, until they come there where they shall rest from all their labours. So it must be.

2. God doth it to purge out sin: Isa. xxvii. 9, ‘By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.’ Gold is cast into the fire. Why? To have its dross consumed. Corn is beaten with the flail. Why? To be severed from its chaff, husks, and straw; and iron is filed to get off its rust; so this is the fruit of all—the taking away sin. Afflictions are a necessary cure for sin: John xv. 2, ‘Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.’ Look, as in a vine there are certain superfluous luxuriant leaves and branches that grow up with the fruit, and hindereth the increase of it, which the vine-dresser pares off, not to destroy the vine, but to cultivate and manure it, so it is with no ill intent; so corruption grows up with our graces, and hindereth us that we cannot bear fruit, when we are in a flourishing condition; therefore these need to be purged away.

3. God doth it to humble us. This was that which God aimed at in all his afflictive dispensations towards the people of Israel, Deut. viii. 2. God’s eminent servants need affliction to humble them. David had many things to puff him up, his royal dignity, the gift of prophecy, familiarity with God, great opulency, many victories, pride of life, &c.; and he needed many afflictions to keep him humble, Ps. cxxxii. 1. Paul, he was apt to be lifted up with abundance of revelations, therefore God humbled him with ‘a thorn in the flesh,’ 2 Cor. xii. 7.



Use 1. If we he out of affliction, let us provide for a time of exercise. David, a saint, is afflicted. God’s bosom-friends may feel his hand sore upon them. David, a king, is afflicted; those in the highest station have their incident cares and troubles. David, an Old Testament believer, saith, ‘I am afflicted.’ I observe this, because God then dispensed himself to his people in and by temporal

promises, and yet even then they had great mixtures of trouble, to show that which they had in the world was not all they had to expect from God. The promises now in the New Testament, now life and immortality is brought to light, they run to us in another strain, not of temporal, but spiritual things; therefore we must expect our portion of sorrow before we go to heaven. Be not of such a woman-like nature, and so delicately brought up, as never to see evil days; for aught I see, we are entering upon our trial. The strain of our ministry is mainly consolatory usually, but there comes a time of expense and laying out, when such comforts are to be laid up in our heart, therefore let us be provided.

Use 2. If we be for the present under affliction, let us bear it with patience, observing how God's ends are accomplished. It is smart and grievous now, Heb. xii. 11, but it will be salutary and healthful; it will yield to you righteousness, and that righteousness will yield you peace—give the peaceable fruit of righteousness. If God will take away the fuel of our sin, empty us of our pride, self-conceit, weaken the security of the flesh, let us 'be content, only let us take heed that the time of mortifying sin be not the time of discovering sin, and that we do not trespass the more. To be sinning and suffering is the case of the damned. Take heed you do not sin in your suffering; especially take heed of those sins that are proper to affliction. Fainting: 'If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is but small.' Distrust of God's providence: 'I shall one day perish by the hands of Saul.' Despair of God's promises: 'I said I am cut off,' &c. Then you lose the benefit of God's family discipline when you yield to these sins. But see how it drives you out of the way of hell, for affliction is a gentle remembrance of hell; for look, as those whose garments were singed, as when they threw the three children into the furnace, their own garments were singed by the force of the flame, they knew what it was to be thrown into the pit; so the Lord in effect doth tell you what will be in hell; this is a gentle remembrance, stand farther off, that ye may not be condemned with the world, 1 Cor. xi. 32. Arid then, how it quickens you to look after heavenly things; for when the out ward man decays, then look to things not seen, 2 Cor. iv. 17; when you are fitted more and more for your change, when you grow more humble, mortified, as stories are hewn and squared for the building.

Let us come to the degree, 'I am afflicted very much; the Septuagint renders it, ἐταπεινώθηω ἕως σφόδρα, 'I am afflicted very sore.'

Doct. The afflictions of God's people may not only be many, but very sore and heavy.

So David here, and Ps. lxxi. 20, 'Thou hast showed me great and sore troubles.' Why many?

97

1. Many and strong lusts are to be subdued, and we need great afflictions to subdue many and great corruptions. Some stains are not easily washed out, but need much rubbing. When pride is deeply rooted in the heart, God brings down even to the grave, that a man goes up and down like a walking ghost, and like a skeleton or dry bones. There is such an one described, Job xxxiii. 17 with 22; and why? To bring down pride in his heart? The physic must be according to the distemper; if the distemper be more rooted, the physic must be more strong: Ps. cvii. 11, 12, 'Because they

rebelled against the word of the Lord, and contemned the counsel of the Most High, therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help.' When people begin to grow high and stomachful, contemptuous against God and his ordinances, then God brings them into sore distresses, to break their pride and stoutness of heart.

2. That God may have the more experience and trial of his people. In daily and little afflictions there is no trial of their courage, faith, patience, and submission, and all other graces. The trial of faith is in extremity. Graces are exercised to the life, when we are even at the point of death: 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.' So patience, it is not tried but by sharp affliction; therefore the apostle saith, 'Let patience have its perfect work,' James i. 4. So Christian courage and resolution, that is tried in deep affliction, when we are 'slain all the day long,' Heb. xi. 35, 36; Rom. viii. 37, 'In all these things we are more than conquerors.' The strength of a man's back is not tried by a small weight, but by a heavy burden, how much he can bear; so the sharper the affliction, the greater the trial.

3. That they may have the more experience of God, for the sharper the affliction the sweeter their comfort, and the more glorious their deliverance: Ps. lxxi. 20, 'Thou which hast showed me great and sore troubles, thou shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.' God's power in raising them up is more seen: 2 Cor. i. 10, 'Who delivered me from so great a death.'

Use 1. If we be under sore troubles—

1. Let us not faint; remember it is no more than we have deserved. God will not afflict a man above his deserts; he cannot complain of wrong, Ezra ix. 13. It is never more, it may be less; when our afflictions are great, our deserts are far greater: Isa. xl. 1, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God.' Why? 'For she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.' God saith double; he relents presently.

2. Consider the degree of affliction; it is not measured out by yourselves, but measured out by a wise God; though afflicted very much and very sore, the measure it is ordered by God, as well as the kind of it. If it were measured out by ourselves, it would be too light, it would be too gentle; the patient must not be trusted in searching his own wounds; and if it were left to our enemies, they would know no bounds: Zech. i. 15, 'I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.' But it is left to the wise, just, and gracious God and Father; he tempers the cup in his own hand; and therefore when the affliction is grown sore and strong, it comes not only from a wise God, but a tender Father, that best knows what is good for us. Job xxxiv. 23, that is a notable place, 'For he will not lay upon man more than right, that he should enter into judgment with God;' that is, the party afflicted hath no just complaint against God, can take no exception against God's proceedings, for he perfectly understands our need, and understands our strength. God perfectly

understands our need: 1 Peter i. 6, ‘If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.’ And understands our strength: 1 Cor. x. 13, ‘Faithful is he, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.’ Many parents do not correct their children in measure, being ignorant of their nature and disposition. Many physicians mistake their patients’ constitution, therefore the physic may work too strongly and too violently for them; but God understands our need and our strength, and so suits all his remedies accordingly.

Use 2. To reprove those fond complaints that are extorted from us in deep and pressing afflictions; as if—

1. Sometimes, there was never any so afflicted as I am. God’s people have been sore troubled: Lam. i. 12, ‘Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me.’ Yes, others have been afflicted in the same kind and degree, if not worse: 1 Peter v. 9, ‘All these things are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.’ You think it is such as the like hath never been known or heard of, for every man’s own pain seemeth most grievous: Lam. iii. 1, ‘I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.’ Other prophets foretold them, I see them executed. The best of God’s people have their measures of hardships; you are not singular, do not stand alone. This is one of Satan’s deceits. Satan will suggest this to a child of God, that he may question his Father’s affection, lose the comfort of his adoption, and put yourselves out of the number of God’s children. Your lot is not harder than the rest of God’s children; all that are in the world have the same trials, troubles, pressing evils upon their hearts now and then.

2. Another you find complaining, taxing God of unfaithfulness, as if he would break trust, and lay upon you more than you are able to bear, and you deceive yourselves; for if you cannot bear your present burden, you would bear none, you do not improve Christ’s strength: Phil. iv. 13, ‘I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me.’ Christ doth not help us in such a degree, or one trouble, and no more, but in all.

3. Another we find complain, I am cut off; God will be merciful and gracious no more, Ps. lxxvii. 8, 9, &c.; he hath forsaken me and forgotten me. God’s children have been brought thus low, yet have been raised, as the church: Ps. cxviii. 18, ‘Lord, thou hast chastened me sore, yet hast not given me over unto death.’ Within a little while he will show this was but our infirmity; this would stop these idle complaints by which we give vent to our daily impatience.

We have seen David’s case, but what doth he do? He goes to God about comfort and relief, ‘I am afflicted very sore: O Lord, quicken me, according to thy word.’ There observe—

1. That he prays, and makes his addresses to God.

2. For what he prays.

Doct. First, That he prays. Observe, affliction should put us upon prayer and serious address to God. Thus God's people are wont to do: Isa. xxvi. 16, 'Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.' They that have neglected God at other times, will be dealing with him then, and this God expects: Hosea v. 15, 'I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early.' It will be the first thing they will do, the greatest thing they will take care of; as that which we most care for, most is thought of in the morning. Nay, it is that which God enjoins: Ps. l. 15, 'Call upon me in the time of trouble.' Some might hang off when God's rod is upon their backs, or be discouraged by the bitter sense of a trouble; therefore God doth not only give us leave, but commands us to call upon him. This is the special season when this duty is performed with life and vigour: 'Is any man afflicted? let him pray,' James v. 13. Let him thus give vent to his trouble, it doth mightily ease the heart. An oven stopped up is the hotter within; the more we keep down grief, and do not unburden ourselves, the more it presseth upon the heart. Wind imprisoned in the bowels of the earth makes a terrible shaking there till it gets vent; so till our sorrow gets a vent it rends and tears the heart. The throne of grace was appointed for such a time, Heb. iv. 16; when need comes, then it is a time to improve our interest, to put promises in suit; when God seems to be an enemy to us, when, to appearance, he executes the curse of the old covenant, oh! then we should work through all discouragements, then we should hold God to his second grant and charter, and come to his throne of grace, and keep him there.

For the reasons:—

1. God is the party with whom we have to do; whencesoever the trouble doth arise, there is his hand and his counsel in it; therefore it is best dealing with him about it, in all afflictions, public or private: Amos iii. 6, 'Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?' Let men but awaken their reason and conscience, who is it that is at the upper end of causes, that casts our lot upon such troublesome and distracted times? So in private afflictions, David owned God's hand; Shimei had mocked him, but he looks higher; the Lord hath bid him curse. So Job; he doth not say the Chaldean and Sabean hath taken away, but the Lord hath taken, Job i. 21. Afflictions have a higher cause than men ordinarily look at; they do not come out of the dust, but come from God. See what inference Eliphaz draws from this principle, Job v. 8, 'I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause;' that is, I would go and deal with him about it; it was Eliphaz's advice to Job, and it is seasonable to us all.

2. It is God only that can help us and relieve us, either by giving support under the trouble, or removing it from us; so saith David, Ps. lvii. 2, 'I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.' A believer looks for all things from God; when all things go well with him, God is his best friend; when all things go ill with him, God is his only friend; he runs to

none so often as to God. Now upon these principles we go to God; but for what end? Let us see what we go to God for.

[1.] That we may know his mind in all his providences. The affliction hath some errand and message to us, something to deliver us from God; now we need to ask of God to know his mind: Micah vi. 9, 'Hear the rod, and who hath appointed it.' We should not only be sensible of the smart, but look to the cause; therefore, if we would know the cause, let us go and expostulate with God about it; as Joab, when Absalom set his corn-field on fire; he sent for him once and twice, but he comes not, until he sets his corn-field on fire, and then he comes and expostulates with him, 'Who hath done this?' 2 Sam. xiv. 30, 31. So when we make bold, and will not come to God, nor take notice of his messages, God comes and lets out his wrath upon our comforts and conveniences; now let us deal with God about it; wherefore is all this?

[2.] That we may have strength to bear it. Alas! we can bear or do little of ourselves, for that doing refers to bearing: Phil iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me;' that is, I can suffer want, need, hunger, thirst, nakedness, and run through all conditions, 'through Christ that strengtheneth me.' Now you must ask it of God: James i. 5, 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God.' It is wisdom to bear affliction, if he would wisely carry himself under the rod; that he may not discover his folly, he must ask this strength and grace of God.

[3.] Wisdom to improve our chastisements, that we may have the benefit and fruit of them: Isa. xlviii. 17, 'I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit;' that is, to profit by afflictions, to reap the fruit of them. So Job xxxiii. 16, 'He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.' God, by a powerful work upon the heart, impresseth their duty upon them, that they may see wherefore it is that he hath afflicted them.

[4.] We go to God for deliverance and freedom from the trouble: Ps. xxxiv. 19, 'Many are the troubles of the righteous, but out of them all the Lord will deliver them.' It is God's prerogative to set us free. We break prison when we attempt to escape merely by our own means; therefore either we shall have no deliverance, or no kindly one. God hath delivered, doth deliver, and we trust will deliver. This must be sought out of God; God helping together with your prayers, 2 Cor. i. 10, 11. Prayer must fetch it out from God, or it is no kindly deliverance. Well, then, in our affliction, we need to be often with God.

SERMON CXVII.

Quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word.—VER. 107.

USE 1. To reprove the stupidness and carelessness of them that neglect God in their troubles: Dan. ix. 13, ‘All this evil is come upon us, yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God.’ A very senseless slight spirit, that when they are under the blows of God’s heavy hand, they will not be much in calling upon God; this is contrary to God’s injunction, who expects now with earnestness they will seek him. God reckons upon it; he could not hear from them before, but now they will pray hard, and will make up their former negligence. When God sends a tempest after you, as on Jonah, yet will you keep off from him? It is contrary to the practice of the saints; in their chastisements, troubles, and afflictions, they are much with God, opening their hearts to him. Nay, it is worse than hypocrites, for they will have their pangs of devotion at such a time, Job xxvii. 10, 11. In short, you lose the comfort of your affliction. Seasons of affliction are happy seasons if they prove praying seasons; when they bring you nearer to God, it is a sign God is not wholly gone, but hath left somewhat behind him, when the heart is drawn into him. This is the blessing of every condition, when it brings God nearer to you, and you are more acquainted with him than before.

Use 2. Then it takes off the discouragements of poor disconsolate ones, who mis-expound his providence when they think afflictions put us from God rather than call us to him. Oh no! it is not to drive you from him, but to draw you to him. Do not think God hath no mercy for thee, because he leaves thee to such pressures, wants, and crosses. This is the way to acquaint yourselves with God, yea, though you have been hitherto strangers to him; he hath invited you to call upon him in time of trouble, he is willing to have you upon any terms. A man will say, You come to me in your necessities; God delights to hear from you, and is glad any occasion will bring you into his presence; and therefore be much with God.

Secondly, I observe, when this affliction was sore and pressing, yet then he hath a heart to pray, ‘I am afflicted very sore, O Lord, quicken me.’

Doct. We must not give over prayer, though our afflictions be never so great and heavy. Why? Because—

1. Nothing is too hard for God; he hath ways of his own to save and preserve his people when we are at a loss. This was the glory of Abraham’s faith, that he accounted God was able to raise up Isaac from the dead, Heb. xi. 19. Difficult cases are fit for God to deal in, to show his divine power. When means have spent their allowance, then is it time to try what God can do: Ps. cxlii. 4, 5, ‘I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living.’ When all things fail, God faileth not.

2. We must still pray. Faith must express something above sense, or else living by faith and living by sense cannot be distinguished. In desperate cases then is the glory of faith seen: Job xiii. 15, ‘Though he should kill me, yet I will trust in him.’ In defiance of all discouragement, we should come and profess our dependence upon God.

Use. To condemn those that despond, and give over all treaty with God, as soon as any difficulty doth arise; whereas this should sharpen prayer, rather than discourage us. This is man's temper, when troubles are little and small, then to neglect God; when great, then to distrust God. A little headache will not send us to the physician, nor the scratch of a pin to the chirurgeon; so if our troubles be little, they do not move us to seek after God, but we are secure and careless; but when our troubles are smart, sore, and pressing, then we are discouraged, and give over all hopes; so hard a matter is it to bring man to God, to keep an even frame, neither to slight the hand of God, nor to faint under it, as we have direction to avoid both extremes, Heb. xii. 5, to cherish a due sense of our troubles, with a regular confidence in God.

102

That he prays you have seen. Now what he prays for. He doth not say *deliver* me, but *quicken* me.

Doct. Strength and support under afflictions is a great blessing, to be sought from God, and acknowledged as a favour, as well as deliverance.

1. You shall see this is promised as a favour: Isa. xl. 31, 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;' that is, shall not faint nor be weary, but mount up as it were with wings as eagles; they shall have a new supply of grace, enabling them to bear and hold out till the deliverance cometh. They that wait upon the Lord do not always see the end of their troubles, but are quickened, comforted, and strengthened in them; they shall renew their strength.

2. This is accepted by the saints with thanksgiving, and valued by them as a special answer of prayer; they value it more than temporal deliverance itself many times; as 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10, Paul prays for the removal of the thorn in the flesh thrice, when God only gives him this answer, 'My grace is sufficient for thee;' saith Paul then, 'I will rejoice in mine infirmities,' so I might have strength and support in grievous weaknesses, reproaches, and afflictions, whatever they be. So Ps. cxxxviii. 3, 'In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.' That is noted as a special answer of prayer. How did he hear him? With strength in my soul. Though he did not give him deliverance, he gave him -sup port, so that was acknowledged as a very great mercy.

3. There are many cases wherein we cannot expect temporal deliverance, then we must only go for quickening and support; when by a lingering disease we are drawing down to the chambers of death, and our outward strength is clean spent and gone, then have we sup port; that is a great mercy: Ps. lxxiii. 26, when strength fail and heart fail, 'God is the strength of my heart, and portion for ever;' that is, to have his heart quickened by God in the languishing of a mortal disease. So 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'Though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day.' There are many troubles that cannot be avoided, and therefore we are then to be earnest with God for spiritual strength.

Use. Well, then, you see upon what occasion we should go for grace rather than for temporal deliverance. We should pray from the new nature; not deliver me, but quicken me; and if the Lord should suspend deliverance, why, that will be our strength in time of trouble: Ps. xxxvii. 39, 'The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; he is their strength in the time of trouble.'

But more particularly, let us take notice of this request: 'Quicken me,' saith he.

Doct. Quickening grace must be asked of God.

1. What is quickening?

2. Why asked of God?

First, What is this quickening? Quickening in scripture is put for two things:—

1. For regeneration, or the first infusion of the life of grace; as Eph. ii. 5, 'And you that were dead in trespasses and sins hath he quickened;' that is, infused life, or making to live a new life.

2. It is put for the renewed excitations of God's grace, God's breathing upon his own work. God, that begins life in our souls, carries on this life, and actuates it. Now this kind of quickening is twofold spoken of in this psalm; there is quickening in duties, and quickening in afflictions. Quickening in duties, that is opposite to deadness of spirit; quickening in affliction, that is opposite to faintness.

[1.] Quickening in duties, that is opposite to that deadness of spirit which creeps upon us now and then, and is occasioned either by our negligence or by our carnal liberty, that deadness of spirit that doth hinder the activity of grace.

(1.) By out negligence and slothfulness in the spiritual life, when we do not stir up ourselves: Isa. lxiv. 7, 'There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold on thee;' when men grow careless and neglectful in their souls. An instrument, though never so well in tune, yet if hung up and laid by, soon grows out of order; so when our hearts are neglected, when they are not under a constant exercise of grace, a deadness creeps upon us. Wells are sweeter for the draining. Our graces they are more fresh and lively the more they are kept a-work, otherwise they lose their vitality. A key rusts that is seldom turned in the lock, and therefore negligence is a cause of this deadness: 2 Tim. i. 6, 'Stir up the gift that is in thee.' We must blow up the ashes. There needs blowing if we would keep in the fire; we grow dead and lukewarm, and cold in the spiritual life, for want of exercise.

(2.) This deadness is occasioned by carnal liberty: Ps. cxix. 37, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.' When we have been too busy about the vanities of the world, or pleasures of the flesh, when we have given contentment to the flesh, and been intermeddling with worldly cares and delights, it brings a brawn and deadness upon the heart: Luke xxi. 34, 'Take heed that your hearts be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the

cares of this world,' &c. I say, by this the soul is distempered, and rendered inapt for God. Christians! this is a disease very incident to the saints, this deadness that creeps upon them. We have not such lively stirrings, nor a like influence of grace; we have not those earnest and lively motions we were wont to have in prayer. Now God he quickeneth us. How? By exciting the operative graces, as faith, love, hope, and fear, when these are kept pregnant and lively, as we read of 'lively hope,' 1 Peter i. 3. There is living faith and lively faith, and living fear and lively fear of God, and living hope and lively hope. All graces God makes them lively and vivacious, that they may put forth their -operations the more readily. Well, this is quickening in duties.

104

[2.] There is quickening in afflictions, and so it is opposed to fainting, that fainting which is occasioned by too deep a sense of present troubles, or by unbelief, or distrust of God and his promises, and the supplies of his grace. Oh! when troubles press upon us very sore, our hearts are like a bird, dead in the nest, overcome, so that we have no spirit, life, nor aptness for God's service: 'My soul droopeth for very heaviness;' we have lost our life and our courage for God.

Well, how doth God quicken us? By reviving our suffering graces, as our hope of eternal life and eternal glory, patience and faith, and so puts life into us again, that we may go on cheerfully in our service. By infusion of new comforts. He revives the spirit of his contrite ones; so the prophet saith, Isa. lvii. 15. He doth revive our spirits again when they are dead and sunk under our troubles. Oh! it is very necessary for this: Ps. lxxx. 18, 'Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.' Discomfort and discouragement they weaken our hands; until the Lord cheers us again we have no life in prayer. By two things especially doth God quicken us in affliction—by reviving the sense of his love, and by reviving the hopes of glory. By reviving the sense of his love: Rom. v. 5, 'The love of God is shed abroad,' like a fragrant ointment that doth revive us, when we are even ready o give up the ghost; Ps. lxxxv. 6, 'Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?' I say, when he restores the sense of his love after great and pressing sorrow, then he is said to quicken. So when he doth renew upon us the hopes of glory: Rom. v. 2, 3, 'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Well, you see what this quickening is.

Secondly, This quickening must be asked of God.

1. Because it is his prerogative to govern the heart of man, especially -to quicken us. God will be owned as the fountain of all life: 1 Tim. vi. 13, 'I charge thee in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things.' It is God that quickeneth all things. All the life that is in the creature, all the life that is in new creatures, it comes from God; it is he that giveth us life at first, and he must keep in this life in the soul, and restore it. The meanest worm, all the life it hath, it hath from God. When John would prove the Godhead of Christ, he brings this argument, John i. 4, 'In him is life.' There is not a gnat but receives this benefit from Christ as God. He hath the life of all things, and this life is the light of men; much more the noble creature man hath this life from God; much more the new creature; greater operation of spiritual life, more depends upon his influence; and therefore, if we would be quickened, and carried out with any life and strength, we must go to God for it.

2. God as our judge, he must be treated with about it, for he smites us with deadness; therefore till he takes off his sentence, we cannot get rid of this distemper; it is one of God's spiritual plagues, which must be removed before we can hope for any liveliness, and any activity of grace again. Under the law, God punished sins more sensibly; as unhallowed addresses, he punished them with death. Under the gospel, he punisheth sins with deadness of heart. When they seem careless in the worshipping of God, they have a blow and breach, as he smote Uzzah and Nadab and Abihu dead in the place; and now he smites with deadness, Rev. iii. 7. He 'hath the key of David, that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth;' without his permission we can never recover our former lively estate again, for there is a judicial sentence passed upon us.

105

Use. To press us to be often with God for quickening, that we may obtain this benefit. I have spoken of it at large upon another verse; if you would have this benefit, rouse up yourselves: Isa. lxiv. 7, 'There is none that stirreth up himself;' and 2 Tim. i. 6, 'Stir up the gift that is in thee.' A man hath a faculty to work upon his own heart, to commune and reason with himself; and we are bidden to 'strengthen the things that are ready to die,' Rev. iii. 2. When things are dying and fainting in the soul, we are to strengthen ourselves; therefore, if we would have God to quicken us, thus must we do, chide the heart for its deadness in duty; we can be lively enough in a way of sin; chide the heart for its deadness in affliction: Ps. xlii., 'Why art thou cast down, my soul? still trust in God.' And after you have done this, then look up, and expect this grace from God in and through Christ Jesus. It is said, John x. 10, 'I am come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.' Jesus Christ, he came not only that we might have life enough to keep body and soul together, but that we might not only be living but lively, full of life, strength, and cheerfulness in the service of God. He is come into the world for this end and purpose: expect it through Christ, who hath purchased it for us. And then plead with God about it, according to his promise, Ah! Lord, according to thy word; hast thou not said, I will quicken a dead heart? When thou art broken and tossed with affliction, remember it is the high and lofty one that hath said he will 'revive the heart of the contrite ones,' Isa. lvii. 15; and plead thus with God, Ah! Lord, dost not thou delight in a cheerful spirit? 'Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?' Ps. lxxxv. 6. And then humble yourselves for the cause of the distemper. What is the matter? how comes this deadness upon me? Isa. lxiii. 17, 'Why hast thou caused us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?' Inquire what is the cause of this deadness that grows upon me, that you may humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.

The argument only is behind, *according to thy word*. David, when he begs for quickening, he is encouraged so to do by a promise. The question is, where this promise should be? Some think it was that general promise of the law, 'If thou do these things, thou shalt live in them,' Lev. xviii. 5; and that from thence David drew this particular conclusion, that God would give life to his people. But rather it was some other promise, some word of God he had to bear him out in this request. We see he hath made many promises to us of sanctifying our affliction: Isa. xxvii. 9, 'The fruit of all shall be the taking away of sin;' of bettering and improving us by it, Heb. ii. 11; of

moderating our affliction; that he will ‘stay his rough wind in the day of the east-wind,’ Isa. xxvii. 8; that he will ‘lay no more upon us than he will enable us to bear,’ 1 Cor. x. 13. He hath promised he will moderate our affliction, so that we shall not be tempted above our strength. He hath promised he will deliver us from it, that ‘the rod of the wicked shall not always rest on the back of the righteous?’ Ps. cxxv. 3; that he will be with us in it, and never fail us, Heb. xiii. 5. Now, I argue thus: if the people of God could stay their hearts upon God’s word when they had but such obscure hints to work upon, that we do not know where the promise lies, ah! how should our hearts be stayed upon God when we have so many promises! When the scriptures are enlarged for the comfort and enlarging of our faith, surely we should say now as Paul, when he got a word, Acts xxvii. 25, ‘I believe God;’ I may expect God will do thus for me, when his word speaks it everywhere. Then you may expostulate with God: I have thy word for it, Lord; as she, when she showed him the jewel, ring, and staff, Whose are these? So we may cast in God his promises: Whose are these according to thy word? And mark, David, that was punctual with God, ‘I have sworn, and I will perform it; and quicken me according to thy word.’ Sincere hearts may plead promises with God: Isa. xxxviii, 3, ‘Lord, remember I have walked before thee with an upright heart.’ These may look up and wait upon God for deliverance.

106

SERMON CXVIII.

Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will-offerings of my mouth, O Lord, and teach me thy judgments.—VER. 108.

IN this verse two things are asked of God—God’s acceptance; then, secondly, instruction.

First, He begs acceptation. Therein take notice—(1.) Of the matter, object, or thing that he would have to be accepted, *the free-will-offerings of my mouth*. (2.) The manner of asking this acceptation, *accept, I beseech thee, O Lord*. In the former, you may observe the general nature of the thing, and then the particular kind; they were free will-offerings; and yet more express, they were free-will-offerings of his hands; not legal sacrifices, but spiritual services, free-will offerings of his mouth, implying praises. Our praises of God are called ‘the calves of our lips,’ Hosea xiv. 2, rendered there by the Septuagint, ‘the fruit of our lips,’ and accordingly translated by the apostle, Heb. xiii. 15, ‘The fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.’ He was in deep affliction, wandering up and down the desert; he was disabled to offer up to God any other sacrifice, therefore he desires God would accept the free-will-offerings of his mouth; he had nothing else to bring him.

Secondly, He begs of God instruction in his way, *teach me thy judgments*. By *misphalim*, ‘judgments,’ are meant both God’s statutes and God’s providences. If you take them in the former sense, for God’s statutes, so he begs grace to excite, direct, and assist him in a course of sincere

obedience to God, practically to walk according to God's will. If you understand it in the latter sense, only for the accomplishment of what God had spoken in his word, for God's providence, for his corrective dispensation, 'Teach me,' he begs understanding and profiting by them.

I shall begin with his first request, which offereth four observations:—

1. That God's people have their spiritual offerings.

2. That these spiritual offerings must be free-will-offerings.

3. That these free-will-offerings are graciously accepted by God.

4. That this gracious acceptance must be earnestly sought and valued as a great blessing, 'I beseech thee accept,' &c.

Doct. 1. First, That God's people have their spiritual offerings. I shall give the sense of this point in five propositions.

1. That all God's people are made priests to God, for every offering supposeth a priest; so it is said, Rev. i. 6, that Christ Jesus 'hath made us kings and priests.' All Christians, they have a communion with Christ in all his offices; whatever Christ was, that certainly they are in some measure and degree. Now, Christ was king, priest, and prophet; and so is every Christian, in a spiritual sense, a king, priest, and prophet; for they have their anointing, their unction from the Holy One, and he communicates with them in his offices. So also do they resemble the priesthood under the law. In 1 Peter ii. 5, they are called 'a holy priesthood to offer sacrifices to God;' and 1 Peter ii. 9, they are called 'a royal priesthood.' They are a holy priesthood, like the sons of Aaron, who were separated from the people, to minister before the Lord; and they are a royal priesthood, in conformity to the priesthood of Melchisedec, who was 'king of Salem, and also priest of the most high God.' There is a mighty conformity between what is done by every Christian and the solemnities and rites used by the priests under the law. The priests of the law were separated from the rest of the people: so are all God's people from the rest of the world. The priests of the law were to be anointed with holy oil, Exod. xxviii. 41; so all Christians they receive 'an unction from the Holy One,' 1 John ii. 20. By the holy oil was figured the Holy Spirit, which was the unction of the Holy One, by which they are made fit and ready to perform those duties which are acceptable to God. After the priest was thus generally prepared by the anointing to their services, before they went to offer, they were to wash in the great laver which stood in the sanctuary door, Exod. xxix. 4; Lev. viii. 4, 5. So every Christian is to be washed in the great laver of regeneration, Titus iii. 5. And when they are regenerated, born again, purged and cleansed from their sins, then they are priests to offer sacrifices to God; for till this be done, none of their offerings are acceptable to him: for 'they that are in the flesh cannot please God,' Rom. viii. 8; and 'the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord,' Prov. xv. 8. Thus you see in all these correspondences, and in many

more, Christians they are priests. What the priests of the law were to God, that is every Christian now to God, to offer spiritual sacrifices by Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. They have their offerings. The great work of the priest was to offer sacrifice, and this is our employment, to offer sacrifices to God. What sacrifices do we offer now in the time of the gospel? Not sin-offerings, but thank-offerings. A sin-offering can be offered but once: Heb. x. 14, 'By one offering Jesus Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' And there needs no more of that kind; that was but to be once offered, Heb. vii. 27; and therefore there remains nothing more to be done by us but the offering of thank-offerings, and this is to be done continually: Heb. xiii. 15, 'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.'

108

3. These offerings must be spiritual thank-offerings. Under the law the thank-offering was that of a beast, but now under the gospel we offer spiritual sacrifices; therefore the apostle saith. 1 Peter ii. 5, 'Ye are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.' The sacrifice must suit with the nature of the priesthood. The priesthood is spiritual, and not after the law of a carnal commandment, and not by an external consecration, but the inward anointing of the Holy Ghost. And herein we differ from the priests of the law, because the very nature and substance of our worship is more pleasing to God than the nature of theirs; for moral worship is better and more suited to the nature of God than ceremonial: 'God is a spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit,' John iv. 24. And therefore, when ceremonial worship was in force, they that rested in external ceremonies, and did not look to the spiritual intent and signification of them, were not accepted by God; though the ceremony was performed with never so much pomp, though they came with their flocks and herds, yet praying to God, and praising God with a willing mind, which was the soul of their offering, was that alone which was acceptable to God; therefore it is said, Ps. lxix. 30, 31, 'I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving: this also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs;' that is, which is perfect and exact according to the institutions of the law, for there was to be no blemish in the sacrifice of the law; yet calling upon the name of God, and praising him, is better than the service performed with the exactest conformity to legal rites: Ps. l. 13-15, 'Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' The Lord draws them off from ceremonies to the spiritual service; it is more becoming the nature of God, and it is more reasonable service. The offering of a beast hath not so much of God's nature, nor of man's nature in it, only God would keep it up for a while; therefore now these are the great offerings.

4. The two great sacrifices required of us, prayer and praise; there are many others, but they are implied in these. To instance, under the gospel there is this thank-offering, presenting ourselves to the Lord, dedicating ourselves to the Lord's use and service: Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, brethren,

by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service' 2 Cor. viii. 5, 'They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.' And then there is alms: Heb. xiii. 16, 'To do good and communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' And when the Philippians had made contribution to Paul's necessities, he saith it was 'a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God,' Phil. iv. 18. Ay! but now both these are included in the other two, namely, as they are evidences of our thankfulness to God, and the sense of his love and favour which we have received by Christ.

The great and usual offerings are 'the fruit of our lips.' 'the calves of our lips,' here called 'the free-will-offerings of our mouth,' prayer and praise. That prayer is a sacrifice, see Ps. cxli. 2, 'Let my prayer be set before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.' The daily offering was accompanied with incense, and he mentions the evening sacrifice, because then was a more perfect atonement for the day, therefore when the evening sacrifice came, it was to be understood they were perfectly reconciled to God. And then that praise is a sacrifice, see Ps. liv. 6, 'I will freely sacrifice unto thee; I will praise thy name, O Lord, for it is good.' And in that other place where the Lord rejects the flesh of bulls and blood of goats, praise is substituted, 'Will I eat the flesh of bulls and blood of goats?' No: Ps. l. 14, 'Offer to me thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High.' So Ps. cxvi. 17, 18. So that prayers and praises are the oblations which we offer unto God under the gospel, either acknowledgments for former mercies, or petitions for future deliverances. These are the two duties which contain the substance of the ceremonies under the law, and are daily and constantly to be performed by us.

5. Whatever was figured in the old sacrifices, it must be spiritually performed in the duty of prayer and praise. In those legal rites, there was an evangelical equity, or something that was moral and spiritual for us still to observe.

As, first, in prayer, truth was the inward part of the sacrifice, for the mere external oblation was of no significancy with God. There were three things wherein it symbolizeth with prayer; in prayer there is required brokenness of heart, owning of Christ, renewing covenant with God.

[1.] One thing that was required in sacrifices was brokenness of heart; for when a man came to present his beast before the Lord, he was to consider this beast was to be slain and burnt with fire; and to consider, All this was my case; I might have been consumed with his wrath, and be burnt with fire; and so come with a compunctionate spirit, with brokenness of heart, to bemoan his case before the Lord; therefore it is said, Ps. li. 17, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' This is required in every one that comes to prayer, brokenness of heart; that is, a sensibleness of his want of those good things for which he comes, and his inability to supply himself with anything without God; nay, his ill-deservings, how justly he might be denied of God, and cursed by all manner of plagues; how he hath forfeited all manner of blessings; this must be at the bottom.

[2.] The sacrifices implied an eying of the Redeemer, by virtue of whose oblation and intercession we are accepted with God; for every one that came with his sacrifice was to lay his hand upon the head of the beast, to put his sins there, to show Christ bore the iniquity of us all; and in every prayer we make, there is this evangelical equity, by virtue of the old sacrifice remaining upon us, that we should eye the Redeemer, even Christ Jesus, our Lord, 'Who hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour,' Eph. v. 2. He is the expiatory sacrifice, and therefore in all our supplicatory or gratulatory offerings to God we must still look to him. The word, *an offering*, relates to things destitute of life that were dedicated to God, as flour, oil, frankincense; that which was signified thereby was accomplished in Christ. And for the other word, *sacrifice*, gave him self as an offering and sacrifice; the beasts whose blood was shed, those things which had life in them, were called a real sacrifice offered to God to appease his justice. Thus Christ Jesus was given as a sacrifice, to obtain all manner of blessings for us. 'We should look upon God as an all-sufficient fountain of grace, and the author of every good gift, depending upon him for his goodness and bounty for Christ's

[3.] In sacrifices there was implied a renewing of covenant; so the Lord saith, Ps. l. 5, 'Gather my saints together, that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.' As they did dedicate the beast offered to God, so was the worshipper to dedicate himself to God. Now we must renew this dedication of ourselves to the Lord's service; all this was morally in the sacrifices, and is to be done every day in our future prayers, with brokenness of heart, eying our Redeemer, casting our whole dependence upon him, and in a sense of his love dedicating and devoting ourselves to God.

Secondly, For the other duty, of thanksgiving and praise for mercies received. Every point and passage of his undeserved favour to be owned, and praise thereof to be given to God, and still to look on all done not for our sakes, but for the sake of Christ Jesus. You read under the law, Lev. iii. 3, when the thank-offering was brought to God, it was to be laid upon the top of the burnt-offering. First they were to bring the burnt-offering, and offer that to God, then to lay upon it the peace or thank-offering, to show that first we must be reconciled to God, and by virtue of that all mercies descend and come down upon us; and then upon this solemn occasion they were to give up themselves anew to the Lord. So the apostle presseth this, Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.' And this is one part of the offering of our lips, namely, when we come solemnly by virtue of every mercy received, and promise obedience anew and afresh to God. To apply this—(1.) Are you priests? (2.) Do you offer sacrifices of prayer and praise to God continually?

[1.] Are you priests unto God? Are you priests by separation? Hath God called you out from amongst men? Ps. iv. 3, 'The Lord hath set apart the man that is godly for himself.' Hath God called you off from sin to holiness, from self to Christ, from the creature to God? for these are the three things wherein conversion consists. From the creature to God, as our last end; from self to Christ,

as the only means to come to God; and from sin to holiness, as the only way to get an interest in Christ. Are you called off from the common course of living, wherein most men are involved, that you may live and act for God? Are you priests by unction? Are you anointed by the Spirit as to gifts and graces, and qualified and made meet for this holy ministration unto God? Christ hath purchased gifts in some measure for his people; for as we were maimed in Adam, not only as to graces but also as to gifts, so is our restitution by Christ, that the plaster may be as broad as the sore. We have necessary gifts given us by virtue of his ascension, whereby we may lay open our state and case to God. Indeed, all God's people have not a like measure of gifts, and carnal men may come behind in no gift, therefore have you the grace of prayer: Zech. xii. 10, 'I will pour upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication.' Have you a heart qualified by grace, made meet to converse with God? the tendency and disposition of your souls that carrieth you to God? grace that seeks a vent and utterance in prayer and holy converses with God? and are you priests by purgation? Every priest was to be washed in the great laver; are you washed and purged from sin, that you may serve God acceptably? Mal. iii. 3, first they must be purified, then offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. God will not take a gift out of a carnal man's hand; and therefore you should look to this, that you be purified and purged.

111

[2.] Do you offer spiritual sacrifices to God, of prayer and praise?

(1.) Prayer, a duty very kindly to the saints. It is natural to them; it is, as it were, the sphere of their activity, the Spirit discovers himself to men in prayer. As soon as they are converted to God they will fall a-praying, and be dealing with God often in this kind; therefore the children of God are described by this, as a duty wherein they are most exercised: Zeph. iii. 10, 'My suppliants;' and Ps. xxiv. 6, 'This is a generation of them that seek thee;' to show this is a vital act, a usual and constant expressing of the new nature that is put into them. Surely they that love God will be always seeking him, and a broken heart, sensible of its condition, can never want an errand to the throne of grace. You are to offer sacrifices as they did under the law. Now under the law there was a daily sacrifice, every morning they were to offer a lamb without spot, Num. xxviii. 3, to show that every morning they should come and sue out their pardon by Christ, and every evening to look to the Messiah, the lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world; that was the intent of the type. Now I reason thus: certainly we have as much need as they; we are sinners as well as that people which lived under that dispensation; therefore every morning we must look to the lamb of God. Nay, we have more reason, for they could not clearly discern the meaning of that type; but now all things are open, we can behold the lamb of God, therefore must be often with God, suing out our pardon' in the name of Christ.

(2.) The sacrifice of praise. It is notable when the apostle had spoken of Christ as a sin-offering he mentions this as the main thing in the gospel: Heb. xiii. 15, 'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.' Praise, it ought continually, frequently, and upon all occasions to be offered to God, for this is a more noble duty than prayer. Self-love may put us upon prayer,

but love to God puts us upon praise and thanksgiving; we pray because we need God, and we praise because we love him. In prayer we become beggars, that God would bestow something upon us; but in praise we come, according to poor creatures, to bestow something upon God, even to give him the glory due to his name, and tell him what he hath done for our poor souls. This is the most noble among all the parts of Christian worship. We have more cause to give thanks than to pray, for we have many things more to praise God for than to pray to him for. There are many favours which go before all thought of desert, and many favours still bestowed upon us beyond what we can either ask or think.

112

Doct. 2. Secondly, These spiritual offerings must be free-will-offerings to God. This expression is often spoken of in the law, Lev. xxii. 18; Num. xxix. 39; 2 Chron. xxxi. 14; Amos iv. 5. What are these free-will-offerings? They are distinguished from God's stated worship, and distinguished from that service which fell under a vow. Besides the stated peace-offerings there were certain sacrifices performed upon certain occasions to testify God's general goodness, and upon receipts of some special mercy; and you will find these sacrifices to be expressly distinguished from such services as men bound themselves to by vow, Lev. vii. 16. What is there that answers now to these free-will-offerings? Certainly this is not spoken to this use, that a man should devise any part of worship of his own head, whatever pretence of zeal he hath; but they serve to teach us two things:—

1. They are to teach us how ready we should be to take all occasions of thankfulness and spiritual worship; for besides their vowed services and instituted services they had daily sacrifices and set feasts commanded by God; they had their free- will-offerings offered to God in thankfulness for some special blessing received or deliverance from danger.

2. It shows with what voluntariness and cheerfulness we should go about God's worship in the gospel, and what a free disposition of heart there should be, and edge upon our affections in all things that we offer to God. And in this latter sense I shall speak, that our offerings to God, prayer and praise, should be free-will-offerings, come from us not like water out of a still forced by the fire, but like water out of a fountain, with native freeness, readily and freely.

[1.] God loves a cheerful giver; constrained service is of no value and respect with him. Under the law, when sacrifice of beasts was in fashion, wherefore did God choose the purest and fattest of everything offered to him, but as a testimony of a willing mind? And still he looks to the affections rather than the action. God weighs the spirit, Prov. xvi. 2. When God comes to put them into the balance of the sanctuary, what doth he weigh? External circumstances of duty, or the pomp and appearance wherein men go? No; but he considers with what kind of heart it is done; and the love of sin, God takes notice of that, as well as the practice of sin. So in our duties, God takes notice of the love, the inclination of our souls, as well as the outward service; therefore our offerings must be free and voluntary.

[2.] God deserves it, he doth us good with all his heart, and all his givings come to us from his love. Why did he give Christ for us and to us? 'He loved us.' Why gave he him for us?' God so loved the world,' John iii. 16. Why doth he give Christ to us? Eph. ii. 4, 5, 'God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.' That which moved God to bestow his saving grace upon us was his great love, and all the good we receive from him. Why, mercy pleaseth him: 'I will rejoice over them to do them good.' If he deliver us out of any danger, he hath 'loved us from the grave,' Isa. xxxviii. 7. Now love should season all our services to God.

[3.] Where a day of grace hath passed upon our hearts, so it will be; the soul will come off readily and freely to the duties God hath required of us: Ps. ex. 3, 'Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of thy power.' We are naturally backward, slow of heart to do anything that is good, hang off from God, will not be subject to him; but when the day of his power passeth upon us, then we are a willing people, we are more delighted in communion with God, less averse from him, the bent of our hearts is altered, and the stream of our affections is turned another way. and our converses with God are more delightful, and we are as earnest in serving God as before we were in serving sin.

Use. To press us to serve God with a perfect heart and with a willing mind, 1 Chron. xxix. 9. Thus when we give God any spiritual sacrifice, when we pray to or praise him, we should do it willingly, not customarily, or by constraint, or for by-ends, nor by the compulsion of a natural conscience; and when we feel, as we shall now and then, any tediousness and irksomeness in prayer, we should quicken ourselves by this motive: Christ Jesus, who was our sin-offering, he willingly offered up himself upon the service of our salvation. I might urge other arguments, as the nobleness of our service, the greatness of our reward, the many sweet experiences we shall gain in our converse with God; but this should be as the reason of reasons, and instead of all. Christ Jesus did not grudgingly go about the work of our salvation, but willingly offered himself: Ps. xl. 8, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.' When God would have no more legal sin-offerings, but the great sin-offering of the gospel was to be produced and brought forth in the view of the world, 'Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me.' Now our thank-offering should be carried on with the same willingness. Christ will be served now out of gratitude, and therefore his love should constrain us. Surely if we believe this great mystery of Christ, that he did willingly offer himself upon the service of our souls, and if we have any faith in him, 'faith will work by love,' Gal. v. 6. The soul may reason and discourse thus with itself, Do I believe Christ Jesus did thus willingly give himself for my soul? how can I be backward in God's service and hang off from him? Oh! let me live to Christ, 'who loved me, and gave himself for me,' Gal. ii. 20. What! shall I be more backward to do for God than Christ was to die for me, to go to the throne of grace than Christ Jesus was to go to the cross? Can I hang him off from such pleasing noble service, when Jesus Christ my Lord refused not the hard work of my redemption? If his will was in it, certainly so should be yours.

Doct. 3. The third point, that these free- will-offerings are accepted with God. ‘They shall come with rams,’ speaking of the conversion of the Gentiles in terms proper to the old legal dispensation, ‘and they shall come with acceptance,’ Isa. lx. 7; and Mal. iii. 4, ‘Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord.’ Upon what grounds, and what way our acceptance with God is brought about? Our works in themselves cannot please God, they are accepted not as merits, but as testimonies of thankfulness.

114

1. Our persons are by Christ reconciled to God, and in worship he delights. This is the proper importance of laying the peace-offering upon the top of the burnt-offering, Lev. iii. 10.

2. Our infirmities are covered with his righteousness; for Christ is the propitiation, the mercy-seat that interposeth between the law and God’s gracious audience. We come to the throne of grace when we come to God in and by him, Heb. iv. 16.

3. By his intercession our duties are commended to God; as Aaron was to stand before the Lord with his plate upon his forehead, where in was writ, ‘Holiness to the Lord.’ Why? ‘That he might bear the iniquity of the people, that they might be accepted of the Lord.’ All our acceptance comes from Christ’s intercession; and alas! our prayers and praises are unsavoury eructations, belches of the flesh, as they come from us; a great deal of infirmity we mingle with them, we mingle brimstone with our incense and sweet spices, therefore provoke the Lord to abhor and despise us; but there is an angel stands by the altar that perfumes all our prayers and praises. How should this encourage us against the slightings of the world and discouragements of our own hearts, and to look after the testimony of our acceptance with God!

Doct. 4. The fourth point, that this gracious acceptance must be sought and valued as a great blessing: Ps. xix. 14, ‘Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord.’ And it must be valued as a great blessing, if we consider either who the Lord is, or what we are, or what it is we go to him for. If we consider who the Lord is, God all-sufficient, that standeth in no need of what we can do, that cannot be profited by us; he is of so great a majesty, that his honour is rather lessened than greatened by any thing we can do; the great author of all blessings, all our offerings come from himself first: ‘Of thine own have we given thee.’ And if we consider what we are, poor, impotent, sinful creatures, will God take, an offering at our hands? And if we consider what we do, nothing but imperfection; there is more of us in it, of our fleshly part, in anything we do, yet that these things should be accepted with God.

SERMON CXIX.

My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.—VER. 109.

IN this verse and the next, David asserts his integrity against two sorts of temptations and ways of assault—the violence and craft of his enemies. Their violence in this verse, *my soul is in my hand*; and their craft in the next verse, *they laid snares for me*. And yet still his heart is upright with God.

In this verse observe—(1.) David's condition, *my soul is continually in my hand*. (2.) His constancy and perseverance, notwithstanding that condition, *yet do I not forget thy law*.

First, Let me speak of the condition he was now in, in that expression, 'My soul is continually in my hand.' The soul in the hand is a phrase often used in scripture; it is said of Jephthah, Judges xii. 3, 'I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon.' So Job xiii. 14, 'Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand?' And when David went to encounter Goliath, 1 Sam. xix. 5, it is said, 'He put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine.' In exposing ourselves to any hazard and dangers in any great attempt, it is called the putting of our life in our hand. And the witch of Endor, when she ventured against a law to please Saul, and so had exposed her life, this form of speech is used concerning her, 1 Sam. xxviii. 21, 'I have put my life in my hand.' Briefly, then, by *soul* is meant life, and this is said to be in his hand; I go in danger of my life day by day; as if he should say, I have my soul ready divorced when God calls for it. It not only notes liableness to danger, but resolution and courage to encounter it. In a sense, we always carry our souls in our hands; our life hangs by a single thread, which is soon fretted asunder, and therefore we should every day be praying that it may not be taken from us, as the souls of wicked men are, Job xxvii. 8; Luke xii. 20, but yielded up, and resigned to God. But more especially is the expression verified when we walk in the midst of dangers and in a thousand deaths: 'My soul is in my hand;' that is, I am exposed to dangers that threaten my life every day.

Secondly, Here is his affection to God's word, notwithstanding this condition, 'Yet do I not forget thy law.' There is a twofold remembrance of things—notional and affective; and so there is a twofold forgetfulness:—

1. Notional. We forget the word, when the notion of things writ ten therein has either wholly or in part vanished out of our minds.

2. Affectively. We are said to forget the word of God when, though we still retain the notion, yet we are not answerably affected, do not act according thereunto, and this is that which is understood here, 'I do not forget thy law.' Law is taken generally for any part of the word of God, and implies the word of promise, as well as the word of command. As for instance:—

[1.] If we interpret it of the promise, the sense will be this: I do not forget thy law; that is, I take no discouragements from my dangers to let fall my trust, as if there were no providence, no God to take care of those that walk closely with him. Heb. xii. 5, when they fainted, they are said to have forgotten the consolation which spake unto them as unto children.

[2.] If we interpret this word ‘law’ of the commandments and directions of the word, and so I do not forget it; that is either by way of omission, I do not slacken my diligence in thy service for all this; or by way of commission, I do not act contrary to conscience; and the effect of the whole verse is this: Though I walk in the midst of dangers and a thousand deaths continually, yet at such a time, when a man would think he should not stand upon nice points, even then he should keep up a dear and tender respect to God’s law. And he doth the rather express himself thus, I do not forget it, because great temptations blind and divert the mind from the thought of our duty. Our minds are so surprised with the dangers before us, that God’s law is quite forgotten as a thing out of mind, and we act as if we had no such comfort and direction given us. The points are two:—

1. That such things may befall God’s children that they may carry their lives in their hands from day to day.

2. When we carry our lives in our hands, no kind of danger should make us warp and turn aside from the direction of God’s word.

Doct. 1. That such things may befall God’s children that they may carry their lives in their hands from day to day.

That this is often the lot of God’s people, we may prove: 1 Cor. xv. 31, ‘I protest, by our rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.’ How can that be, I die daily, since we die but once? The meaning is, I go still in danger of my life. Such times may come when we run hazards for Christ every day, so that in the morning we do not know what may fall out before night: 2 Cor. xi. 23, ‘In deaths often;’ that is, in danger of death. So 1 Peter iv. 19, ‘Let those that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.’ Let them commit their souls, that is, their lives; the soul is sometimes put for life, for life spiritual or life eternal, but there it is put for life natural; so let them commit their souls to God, that is, in times of danger and hazard. Let them go on in well-doing cheerfully, and though there be no visible means of safety and defence, let them commit their lives to God in well-doing; when they carry their lives in their own hands, let them be careful to put them into the hands of God. Let God do what he pleaseth, for he is a faithful Creator; that is, as once he created them out of nothing, so he is able to preserve them when there is nothing visible, nothing to trust to. Often this may be the case of God’s people, that they carry their lives in their hands from day to day. That you may take the force of the expression, consider when the people of God are in the midst of their enemies, then they carry their lives in their hands: Mat. x. 16, ‘Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves;’ when they are among men no better affected to them than wolves to sheep, and when men have them in their power, and there is no outward restraint of laws and government; for whatever enmity they have or act against them, laws and government are a great restraint; as Gen. xxvii. 41, ‘The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob.’ Till Isaac was dead, there was a check upon him; but sometimes it is in the power of their hands to do them mischief: Micah ii. 1, ‘They practise iniquity, because it is in the power of their hand.’ When men

are ill affected, no restraint upon them, no impediment in their way, yea, when they begin to persecute and rage against the servants of God, and we know not when our turn comes, then we are said to have our lives in our hand; as Rom. viii. 36, ‘For thy sake are we killed all the day long;’ that is, some of that body killed, now one picked up, then another; in these cases they are said to carry their lives in their hands, when they are in the power of men that have no principle of tenderness to us, no restraint upon them, these begin to vex, molest, and trouble the Church.

For the reasons why God permits it so, that his people should carry their lives in their hands.

1. God doth it to check security, to which we are very subject. We are apt to forget changes; if we have but a little breathing from trouble, we promise ourselves perpetual exemption therefrom; as Ps. xxx. 6, ‘My mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved.’ When we have got a carnal pillow under our heads to rest upon, it is hard to keep from sleep, and dreaming of temporal felicity to be perpetuated to us; then we forget by whom we live, and by whose goodness we subsist; yea, this may be when trials are very near: the disciples slept when their master was ready to be surprised and they scattered, Mat. xxvi. 40; when we are in the greatest dangers, and matters which most concern us are at hand. Now, to prevent this security, God draws away this pillow from under our heads, and suffers us to be waylaid with dangers and troubles everywhere, that we might carry our lives in our hands, for this makes us sensible of our present condition in the world, and that we subsist upon God’s goodness and providence every moment.

2. To wean us from creature confidences and carnal dependences: 2 Cor. i. 9, ‘We received the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.’ Paul, that went up and down everywhere to hunt the devil out of his territories, and to alarm the carnal sleepy world, this Paul was very prone to trust in himself; a man that was whipped, imprisoned, stoned, opposed everywhere by unreasonable men, what had he to trust to but God’s providence? And yet he needs to be brought to this, to take his life in his hands, that he might learn to trust in God that raiseth from the dead. The best are prone to trust in themselves, and to lean to a temporal, visible interest. We would fain have it by any means, therefore sometimes we take a sinful course to get it. Well, now, God, to cure his people of this distemper, breaks every prop and stay which they are apt to lean upon, breaks down the hedge, the fence is removed, and lays them open to dangers continually, so that from day to day they are forced to seek their preservation from him.

3. To check their worldliness. We are very apt to dote upon present things, and to dream of honours and great places in the world, and seek great things for ourselves, when we should be preparing for bitter sufferings. As the two sons of Zebedee employed their mother to speak to Christ; being near of kin to him, she comes in a cunning manner, under pretence to worship him, and propounds a general question to him; she does not at first propose the particular, but says in general, ‘I have a certain thing to request of thee.’ And what was her request? ‘That one of my sons may sit on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.’ Saith Christ, ‘To sit on my right

hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my father.' Mark, out of this story you learn how apt Christ's own disciples are to dote upon worldly honour and greatness. The sons of Zebedee, James and John, those two worthy disciples, employ their mother to; Christ in such a message; they were dreaming of earthly kingdoms and worldly honour that should be shared between them, notwithstanding Christ taught them rather to prepare for crosses in this world. Do but reflect the light of this upon your own hearts. Do we think we are better than those apostles? and that it is an easy thing to shut the love of the world, and the honour thereof, out of our hearts, since they were so enchanted with the witchery of it? Therefore Christ tells them, Mat. xx. 22, 'Alas! poor creatures, ye know not what ye ask: can you pledge me in my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' We know not what we do when we are hunting after high places in the world; we are to pledge Christ in his bitter cup before our advancement come. Nay, to prove this is not only the worldling's disease, but it is very incident to the choicest of God's people; for after Christ had suffered and rose again, the apostles were not dispossessed of this humour, but still did dream of worldly ease and honour, therefore they come to Christ with this question, Acts i. 6, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' meaning, in the Jewish sense, break the Roman yoke, and give them power and dominion over the nations, hoping for a great share to themselves when this work was done. Thus you see human weakness and the love of worldly honour bewrays itself in Christ's own disciples. One instance more, in Jer. xlv. 5, of Baruch, 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.' Baruch, he was Jeremiah's scribe, had written his prophecy, and believed it, that dreadful roll, written it over, yet he was seeking some great thing for himself. The best are apt to think they shall shift well enough for themselves in the world; therefore saith Jeremiah, For thou to have thoughts of honour and credit, and a peaceful and prosperous estate, when all is going to rack and ruin, never dream upon such a matter. Now judge whether there be not great cause that God should bring his people to such a condition that they should carry their life in their hands from day to day, that he might cure them of this distemper.

118

4. That they may value eternal life the more, which they would not do if they had a stable condition here in the world. After death there will be a life out of all danger, and a life that is not in our hands, but in the hands of God; none can take that life from us which God keepeth in heaven. Now that they might look after this life, and value and prize it the more, they are exposed to hazards and dangers here. The apostle saith, 1 Cor. xv. 19, 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.' When they find the present life encumbered with so many sorrows, and exposed to so many dangers, then they conclude surely there is a better and safer estate for the people of God elsewhere in heaven. God's people cannot be of all men most miserable; there is another life; they have hopes in Christ, and for other things; therefore they long for it, and look for it: Heb. xiii. 14, 'Here we have no abiding city, but we seek one to come.' All things are liable to uncertainties and apparent troubles, that we might look after that estate where the sheep of Christ shall be safely lodged in their eternal fold. Now God by their condition doth, as it were, say to

them, as Micah ii. 10, ‘Arise, this is not your rest.’ Your stable comforts, your everlasting enjoyments are not here; here all our comforts are in our hands, ready to deliver them up from day to day.

119

5. God doth by his righteous providence cause it to be so, that his people carry their life in their, hands, to try their affections to him and his word. When we sail with a full stream of prosperity, we may be of God’s side and party upon foreign and accidental reasons. Now God will see if we love Christ for his own sake, and his ways as they are his ways when separated from any temporal interest, yea, when exposed to scorn, disgrace, and trouble. It is easy to be good when it costs us nothing, and the wind blows in our backs rather than in our faces, the state of affairs is for us rather than against us. Halcyon times and times of rest are times of breeding the church, but stormy times are times of trying the church: 1 Peter iv. 12, ‘Be loved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.’ God will put ‘us into his furnace, there will a fiery trial come, to see if we have the same affection to truth when it is safe to own it, and when it is dangerous to own it, when it is hated and maligned in the world. Few professors can abide God’s trial: Zech. xiii. 9, ‘I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried.’ When two parts fall away, there is a third part refined and tried by trials. When the generality proves dross, or chaff, or stubble in the furnace, there is some good metal preserved, to shine brighter, for trial as their zeal is increased and their grace kept more lively, and their faith and dependence upon a continual exercise. God will try whether we can live upon invisible supports, and go on cheerfully in the performance of our duty in the midst of all difficulty, without these outward encouragements. They are proved that they may be improved.

6. God doth cause such things to befall his people, to show his power both in their preservation and in overruling all those cross providences for their good.

[1.] His power in their preservation; when they have no temporal interests to back them, God will show he can preserve his people: Ps. xcvii. 1, ‘The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.’ It is well that the Lord reigns, else how could his people stand? The Lord reigns, and the multitude of isles they have a share in the joy and benefit. One benefit that we have by his reign is this, ver. 10, compared with ver. 1, he preserveth the souls of his saints; that is, their lives; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. There is an overruling, a secret and in visible providence, by which they are kept and hidden as in a pavilion, so they have often experience of wonderful preservation in the midst of all their troubles.

[2.] God shows his power for overruling all these accidents for the increase and benefit of his church and people. When the believers were scattered, and driven up and down, when exposed to hazards and inconveniences, it is said, Acts xi. 21, ‘The hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.’ God can make their loss turn to their increase. Christ often gets up upon the devil’s shoulders, and is beholden more to his enemies than to his friends in this sense, because that which would seem to stop his course, and to obscure his glory,

doth advance it so much the more: Phil. i. 12, ‘The things which happened unto me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.’ The gospel was not extinguished by Paul’s imprisonment, but propagated. I say, Paul’s sufferings were as necessary as Paul’s preaching, that the truth might gain, and that it might be known and heard of. God overrules all these actions for his glory, and for the benefit of his church.

Use 1. First, if we be not in this condition, let us look for it and prepare for it. Religion is a stranger in the world, and therefore it is often ill-treated; we have a stable happiness elsewhere, and here we must expect changes. All the comforts and hopes of the scriptures is suited to such a condition; a great part of the Bible would be need less, and would be but as bladders given to a man who stands upon dry land, and never means to go into the waters; the comforts and provisions God hath made for us in the word would be useless, it’ such things did not befall us. Why hath God laid in so many sup ports, if we think never to be put to distress and troubles? Oh! then, think of these things beforehand, and make them familiar to you. ‘The evil which I feared is come upon me,’ saith Job. When the back is fitted, the burden will not be so dreadful. Think of these things beforehand, that you may provide and prepare for them. Now, that you may not be strange at such kind of providences, consider four things:—

1. The world will be the world still. There is a natural enmity between the two seeds, which will never be wholly laid aside, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, Gen. iii. 15; as natural an enmity as between the wolf and the lamb, the raven and the dove: 1 John iii. 12, ‘Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.’ Separation and estrangement in course of life is a provoking thing. Men that live in any sinful course are loath any should part company with them, that there might be none to make them ashamed; therefore when they draw from their sins, and do not run with them into the same excess of riot, they think it strange; your life is a reproof to them: John vii. 7, ‘The world hateth me, because I testified of it that the works thereof are evil;’ and Heb. xi. 7, ‘Noah condemned the world; being moved with fear, prepared an ark.’ Strictness is an object reviving guilt. Every wicked man loves another—*Velut factorem, adjutorem et excusatorem sui criminis*, as one that favours his actions, and helps to excuse his actions. One wicked man doth not put another to the blush. It is no shame to be black in the country of the negroes. But when there is a distinction, some walk with God humbly and closely, certainly your life is a reproach to others that do not so, therefore they will hate you.

2. This enmity hath ever been working: the prophets and holy men of God have had experience of it. Abel was slain by Cain, Gen. iv. 18; Isaac scoffed at by Ishmael, Gen. xxi. 11; which example the apostle allegeth, Gal. iv. 29, ‘He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit,’ So it was then, so it is now, and so it will ever be to the world’s end. Ever it hath been the lot of God’s children to suffer hard things from the men of this world, though they are related to them in the nearest bonds of kindred and acquaintance. Jacob, because of the blessing and

birthright, was pursued to death by Esau, and driven out of his father's house, Gen. xxvii.; Moses driven out of Egypt by his unkind brethren, Acts vii. 25-27; David hunted up and down like a partridge upon the mountains; Jezebel sought Elijah's life; Micaiah thrown into prison, and hardly used; Elisha pursued by Jehoram for his head. Instances are end less of this kind; ever there hath been an enmity, and ever will be.

3. Persecutions are more, greater, and longer in the New Testament than in the Old. Why? Partly because the Old Testament church was under tutors and governors, Gal. iv. 1, 2; neither for light of knowledge, nor ardour of zeal to be compared with the New Testament church, when 'the kingdom of heaven suffers violence,' Mat. xi. 11. Look, as Christ spared his disciples until they were fit for greater troubles, till fit for the new wine, Mat. ix. 17, so God spared that church. The church then had troubles, but for the most part they were not for religion, but for defection from God, for their sins. And partly, too, because the church of the Old Testament was not so dispersed, but confined within the narrow bounds of one province or country, not mixed with the profane idolatrous nations, nor exposed to their hatred, contradiction, and rage; but of Christians, the apostle tells us, this sect is everywhere spoken against. And partly because Satan then had quiet reign over the blind world for a long time; but now, when Christ comes to dispossess him, to turn out the strong man—the goods were in peace before, and now he hath but a short time—he hath great wrath, Rev. xii. 11. When Christ came to seize upon the world, it was quick and hot work, his force and violence was greater. Again temporal promises were more in the eye of the covenant, where all things were wrapped up in types and figures; when prosperity signified happiness, and long life signified eternity, there were not such exercises and trials then. But now, 'All those that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution,' 2 Tim. iii. 12. But since Christ hath set up his church, and brought light and immortality to the world, now troubles are greater.

4. Persecutions from pseudo-Christians will also be hot and violent: Rev. xiv. 13, 'Write from henceforth, saith the Spirit, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.' Why, the dead that die in the Lord? they were always blessed from the beginning of the world; why such a solemn notice from heaven? Why *from henceforth*? The meaning is this: those that suffered under pagan persecutions, all Christians would call them blessed that died in the Lord. Ay! but now, when the persecutions began under the pseudo-Christians, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth still. Nay, the persecutions here are greater than the pagan, and of longer continuance. Why? Because they have a show of Christ's authority, as the beast in the Revelations had horns like a lamb; that beast which spake like a dragon, deceived the nations, enchanted the world with her witchery and sorcery, that beast had a pretence of the authority of Christ, Rev. xiii. 11. And the purity of Christians is greater, and so more enraging; and the great quarrel in the latter ages of the world is about a temporal interest. The spirit of the world is the spirit of antichristianism, and all those that hang upon her are of the spirit of the world: 1 John iv. 5, 'They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.' Now, when these are contending for the world, this doth exceedingly inflame and heighten the rage against those that would endanger their worldly interest.

122

You see there is cause to think that God will expose us also to our trials; therefore we should be forewarned and prepared for these things that they may not come upon us unawares.

Use 2. If God's people are put into such a condition that they carry their lives in their hands, then learn from hence, that if we have greater security for our lives and interests, we ought more to bless God and to improve the season. It is a great mercy that we have laws to secure our religion and our interests, that we have Christian and Protestant magistrates to execute those laws, that we may in safety worship God in the public assemblies, and we ought to bless God. But then, if this be our condition, there are three duties required of us:—

1. To acknowledge God in this mercy, for it is he that hath the hearts of magistrates in his own hands: Prov! xxi. 1, 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the river of waters, he turneth it whithersoever he will.' Their thoughts, their designs, inclinations and aversations are in God's hands. And as God hath power, so hath he promised this blessing, Isa. xlix. 23, that he will give 'kings to be nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers.' Well, there is a power and a promise. What follows then? Only that we praise God for so much of it as we have, and that we pray to God still for more, that we may, under our kings and governors, 'lead godly and quiet lives,' 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2; and therefore, if we have greater security for our lives and interests, God must be acknowledged.

2. Be so much the more in active obedience: Acts ix. 31, 'Then had the churches rest.' And what then? 'And they walked in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.' When you have a good day, you should improve it well; when we may walk up and down in the security of laws, and serve God freely, oh! let us serve him much; we are not called to renounce our interests, therefore let us mortify our lusts. Fires are not kindled about us to consume our bodies, therefore let the fire of God burn up our lusts. If the saints are to quit their well-being, certainly it should not be grievous to us to part with our ill-being, with our sins for God's service. Look, as Salvian *de Gub*. lib. iii., saith, when our kings are Christians, and religion is not troubled by them, now God calls us to be more pure and holy in our conversations; now we do not shift for our lives, let us avoid occasions of evil; now we are not cast into prisons, let us confine ourselves to our closets, that we may serve God more cheerfully there.

3. Bear the lesser troubles with more patience, when this is not our condition, that our lives are carried in our hands from day to day. It was never so well with the people of God, that if not in kingdoms, yet in families, in parishes, in lesser societies there will be some conflict; now these we should bear with more patience, because the children of God are exposed to that condition that they have carried their lives in their hands from day to day: Heb. xii. 3, 'Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.' You are not called unto a 'resistance to blood.' As Julian the apostate said to one, If he was so offended with their taunts, what would he be with the darts of the Persians? If we cannot suffer a reproach, and an angry word for Christ; if we murmur when we are a little slighted and forgotten by men, and left out of the tale of the world, oh! what would we do if we were called to suffer greater things?

123

Jer. xii. 5, ‘If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horsemen?’ that is, if thou canst not endure the scorn, reproach, and opposition of a few private wicked men that stand upon even ground with thee, how canst thou contend with horses, when there are other manner of oppositions?

Use 3. If this should now befall you, as it hath befallen God’s choicest servants, and very likely so to do for those reasons I gave, then shrink not, but resolve to endure any extremity rather than take any sinful course for your ease; nay, be not dejected if it should happen: Acts xxi. 13, ‘I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.’ There was one that had his life in his hand indeed, that had the courage to lay it down. To quicken you hereto, let me give a few considerations:—

1. God hath given you greater things than possibly you can lose for his sake; though we should lose life and all, yet he hath given us his Christ. Saith Ambrose, We are indebted for a person of the. Godhead; and shall we stick at our personal interests and concernments? Shall we not die for his honour who died for our salvation? die temporally for him who maketh us to live eternally? and give that body as a sacrifice to the honour of Christ, which otherwise by the law of nature will become meat for the worms? therefore every Christian should carry his life in his hand, Phil. i. 20, either by martyrdom or ministerial labours.

2. No evil is like to that evil which will befall us in forsaking God: Mat. x. 28, ‘Fear not them which can but kill the body,’ &c. Shall we, rather than run hazards with the sheep of Christ, be contented to howl with wolves in everlasting darkness, when we for a little temporal danger refuse to run hazard with Christ’s sheep, shall be cast into hell-fire for evermore? If we are so tender of suffering, what will it be to suffer hell-fire?

3. All that we can lose is abundantly made up in the other world. Heb. xi. 35, it is said, they ‘would not accept deliverance, having obtained a better resurrection.’ There is a resurrection from death to life, when we come out upon ill terms, by accepting the enemy’s deliverance. Ay! but there is a better resurrection when we come out upon God’s terms, a resurrection to life and glory hereafter. Violence doth but open the prison door, and let out the soul that long hath desired to be with Christ; and therefore we should endure, as expecting this better resurrection.

4. Consider upon what slight terms men will put their lives in their hands for other things, and shall we not run hazards for Christ? Many venture their lives for a humour, a little vainglory, to show a greatness of spirit; or they venture their lives upon revenges, upon a punctilio of honour. Some will venture their lives in the wars for one shilling a day, and shall we not carry our lives in our hands for Christ? Scipio boasted of his soldiers, that they loved him so as to venture their lives for him, to leap into the sea, and cast themselves down a steep rock: There are none of these but if I spake the word, shall go upon a tower, and throw himself down into the sea if I bid him. So Fulgentius’ story of those that would obey their chief, whom they called *Vetus*, the old man of the

mountain, if he bid them fall down a steep rock, to show their obedience; and shall not we venture our lives for Christ?

Doct. 2. That when our souls are continually in our hands, no kind of danger should make us warp and turn aside from the direction of God's word. Why?

1. A Christian should be above all temporal accidents; above carnal grief, carnal joy, worldly hope, worldly fear; he should be dead to the world, or else he is not thoroughly acquainted with the virtue of Christ's cross, Gal. vi. 14.

2. God can so restrain the malice of wicked men, that though we carry our lives in our hands, we shall be safe enough for all that: Prov. xvi. 7, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.' Mark, the Lord can secure you against men, when a man pleaseth the Lord; but when a man pleaseth men, they cannot secure you against the Lord, they cannot save you harmless from the wrath of God, or answer for you to the Almighty, nor give you safety from the terrors of conscience. But on the other side, many a man by pleasing God finds more safety and comfort in opposing the lusts and the humours of men than in complying with them. God's providence is wonderfully at work for his children when they are reduced to these extremities; either he can allay their fury, turn in convictions upon their consciences of the righteousness of those whom they molest and trouble, as when Saul hunted for David, 1 Sam. xxiv. 17, 'Thou art more righteous than I.' God puts conviction upon him. Nay, sometimes such a fear and reverence that they dare not: Mark vi. 20, 'Herod feared John because he was a strict man.' Or some check or bridle, some contrary interest that God can set up, that their hands are withered when they are stretched out against them, as was Jeroboam's hand; and therefore a Christian, though his life be in his hand, he should not warp. Why? For God can mightily provide for him as to his temporal safety: 1 Peter iii. 13, 'Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?' It is an indefinite proposition, some times it will be true. Let a man follow that which is good, who dares harm him? There is an awe, and he is kept safe, though not always.

3. We renounced all at our first coming to Christ. Estate, credit, liberty, life, it was all laid at Christ's feet, if our hearts were really upright with him. A man must lay down self, whatever it be, else he cannot be Christ's disciple, Mat. xvi. 24; Luke xiv. 26. This was done in vow, in a time of peace; therefore it must be actually done and made good in a time of trouble. Your interests are God's, and are only given back to God again; your estate, life, liberty, and credit, all given up. Why? That you may have something of value to esteem as nothing for Christ.

125

4. Our sufferings shall be abundantly recompensed and made up in the world to come: Rom. viii. 18, 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.' For a man to stand comparing his interest or sufferings here in this world with the glory revealed, is as foolish a thing as if a man should set a thousand pound weight with a feather. So 2 Cor. iv. 17, 'Our light affliction,' &c. We are often saying, If we lose this and

that, what will become of us? what shall we have? Mat. xix. 27-29, ‘We have left all.’ A great all they had left for Christ; it may be a net, a fisher-boat, a cottage; yet he speaks magnificently of it, and ‘what shall we have?’ Have! You shall have enough; ‘in the regeneration you shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’

5. You should not warp, though you carry your lives in your hands, because constancy is necessary. How necessary? For our credit and good name as we are men: ‘Do I use lightness?’ saith the apostle, 2 Cor. i. 17. Men lose their authority and esteem, they are not accounted grave, serious, and weighty, when they shift and change, and appear with a various face to the world; and certainly it is for our comfort, for our right to everlasting blessedness is most sensibly clear by constancy in God’s cause: Phil. i. 28, ‘And in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.’ Oh! what would a man give for to clear this, that he is an heir of God? This is an evident token; and it is necessary for the credit of the truth which we profess. When we shift, turn, and wind, we bring a dishonour upon it; but, saith the apostle, Phil. i. 14, ‘They waxed confident by my bonds;’ this puts heart and courage. And it is for the honour of God: 1 Peter ii. 14, ‘On your part he is glorified;’ and John xxi. 19, ‘Signifying by what death he should glorify God.’ Since constancy is so necessary, either we should not take up principles, or suffer for them if called thereunto.

Use 1. Caution to the people of God. Take heed you do not forget the word, when you carry your lives in your hand. Many of God’s people may do so sometimes, as when we deny the truth: Mat. xxvi. 72, ‘Peter denied before them all, saying, I know not the man.’ Or when we take any sinful course for temporal safety, as when David feigned himself mad before Achish, 1 Sam. xxi. 13. Or when our spirits are filled with passion against the instruments of our trouble, and with uncomely heats, as Peter drew a sword in a rash zeal, and had no thanks for it, but a rebuke from Christ. Or when we suffer in a heartless and comfortless manner, as God’s children sometimes are in dejections of spirit. David took notice of his drooping and disconsolateness, Ps. xlii. 5; when he flitted up and down in the wilderness, pursued with Saul’s army, he had his droopings and discomforts. In these cases we forget the word of God.

Use 2. To press you to courage and constancy in a time of danger; to endure all extremities, rather than do anything against the word of God. Here I shall inquire:—

1. What is this Christian courage? There is military valour and Christian valour. The one consists in doing, the other in suffering, great things. Peter, at Christ’s death, had more of the military valour and fierceness than of the passive valour, for he that could venture on a band of men was foiled by a damsel’s question. The one dependeth on hastiness of temper, greatness of blood and spirits; the other upon faith and submission to God’s will: Acts vii. 55, ‘He being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.’ It is spoken when the people gnashed on him with their teeth, then full of the Holy Ghost. There is the habit of fortitude, and the act of it when led on. There is a great deal of difference between

the courage of wicked men, and the faith and fortitude of good Christians. We see rude men are undaunted in the face of danger, but the fortitude of Christians consisteth in lifting up their eyes and hearts to heaven; others not, for as soon as they think of God, their courage faileth; the more brave, the more they shut out the thought of divine things, all sense of God and immortality: 1 Cor. xv. 32, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.' It is a brutish fury, inflamed by wine, stirred up by trumpets and drums, not stirred up by the consolations of God, or remembrance of his covenant; then they are dejected, Rev. vi. 15-17.

2. To remove such objections as may hinder your courage and constancy.

[1.] It is a sore temptation to keep our service, but we must stand to God's providence, to honour him by service or suffering, as he shall think good. We are to honour God in his own way, we are not to stretch conscience in the least degree to continue it. God hath no need of thy sin; when God hath a mind to lay you aside, submit.

[2.] The smallness of the difference is another objection. If it were to turn Turk, or heathen, or papist, men will say, they would not do so and so. God standeth upon every peek of his word, every dust of truth is precious.

[3.] Another objection is this, we shall be interpreted to hinder the public peace.

I answer—'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men,' Rom. xii. 18. But be sure not to betray the cause of God, nor lose the interest of Christ; that is not possible which is not lawful in a moral sense.

[4.] Another objection is, that we shall be accounted peevish, rash, stubborn.

I answer—We must be led to credit. There is a difference between men stubborn and obstinate and zealous. Many may sacrifice a stout body to a stubborn mind, but be courageous and constant in the service of God.

3. What is necessary to this well-tempered courage, that we may suffer not out of humour, but out of conscience towards God? Not because formerly engaged by profession, or out of a desire of a name and esteem among religious persons, but out of obedience to God, who commandeth us to choose afflictions, rather than sin. To this resolution there is necessary—

[I.] A heart weaned from the world, Mat. vi. 24, otherwise a man will act very uncertainly, and his zeal for God be very uneven.

127

[2.] A heart entirely devoted to God. Every one that cometh to Christ must be thus resolved, Luke xiv. 26.

[3.] A heart purged from sin, or else our zeal is not uniform, besides that our lusts will weaken our courage. A carnal person, suffering in a good cause, is of no account with God. The priests

were to search the burnt-offering if sound, or had any defect or blemish upon them. He that keepeth the commandments is best able to suffer for them: Mat. v. 10, 'Blessed are they that suffer for righteousness' sake.' A martyr must have all the precedent graces.

[4.] A heart that lieth under a deep sense of eternity, and things to come: 1 John v. 4, 'This is the victory we have over the world, even our faith.' Not any looking backward, but forward.

SERMON CXX.[9]

The wicked have laid a snare for me; yet I erred not from thy precepts.—VER. 110.

HERE is the second assault made upon David's integrity, the secret snares laid for him. The enemies of God's people do not always go to work in the way of open persecution, and directly for righteousness' sake; but then they lay snares; what they cannot do by open force, they seek to do by fraud. Many that have stood out with courage against the shock k of violence, have been taken in a snare; as the prophet that resisted the king was enticed by the blandishments of the old prophet, 1 Kings xiii. Persecution is a more gross way, and liable to exception, and therefore they must go secretly to work. Sometimes this life is a continued temptation, and a Christian that walketh in the world walketh in the midst of snares set for him, by his enemies bodily and spiritual. The devil is the great snare-layer, and wicked men learn it of him: 'The wicked have laid a snare for me,' &c. In the words observe—

1. David's temptation, *a snare laid* for him.

2. The persons who managed the temptation, *the wicked*.

3. The success and issue, *yet I erred not from thy precepts*.

Doct. The godly have often snares laid for them, not only by Satan, but by wicked men.

Now snares are to entice, or endanger, or of a mixed nature.

1. Snares to entice them from their duty. Thus the blandishments of the whorish woman are called a snare: Prov. vii. 23, 'As the bird hasteth unto the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.' Of this nature are crafty insinuations, baits of preferment, profit, pleasure, or any carnal advantage, to pervert our judgments, and draw us off from our duty.

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[9] On the Fifth of November.

2. Snares to endanger their safety, clogged with some spiteful condition to entrap others, or when there is a plot laid to endanger others, as Jeremiah complaineth, Jer. xviii. 22, 'They have digged a pit to take me, they have hid snares for my feet;' secretly conspired and practised his destruction. And David, Ps. cxl. 5, 'The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside, and set gins for my feet. Selah.' Hunters and fowlers did never go more cunningly to work to catch the prey, than those proud men had laid their design to bring his life under their power. And in Ps. xxxv. 7, 'For without cause they have hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul;' and Ps. lvii. 6, 'They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit for me, into the midst whereof they are Mien themselves. Selah.' Now of this sort are St Bartholomew's matins, and the plot and contrivance to out the Protestants in France, when they were invited to a wedding, that they might destroy them; and of this nature was the Gunpowder Treason; there was a snare laid. When Orestes had plotted Clytemnestra's death, Euripides expresseth it, καλῶς ἀρ' ἄρκυν ἐς μέσην πορεύεται—she fitly cometh into the snare.

128

3. Of a mixed nature, both to entice by endangering, and endanger by enticing.

[1.] As when they put them upon such conditions as may tempt them to folly and sin. Some think the text verified in David, at that time when he said, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19, 'They have driven me out from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go serve other gods;' meaning, they excited Saul to pursue him and persecute him, and forced him to flee into an idolatrous country, and so a snare laid to endanger his steadfastness in the true faith. It is a great temptation. *Necessitas cogit ad turpia*—necessity is but an evil counsellor; and this joined with the other temptation of bad company: Ps. cxx. 5, 'Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar.'

[2.] When they enact a law or statute, whereby to force them to sin or trouble; as they had a plot against Daniel, either to make him neglect his God, or render him obnoxious to authority, Dan. vi. 7, 8. When they burden them with such laws and statutes as the godly cannot obey without sin, or refuse without danger; they have their ends either to draw them to sin or suffer.

Now snares are laid by the wicked:—

1. Because usually they excel in policy, craftiness, and worldly wit, are superior to God's children therein; their whole hearts run that way, and their principle is entire and unbroken; and therefore our Lord Christ telleth us, Luke xvi. 8, 'For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.' They applaud themselves in their artifices, idolise their wit: Hab. i. 16, 'Sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their drag;' therefore use it to the saints' destruction.

2. Because they are acted by Satan, who will ever be doing against the church, though to little purpose. Luke xxii. 3, the devil entered into Judas when he plotted against Christ. They learn their wiles from Satan, and conceive mischief by copulation with the great incubus of hell.

3. Their own hatred and malice against the people of God. Malice is a laying snares. Anger vents itself in a storm of words, or in some sudden violent action; but hatred lurketh in the soul, and puts them that harbour it upon plots and contrivances of revenge. The historian observeth of Tiberius, *In malitiam statim invectus est,* &c. When Absalom hated Amnon, because he forced his sister, he plotteth how to take away his life, 2 Sam. xiii. 22.

129

Now, whence cometh this malice against the children of God? Either by envy at their interests, or hatred at their holiness.

1. Envy at their interests, their esteem and respect in the world, when they come to be of any regard among men. Esther v. 9, Hainan plotteth against Mordecai, because he sat in the king's gate: Ps. cxii. 9, 10, 'His horn shall be exalted with honour; the wicked shall see it, and be grieved, and gnash with their teeth.' When the gospel was like to get credit, Acts xvii. 5, the envious Jews raised an uproar. Pride is loath to stoop; to see opposites in glory and power whets their malice, and they contrive how to root them out. Every man would have himself and his own faction admired and magnified. The Pharisees conspired to take Christ: John xii. 19, 'All the world is gone after him.' When religion prevaileth, and groweth in credit and fashion, it is deeply resented by naughty men.

2. Hatred at their holiness. Men cannot endure to be outstripped in religion, and therefore hate what they will not imitate. Hatred is quick-sighted in revenge, full of plots and contrivances, and tickleth the soul with a delight in them; but especially religious hatred, when a man hateth another for his godliness, when religion, instead of a party, becomes a judge, that which should restrain our passions feeds them; no hatred so great as that against the power of godliness. Cain, when he saw Abel so punctual in God's service, he plotteth to draw him into the field, 1 John iii. 12, and beginneth a discourse with him about providence and judgment to come, and rewards and punishments, and while Abel maintained God's part, Cain fell upon him and slew him.

To apply this. As these snares tend to our temporal destruction, so there is a double use to be made of them.

1. To trust God with our safety in the midst of so many snares. What shall we do? Whatever remedy we have against violence, no man by his own foresight can find out all the snares that are laid for him; therefore commit your safety spiritual and temporal to the Lord; go to him and say, Ps. cxli. 9, 'Keep me from the snare they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity.' Constant dependence upon God is necessary, for there can be no snare hidden from him who watcheth over us and our safety by night and by day. There is a double argument why we should trust God with our safety; because of his wisdom, and because of his watchful providence. Because of his wisdom. Alas! we are foolish and simple, and often betray ourselves into an evil condition; but God is wise for them that are foolish: Ps. xxxvii. 12, 13, 'The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth: the Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming.' There is a wise God acting for a foolish people. I tell you, the wisdom of God for us is

much greater than the wisdom of God in us. Where enemies deal proudly, God is above them; where they deal craftily, God is beyond them. The wisdom of God for us is greater than the wisdom of any against us. And also because of his watchful providence; he hath a waking love and care of us night and day: Ps. cxxi. 4, ‘Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.’ He will be so far from sleeping, that he will not so much as slumber. When, we know nothing, his ‘providence finds out the secret contrivances that are against us. I tell you, God is our father; he will maintain us and take care for us, when we live by faith, and not by shifts, in a good plain downright course of honesty: Gen. xvii. 1, ‘I am God all-sufficient: walk before me, and be thou perfect;’ that is, they should go on doing their duty, and refer the care of their safety to God. Oh! then, cast yourselves upon the Lord; he will either direct your way to eschew these snares, or pluck your feet out of them if you be taken therein: Ps. xxv. 15, ‘Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord; he shall pluck my feet out of the snare.’ Look to him for direction and counsel.

130

2. Bless God for your safety and preservation; it is a mercy to have a being, in the midst of so many dangers and snares as waylay us everywhere; especially should we bless God when we have escaped some notable trap and pit that was digged for us: Ps. cxxiv. 7, ‘Our soul is escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.’ This is a passage we may use to God this day. There are two grounds usually of thanksgiving for this deliverance:—

[1.] That their devices came to nought: Job xv. 35, ‘They conceive mischief and bring forth vanity.’ It discovereth the wisdom, power, goodness, and watchfulness of God, that this dark and hellish machination, that they thought so wisely laid that all devils in hell could not discover it, yet the God of heaven brought it to light: Prov. xxi. 30, ‘There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.’

Those three words set out the quintessence of parts. *Wisdom* noteth a quick apprehension; *understanding* a wise foresight grounded upon experience; *counsel* a designation of some rare artifice: Isa. viii. 9, 10, ‘Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.’

[2.] The mischief returned back upon themselves: Ps. vii. 15, ‘He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. Higgaion. Selah.’ Their instruments; it is a high note that we may observe it. An iron heated red-hot burneth their fingers that hold it; they are taken in their own pit, poisoned in their own cup, holden in cords of their own vanity, so that in the issue it appeareth they laid a snare for themselves rather than for us.

Use 2. As they are enticements to sin; so we may make many uses of it.

1. You ought to ask God’s counsel, for you walk in the midst of snares, that he would guide you and lead you: Ps. xxvii. 11, ‘Teach me thy way, O Lord; lead me in a plain path, because of

mine enemies.' Those that watch for our halting are many, their craft is great; therefore go to the wise God for counsel; ask of him what your way and course shall be, for he seeth that which you see not.

2. Get spiritual wisdom and understanding. An ignorant, credulous heart is soon seduced, but a man of understanding, that seeth his danger, is not easily drawn and allured into it: Prov. i. 17, 'In vain is the snare laid in the sight of any bird.' The vain, credulous, simple young man is soon enticed by the lewd woman, in the 7th of the Proverbs.

3. Keep the highway of duty, and walk by a sure rule, and then you are safe. David saith here, 'I erred not from thy precepts.' In a time of snares, often consult with your rule. It is Satan's aim to put us out of our way; as when the fisherman would get the fishes into the net, he seeketh to rouse them out of their place. Take a man out of God's way, and he becometh a ready prey to Satan. In doubtful cases there is no man chooseth the worst, but first he breaketh some known rule and clear moral precept. Therefore be punctual, and keep close to God's directions in clear and known cases, and you are safe.

4. There needs a mortified heart to worldly interests; our temporal interest is to be shaken off. A man of carnal affections seeketh but the snare: Job xviii. 8, 'He is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare.' If we will find the sin and disposition of heart, God will find the occasion; and a man that hath a commodity to put off (faith and a good conscience), will soon find a chapman to truck with him. Judas was thinking of betraying Christ, and the high priests were plotting how to do it just at the same time. Worldliness layeth us open to the snare: 1 Tim. vi. 9, '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.' But he that is dead to worldly interests remaineth firm, whatever bait be proposed.

Secondly, We come to the' persons that managed the temptation, the wicked: 'The wicked have laid a snare for me.'

Doct. It is the property of a wicked heart to plot and lay snares for the mischief and ruin of others, especially God's people. David saith here, 'The wicked have laid snares for me.'

1. It is a deliberate, voluntary sin; and the more will and advisedness in any sin, the greater it is. Laying of snares is not a thing done in passion, but in cool blood; there is art and cunning in it, and the heart dwelleth long upon it. The will sets the wit a-work, to weave the net and frame the device. *Involuntarium minuit de ratione peccati*—when a thing is involuntary it lesseneth sin; a man may be overtaken with a fault, Gal. vi. 1. But when he studieth it, it is much the worse. God's children are surprised through unwariness, and made to stumble in a fit of temptation; but when men's wits are bended to project and plot sin, it is not an infirmity but an iniquity: Prov. vi. 14, 'Frowardness is in his heart; he deviseth mischief continually, he soweth discord.' It is the description

of a naughty heart; so the prophet, Micah ii. 1, ‘Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds: when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hands.’ Their wickedness is premeditated, then woe to them.

2. It is a sign that evil is connatural to them, when they are plotting, as poison is to a spider; they are always working it, never out of their way by night and by day, their hearts run upon it: Prov. iv. 16, ‘Whenever they are abroad, they sleep not unless they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall.’ Then when others cannot rest, they examine themselves. Ps. iv. 4, ‘Commune with your hearts upon your beds.’ When our reins should instruct us, and suggest wholesome thoughts to us, Ps. xvi. 7; or when we should direct our prayer to God in the morning, Ps. v. 3, then they employ their thoughts and musings on evil. The apostle maketh it to be their disposition that are given up by God to a reprobate sense, to be ‘inventors of evil things,’ Rom. i. 30.

132

3. They that plot evil, they are of the devil’s trade, whose work it is to hurt and mischief those who are broken loose from him; it is his business to lay snares: 2 Tim. ii. 26, ‘And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.’ When Judas plotteth against Christ, the devil entereth into him. So Acts xiii. 10, it is said to Elymas the sorcerer, ‘O thou full of all subtlety and mischief, the child of the devil.’ They are like the devil in their hatred of God and the truth, and the persecution of the church, and like him for subtlety and politic contrivance. Bloody designs and inventions are the venom and poison of the old serpent sunk into men’s hearts; there are both cruelty and lying: 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.’

4. It is a sin contrary to the love of God and man, against double light and double obligations, from both the tables: grace and nature condemneth it. It is against God, for if we did love him, we would love his image; the saints that are so near and dear to him, they are ‘his jewels,’ Mal. iii. 17; they cost him dear; he gave an infinite price for them, the blood of Christ: they are the apple of his eye; to strike at them is to strike at God himself. And it is against man; if reasons of grace do not restrain such, yet reasons of nature should. To plot mischief against one that is of the same nature with us, natural light will teach us we should do as we would be done by. Oh! what a cruel creature is man to man, when God lets him alone to the sway of his own heart and natural fierceness!

5. It is contrary to the gentleness and simplicity of the Christian religion. Christian religion is a simple and harmless thing: Phil. ii. 15, ‘That ye be holy and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation;’ 2 Cor. 1. 12, ‘This is our rejoicing, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.’ It is a sign men have drunk in a false religion when their spirits are efferated, and grow monsters in wickedness. Men addicted to false worship are subtle and cruel; subtle, for where there is real worth there is no

dissimulation; they carry things open and fair; they have a God and conscience to bear them out, and this is worth all the world; and if things do not suit to their minds, they can tarry God's leisure, without base and creeping acts, and underhand designs and machinations; but a false religion, that hath not a God to depend upon, breedeth fears, and fear and pusillanimity puts men upon plots and bloody designs, as Herod, when afraid, seeketh craftily to murder Christ, Mat. ii. And as a false religion is crafty, so it is mischievous and cruel: Jude 11, 'These walked in the way of Cain;' for a false religion cannot subsist without the plots of blood and tyranny and cruelty. When Judaism began to fall, the Jews bound themselves under an oath that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. False worships put men upon a blind zeal, that breaketh out in tragical effects. *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.* So much of truth, so much of meekness, openness, and plainness, as the other is of spite and malice.

133

Use. Oh! then, let the children of God abhor this hateful disposition; take heed of those kind of sins that have subtlety and malice in them; these are the devil's sins, the cursed old serpent, that hath been a murderer from the beginning; take heed of plotting mischief, and secretly designing the ruin of others. I would have you Christians, that are of the true religion, carry it meekly towards others; beware of deliberate sins. It is possible in some great temptation the children of God may fall into these kind of sins, as David plotted Uriah's death; but that sin was laid to his charge more than all the sins that ever he committed. These sins are accompanied with some notable affliction and judgment, as on David's sad house; they leave an indelible stain and blemish, and cost us dear: 1 Kings xv. 5, 'David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that he commanded him all his days, save in the matter of Uriah.'

How many failings have we left upon record? His distrust: 'I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.' His dissimulation, with his rash vow to destroy Nabal; his injustice in the matter of Ziba and Mephibosheth; indulgence to Absalom, numbering the people, wherein he showed his carnal confidence. All these are passed over in silence, as his infirmities, save only in the matter of Uriah. And they will cost dear; there is always some eminent trouble and affliction that accompany such sins. When David had sinned in the matter of Uriah, what troubles were there in his house; his daughter ravished, Amnon slain in his drunkenness, Absalom driveth him from his palace royal, and then, poor man, his subjects deserted him, he forced to go weeping up and down, and shift for his life; all Israel came to Absalom, his wives defiled by his own son. Thus you see what is the fruit of deliberate sins.

These sins cost us a great deal of bitter sorrow, sighs, and tears, to recover our peace and God's love and favour. Again, how bitterly did David remember his sin, and beg that God would 'restore to him the joy of his salvation!' Ps. li. Therefore take heed of deliberate sins, when we have time enough to have serious and sufficient consideration of the evil, and yet do it; when a man knoweth a thing to be evil, and yet resolveth to go forward with it. Sin is not done suddenly, in heat of blood,

but at leisure; not limited to a minute, or an hour, or any short space of time; and yet to do it, this grieves the Spirit, and will cost us dear.

SERMON CXXI.

Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.—VER. 111.

IN this notable psalm there are many independent sentences expressing David's affection to the word of God. In this verse you have—(1.) David's choice, 'Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever.' (2.) The evidence of that choice, 'For they are the rejoicing of my heart.' I call it the evidence, for so it is a proper demonstration that he took God's precepts for his heritage; this is the mark and sign of it, 'They are the rejoicing of my heart.' It did his heart good to think of his heritage, and what an ample portion he had in his God.

First, Let me speak of his choice, whence this observation. It is the property of believers to take God's testimonies for their heritage. In the management of which truth, I shall show—

1. What are God's testimonies.

2. What it is to take them for an heritage.

3. The reason why it is their property to do so.

1. What are God's testimonies. Any declaration of his will, in doctrine, precepts, threatenings, promises. The whole word, it is the testimony which God hath proposed for the satisfaction of the world. It is God's deposition or testimony, to satisfy men what is his mind and will concerning their salvation. God's testimony is the public record, that may be appealed unto in all cases of doubt, Ps. xix. 8, 'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart,' &c.; 'The testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple.' By *the statutes of the Lord*, is meant in general the whole counsel of God delivered in the word. But then more specially and chiefly they imply the evangelical or gospel part of the word, the promises of the covenant of grace, Isa. viii. 20, 'To the law and to the testimonies.' *Testimony* in this sense is contradistinguished to the *law* or God's precepts, what is required of us; thus 'the ark of his testimony' is called by that name. Mark this notion of calling the word God's testimony; it shows us what regard we should have to the precepts and promises of God; you need regard them, it is God's testimony *to* you and then *against* you. Christ would have his word preached 'as a testimony against them,' Mat. xxiv.,—a testimony *to* them that they might know God's mind, and then, if it were not received, a testimony *against* them at the last day; when God comes to judgment, the sinner will be without an excuse, but will not be

without a testimony; every sermon will rise up against him in judgment; it will be a testimony for their conviction.

And as we should regard his precepts, so it shows in what regard his promises are, which are chiefly his testimony; therefore it is said, John iii. 33, 'He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.' You give God the glory of his truth by venturing your souls upon his testimony, whereas otherwise you 'make him a liar,' a blasphemy which is most contrary to the glory of his being: 1 John v. 10, 'He that believeth not makes God a liar.' Look upon the promises as God's testimonies, you may urge it to your own heart and to God. We may urge it to our own heart when we are full of doubts and troubles; here we have God's testimony to show for it, 'Why do ye doubt, O ye of little faith?' Here is God's testimony. Nay, it is a testimony under an oath, that the heirs of promise might want no satisfaction, Heb. vi. 18. If we had but God's bare word it should beget faith, for God stands much upon his truth; but we have his oath, his hand and seal. Why! after such a solemn assurance shall I make God a liar, as being in doubtful suspense? And they are a testimony which you may produce to God himself: Lord, thou hast said, and here is a promise wherein thou hast caused me to hope; I expect nothing but what thou wilt perform. Look, as Tamar showed the tokens to Judah when he was about to condemn her, showed him the ring and the staff as a testimony, and said, Whose are these? Gen. xxxviii. 25, you put God in mind of his promise; here is the testimony he hath called you to these hopes whereby you should wait upon him. How shall we take it here? for the precepts of God, or the promises, or both? Surely the precepts of the word are the heritage, or the gospel and treasure of the church, a treasure not to be valued; and every single believer is to take up his share, and count them his treasure and his heritage. No man can take the promissory part of the word for his heritage, but he is to take the mandatory part also; as in every bond and indenture the conditions must be kept on both sides. So if you should take it for the whole covenant of God, wherein God is bound to us and we to God, there were no incongruity. Yet the notion of an heritage is most proper to the promises, and these are the rejoicing of our soul, the foundation of our solid comfort and hope. The promises are a witness in our hearts how he stands affected to us, of which we are most apt to doubt through our unbelief. Natural light will convince us of the justice and equity of his precepts; therefore by the special use of the word the promises of God are called his heritage. Again, the promises are put for the things promised, and testimonies for the things contained and revealed in them; for the promises properly are not our heritage, but they are the evidences, the charters which we have to show for our heritage. The blessings of the covenant are properly our heritage, and the promises are the assurance and conveyances by which this heritage is made over to us. As we say a man's estate lies in bonds and leases, meaning he hath these things to show as his right to such an estate; so the promises, that is the blessings contained, or the testimony revealed there, they are the things a believer takes for his portion. Thus I have showed what is meant by the testimonies of God.

2. What is it to take them for our heritage? There are two words, *heritage*, and *I have taken* them. The word *heritage* first notes the substance of our portion, or what we count our solid and

principal estate; secondly, it notes our right and propriety in it; thirdly, the kind of tenure by which we hold it; fourthly, many times actual possession. Now saith David, I have taken; that implies actual choice on our part. We are not born heirs to this estate, but we take it, we choose it for our portion. And mark, he doth not say they are, but I have taken them for my heritage. Every believer cannot say, These are mine, they are my heritage, for everyone hath not assurance; but yet every one should say, 'I have taken them,' there I look for my happiness; for every believer is alike affected, though not alike assured. David doth not here so expressly mention his interest, though that is implied, as his choice. Briefly, to take God's testimony for our heritage implies four things:—

136

[1.] To count them our choicest portions. Let others do what they will, this is my share, my lot, my portion, saith David; that which I esteem to be my happiness; this is as lands, goods, treasures to me, dearer and nearer than all temporal things whatsoever. Look, as a believer in the duty part of religion takes the precepts for his counsellor, so David saith, Ps. cxix. 24, 'Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors,' or the men of my counsel. Answerably in the happy part, they are my heritage and the rejoicing of my soul; it is my wealth, my treasure, my chief estate. Every man is known by the choice of his portion; now David was not taken up with any worldly thing, so as to make that his heritage, or account it his solid happiness, wherein his soul could find complacency and contentment.

[2.] It signifies to make it our work to get and keep up an interest in God's testimonies; this is to take them for our heritage. Esteem is manifested by prosecution. That which is our chiefest work, that shows us what we take to be our heritage. What 1 is it to grow great in the world, to shine in pomp, to flow in pleasure, or to get and maintain an interest in the covenant? What do we seek first? Is it 'the kingdom of God and his righteousness'? Mat. vi. 33. The main care is to make sure an interest in the covenant, to get a right and propriety in it.

[3.] To hold all by this tenure: heritage is a child's tenure. We do not come to this right by our own purchase, but as heirs of Christ; not by our own merits, but by adoption, God making us children and 'joint-heirs with Christ,' Rom. viii. 17; 'and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.' Adam's tenure was that of a servant; the blessings that he expected from God, by virtue of the covenant of works, he looked upon them as wages of obedience; but now, we take the promises as an heritage, as a right devolved upon us as heirs of Christ, because believers are called the seed of Christ, and upon the account of that are possessed of the privileges of the covenant: Isa. liii. 10, 'He shall see his seed, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands.' This is a heritage purchased for us before we were born, before we had done either good or evil; and we have the right and title of sons, John i. 12; he hath given us this privilege to be the sons of God. Whatever we receive, we receive it from God as a child's portion.

[4.] Heritage signifies actual use and possession, and living upon them; and so I have taken thy testimonies for my heritage; that is, I mean to live upon them, and fetch all my comforts thence. A believer's interest is not an imaginary thing. We do enjoy somewhat by virtue of the promises. It

is true our full fruition is suspended till hereafter, but we begin here. The testimonies of the Lord they are of present use in the present life; therefore we are said to be ‘Heirs according to the hope of eternal life,’ Titus iii. 7. God doth not take us to heaven presently upon our spiritual nativity or new birth. It pleaseth God to exercise us for a while in our nonage, under tutors and governors, and to make us differ little from servants; but for the present we have maintenance, we live by faith, Gal. ii. 20. We live upon our heritage, and fetch thence not only peace and righteousness and grace, but meat, drink, and clothing, protection, and defence. So that to take God’s testimonies for our heritage is to live upon them as far as the present state will permit, to fetch out all our supplies from the covenant; otherwise we should make the promises to be but a conceit and imagination, if they did not afford present support. A believer doth not live upon outward supplies only, but upon the covenant; not upon meat and drink, food and raiment, but he fetcheth all from the covenant, by the exercise of faith, and so these things are sanctified to him. So that to take them as our heritage is to make them the grounds of our future hopes, and the storehouse from whence we receive our present supply. And this is that which is called living by faith, fetching all our supports and supplies out of the promises: Gal. ii. 20, ‘All that Hive in the flesh’ (so in the original), ‘I live by the faith of the Son of God.’

137

3. For the reasons, why it is the property of believers to take the testimony of God for their heritage; before I come to that, first, I must show what kind of heritage it is; secondly, How believers only, and no others, can take them from their heritage.

[1.] What kind of heritage it is. It is a heritage which exceeds all others in three particulars—it is full, it is sure, it is lasting; therefore we must pitch upon it for our solid happiness.

(1.) It is a full heritage, and nothing can be added to the completeness of our portion; for in the promises here is God, heaven, earth, providences, ordinances, all made ours, and all inward comforts and graces they are a part of our portion; and what can a soul desire more? Here is God made over to us; the great blessing of the covenant is, I am thy God. Other men say (and they will think it a great matter when they can say), This kingdom is mine, this lordship is mine, this house, these fields are mine; but a believer can say, this God, this Christ, this Holy Spirit is mine. Alas! riches and honour and worldly greatness are poor things to a God made ours in covenant. Nay, mark the emphasis; God is not only ours, but ours as an heritage: Ps. xvi. 5, ‘The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance.’ They may claim a title to God, and enjoy the possession of God as freely as a man would do his own inheritance. I say, they have as sure a right to God, and all that he is and can do, as a man can have to the patrimony whereunto he is born. And as the Lord is theirs, so heaven and earth are both theirs. Heaven is theirs: let a believer be never so despicable in the world, yet he is an heir-apparent to the kingdom of heaven, James ii. 15. Though, it may be, you are poor persons, nothing to live upon; poor apprentices, nothing to set up withal, yet ‘God hath chosen the poor of this world to be heirs of a kingdom.’ Poor believers are but princes in disguise, princes in a foreign country, and under a veil; they have a large patrimony; it lies indeed in an unknown land to the

138

world, it is in terra incognita to them; but believers know what an ample portion God hath laid up for them, heirs of a kingdom. If that be not enough, take that other expression, Rom. viii. 17, 'Heirs, co-heirs with Christ.' Christ as mediator, and we as members of his body, possess the same God, one father, one husband, one estate; we dwell together, live together; where he is we are. Besides God and heaven there is the world too. Here is the difficulty, how a Christian, that hath not a foot of land, yet should be heir of all the world. All things are theirs, saith the apostle, 1 Cor. iii. 21. And it is said of Abraham, who was 'the father of the faithful,' and whose blessing comes upon us, that through the righteousness of faith he became 'heir of the world.' He was re-established in the right which Adam had before the fall, that wherever God should cast his portion, he should look upon it as made over to him by grace, as a sanctified portion belonging to the covenant; and in this sense he was heir of the whole world. All creatures are sanctified to a believer, and the comfortable enjoyment of them fall to our lot and share; and therefore, 1 Tim. iv. 5, it is said, 'commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving, to them that believe and know the truth.' Mark, believers only have a covenant right to meat, drink, land, money, and the things that are possessed in the world, to make use of the good creatures God hath bestowed upon them. Others are not usurpers; I dare not say so. All men have a providential right; it is 'their portion God hath given them in this world;' but they have not a covenant right. Whatever of the world falls to their share comes to them in a regular way of providence, that shall be sanctified, and truly without this covenant right, if we had all earthly possessions, it would be a mere nothing, and no blessing. Once more, providence is theirs, even those things which are against us, afflictions, death; not only life, but death, 1 Cor. iii. 22, as part of their portion. Ordinances are theirs, all the gifts of the church, Paul, Apollos, Cephas, all for their benefit. And graces are theirs; the righteousness of Christ and the graces of the Spirit, they are all a part of their portion, made over to them by virtue of God's testimony. As to the righteousness of Christ, it is said of Noah, Heb. 11, 7, that he 'became an heir of the righteousness which is by faith.' The great legacy which Christ hath left is his righteousness. As Elijah when he went to heaven left Elisha his cloak or mantle, so when Christ went to heaven, he left the garment of his righteousness behind him as a legacy to the church, in confidence whereof we appear before God. Look, as fathers leave lands to their children, and such as they have, so Christ hath left us what he had. In the outward estate we are despicable. Silver and gold he hath not left us, that is no solid portion; but he hath left us his righteousness and obedience, as a ground of our acceptance with God. No monarch in the world can leave us such a portion; it cost Christ very dear to purchase it for us. Then the graces of the Spirit; we have grace enough to maintain our expenses to heaven, and carry us on till we come to the full enjoyment of our portion. Thus God in covenant, heaven, earth, whatever is great and magnificent, the ordinances of the church, the graces of the Spirit, all these belong to our heritage; it is a full portion.

(2.) It is a sure portion, both on God's part and ours. On God's part, there we have his word, and that is better than all the assurance in the world: 'He hath magnified that above all his name,' Ps. cxxxviii. 2. If we had but God's single word, that is enough, for God is very tender of his word, more than of heaven and earth; and all things he hath made: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.' Then we have it confirmed with an oath, Heb. vi. 6, 7. God thought our heritage could never stand upon terms sure enough, therefore he condescended to give us an oath over and above his word. An oath is given in a doubtful matter. But now because unbelief possibly might not be satisfied with God's bare word, he hath interposed by an oath, and pawned all his holiness and glory, laid them at pledge with the heirs of promise, 'that they might have strong consolation,' for that is the effect of God's oath, when the Lord swears, 'As I live, saith the Lord;' as if he should say, Take my life in pawn, count me not an excellent, glorious, holy God, if I do not accomplish this for you: I will make good this promise. There is no inheritance in the world so sure as this, made over to the heirs of promise. And then on our part, there it is made sure. God will maintain our right to this inheritance. We should embezzle our inheritance, lose it every hour, if it were wholly committed to us; but mark, 'Thou art the portion of mine inheritance, thou shalt maintain my lot, O Lord,' Ps. xvi. 5. A heritage is either wasted by the prodigality of the owner, or else wrested from us by the violence and cunning of others. Now, for the prodigal disposition of the owner: indeed we should spend our patrimony apace, soon embezzle our portion, if we had the sole keeping of it, for we are prodigals. But mark, under the law, Exod. xxv. 23, an Israelite, though he might alienate his inheritance for a while, till the year of jubilee came, yet God forbids him to sell it away for ever. So we blot our evidences often, we cannot read our title; there is an interruption of comfort, a kind of sequestration from the privileges of the covenant for a while; but Jesus Christ is our guardian to look after them that take the promises for their heritages. And then it cannot be wrested from us by the violence of others. All heritages in the world are liable to violences. Princes have been driven from their kingdoms, and men from their heritages; but this is a heritage God will maintain; he hath engaged his own power: John x. 28, 'No man is able to pluck them out of my hand.' It shall not be wrested from us by any pleas in law. The devil would soon pick a flaw in our title, there are so many temptations and accusations; but now God will maintain our right and possession of the privileges of the covenant. He is deeply engaged to maintain their right whose hearts depend upon him: they may take away life, but not the favour of God.

139

(3.) It is a most lasting and durable inheritance, as being eternal: 'I have taken thy testimonies for my heritage *for ever*.' You know all estates are valuable according as they last. A lease for years is better than to be tenant at will, an inheritance is better than a lease. Our inheritance lasts for ever and ever. All other heritages determine with life, but then ours begins—this heritage of God's testimonies. A worldly portion may crumble away and waste to nothing before we die, but these testimonies will give us a good estate when all things else fail. A believer, when he is stripped of

all, and reduced to bare promises, is a happy man; and when he is reduced to exigencies, then is the time to put the bonds in suit. God by promise hath made him self a debtor: ‘As having nothing, yet possessing all things,’ 2 Cor. vi. 10. They have all things in the promise, though nothing in sense. If we have but one gracious promise left to subsist upon, we cannot be poor; it is better riches than all the world, for then our right to God and eternal life still remaineth. If an estate here should last till death, yet then certainly men try the weakness of their portion. When other men find the worthlessness and baseness of their portion, you find the sweetness, fulness, and comfort of yours. Carnal men have but an estate for life at best: Luke xvi. 25, ‘Son, in thy lifetime thou receivedst thy good things;’ when they come to die they can look for no more; then they find the gnawing worm of conscience prove matter of vexation and torment; but then your heritage comes to the full: Ps. lxxiii. 26, ‘My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.’ Not only when all outward comforts fail, all creatures in the world have spent their allowance, but when the flesh begins to fail, when we consume and faint away, and hasten to the grave: Lord, then thou failest not, thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. We have an interest in the eternal God, and we shall live eternally to enjoy him. God lives for ever, and we live for ever, that we may enjoy God.

[2.] Now I come to give the reasons why it is the property of believers to choose this for their portion, and why no others can do it. It is the property of believers to do so upon two grounds:—

(1.) Because of the wisdom that is in faith. Faith is a spiritual prudence. You shall see faith is opposed not only to ignorance, but to folly, because it teacheth us to make a wise choice. Reason makes us wise to choose a good portion in this world: ‘The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light,’ Luke xvi. 9. But faith is for the inward and spiritual life. Worldly men are wise in worldly employments, to make a wise choice, and accomplish such things they affect, turn and wind in the world; there they excel the children of God; but faith makes us wise for eternity, and therefore it chooseth the better portion. Faith is a spiritual light, and seeth a worth in other things. It is a notable saying, Prov. xxiii. 4, ‘Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.’ How came these two things to be coupled? If we had no better wisdom than our own, we should spend our time, strength, and care to labour to be rich. Human wisdom doth only incline and enable us to the affairs of the present life, but God infuseth a supernatural light into the saints; they have counsel from the Lord: Ps. xvi. 7, ‘I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.’ As if he had said, Ah! Lord, if I am left to myself, and the workings of my own natural spirit, I should be as vain and foolish as others are; but thou hast given me counsel.

(2.) The next reason is, because of the nobleness and height of spirit that is in faith. Faith will not be satisfied with any slight fancies; it must have better things than the world yieldeth. The great privilege of the covenant and work of grace is to give us a new heart; that is, another manner of

spirit than we had before. Our natural spirit is the spirit of the world, a cheap, vile, low spirit, that will be satisfied with every base thing. Every man seeketh something for his portion, for no man hath sufficiency in himself, but seeketh it without. Natural men go no further than the world, riches, honour, pleasure; they seek it some in one thing, some in another. There is none more unsatisfied than a worldly man, for his heart cannot find rest, and yet none are sooner satisfied. A worldly man is not dainty, but taketh up what is next at hand. You think there is no such excellent-spirited men as they that have high designs in the world, and can achieve greatness and honour. But a poor Christian is of a more excellent spirit; these things will not give him contentment, nothing on this side God. Faith yieldeth a man a choice spirit, it maketh us take the testimonies of the Lord for our heritage. A renewed soul it hath its aspirings; it gets up to God, and will not be satisfied with worldly delights; but 'thou art my portion, saith my soul,' Lam. iii. 24. Others hunt after other things beneath God, heaven, the graces of the Spirit, the righteousness of Christ. Therefore thus it must needs be the property of God's children, because they have another understanding and another heart. And then none but the children of God can have these privileges. Why? Because though they are very magnificent and glorious, yet they are invisible, and for the most part future and to come; they make no fair show in the flesh; this is hidden manna, meat and drink the world knows not of. Carnal men look upon an estate that lies in the covenant to be but a notion and mere conceit, and they cannot believe they shall be provided for if God bears the purse for them; they cannot live immediately upon God, they must have something visible, outward, and glorious: and partly this inheritance is to come, therefore they cannot have this property: Heb. vi. 12, 'Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' The testimonies of the Lord are an inheritance we cannot come at presently, there needs a great deal of faith and patience in waiting upon God: as a hired servant must have money from quarter to quarter, and cannot with the child expect when the inheritance will befall him. A carnal heart dares not trust God, cannot tarry his leisure; wicked men 'have their reward,' Mat. vi. 2; they must have present wages, glory, honour, and profit here; they discharge God of other things, because it is a thing which costs them much waiting. A humble dependence upon God conflicts with many difficulties and hardships. Carnal men see no beauty in it, and because it is to come, it turns their stomachs.

SERMON CXXII.

Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.—VER. 111.

USE 1. It informs us what is the reason why a believer, that hath nothing in hand, nothing to live upon, yet is not only patient, but comfortable and joyful, as the men of the world when their

corn, wine, and oil increase. Whence are these men maintained, supplied, and kept at such a rate of cheerfulness? Their inheritance lies in the promise. As Christ said, 'I have meat and drink the world knows not of;' so they have land and estate the world knows not of; they have all in God. You account him a richer man that hath much land, and a thousand pounds in bonds, than he that hath only a hundred pounds in ready money; so a child of God that hath one promise is richer than all the world: he hath bonds, and his debtor cannot fail him. Let me tell you, a man may not only live by faith, but he may grow rich by faith. You read of living by faith, Gal. ii. 20; this is that which supports and keeps up a believer in heart and life. This will not only keep body and soul together, but help us to grow rich.

Use 2. For examination. You have heard much what it is to have an heritage in the testimonies of the Lord. Oh! but who is the man? Try yourselves. Let me propound a few plain questions.

1. Were you ever chased out of yourselves in the sense of the insufficiency of your worldly portion, and the curse due to you? Are you driven out of yourselves? Heb. vi. 18, there is a comfortable place: 'God, willing to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation.' Oh! who are these heirs of promise? If we could find out that, we are sure there is enough in God; there they are named who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. There is none ever took the testimony of the Lord for their portion, but they came first to take hold of it as men in danger, ready to sink and perish and be undone. Our first redress is to take sanctuary in the covenant, to flee to Christ, represented there as a city of refuge, that we may be safe. It is an allusion to a man which fled from the avenger of blood. When taken out of the city of refuge, under the law he was to die without remedy. So a poor soul that first takes hold of the covenant runs for sanctuary there first, before he comes to take possession of the comforts of it.

2. What do you take to be your main and your great work? Do you make it your main care to keep up your interest in the promises? the great business you drive on, you would sit down in as your work and employment? What do you wait upon as your great project and design in the world? Mary chose the better part, Luke x. 42; do you make this your choice, your work and business you drive on, that you may be possessed of the whole land of promise, and enjoy eternal life, and clear up your right and title to heaven? 1 Tim. vi. 19, 'Laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life.'

3. Are you very chary of your Interest? Oh! you would not hazard it upon such easy terms. This is that all your happiness depends upon. What! shall I break with God for such a trifle? Are you afraid to lose your inheritance by sin, as a man his treasure by theft? Are you careful and wary in this kind, that you may not hazard your interest? 1 Kings xxi. 3, said Naboth, 'God forbid that I should sell mine inheritance.' Mark, there was a king would traffic with him, and that inheritance

was but a poor vineyard of the earth, but it was that which was descended from his father: now God forbid I should sell it. Thus will be the disposition of God's children. Oh! here lies my all, my happiness, my daily supplies from God. God forbid that upon every trifle and carnal satisfaction I should break with God. It was a great profaneness in Esau, Heb. xii. 16, 'who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.' It is an argument that God is little valued, or the covenant and testimony of the Lord, when you can part with them for a mess of pottage, when the consolations of God are so cheap, and you can part with them for a little temporal satisfaction, and sell your part in Christ at a very easy rate.

4. What respect do you bear to the promises of God? Do you often meditate upon them? Have you recourse to them in straits? Do you keep them up as the choicest things upon your heart, upon which all your comfort depends, as a man would keep the key safe which opens to all his treasure? Do you carry the promises as a bundle of myrrh in your bosom? Because this is the key that gives you ad mission to the blessings promised. A man will keep his bonds chary, and will be often looking over them and considering them. So are you meditating upon the promises? Are they the rejoicing and delight of your souls? Do you keep them near and dear to you? When alone, do your hearts run upon them? For a man may know his heritage by his musing and imagination. When Nebuchadnezzar was alone, 'Is not this great Babel which I have built for the honour of my majesty?' He was thinking of his large territories. So if you have taken the testimonies of the Lord for your heritage, your heart will be running upon them. Oh! what a happiness is it tor God to be my God, and my interest cleared up in eternal life, and the great things of the covenant! Many times the flesh interposeth: Ps. cxliv. 15, 'Happy is that people that is in such a case.' You will be ad miring carnal excellency sometimes, but then you will check your souls: 'Yea, rather, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.'

5. If the testimonies of the Lord be your heritage, then you will live upon them, and make them the storehouse from whence you fetch all your supplies, as righteousness, peace, comfort, and spiritual strength; nay, all your outward maintenance. This will be comfort in straits, strength in duty, provision for your families. There are two sorts of the children of God, either those that are in prosperity, or those that are in want, and both live on the covenant. A child of God that hath a plentiful affluence of outward comforts, yet he doth live upon God, 1 Tim. iv. 5, to them that believe, for everything is sanctified by the word and prayer. Though God hath supplied them with mercy, yet they have their right; all comforts and blessings owe their rise from the promise. I take them immediately out of God's hand, from a God in covenant with me; and so I use the blessing and praise God. Otherwise, if you look only to present supplies, you live by sense, not by faith. Every one is to say, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' to fetch out his supplies from God every day, rich men as well as others, when you see you have a right and liberty by Christ. So God's leave and God's blessing go along with all; by this means rich men live upon the covenant. Ay! but chiefly

144

in want; the word quickened and strengthened him when he was in distress and in want of all things. Do you find the word afford maintenance in distress and want of all things? The covenant is a storehouse that never foils. When all else fails, God is alive still, and the promises are the same; when the field yields no meat, when there are no calves in the stall, &c., yet then you can live upon your covenant interest, and comfort yourselves in the Lord your God, Hab. iii. 18. Though the course of nature may fail, yet the covenant of God doth not fail, for that is beyond the course of nature, or beyond the common providence of God. When you can see that all the accidents which fall out in the world can never take your portion from you, you have enough to live upon; when you see more in the promises than the creature can take away from you, and can see all made up in God. As the children of Israel in the wilderness had no house, but, Lord, 'thou art our dwelling-place,' Ps. xc. 1. Faith gets a living from promises when nothing comes to hand in sense and outward feeling; and nothing can be taken from us but what the covenant can restore again, and to fetch quickening and support from heaven.

Use 3. For exhortation, to press you to take God's promises for an heritage; the poorest, that are born to nothing, may put in for a share. Take those motives:—

1. Consider every man hath an heritage, he hath a chief good: Ps. iv. 6, 'Many say, Who will show us any good?' There is something that man takes to be his happiness. The soul in itself is a chaos of desires; like a sponge that sucks and thirsts, it hath not sufficiency in itself; it was made for something without ourselves. Now man. being such a needy creature, is always looking abroad for a happiness, for a portion to maintain and keep him up in comfort and life, Every man must have a portion. Men are not men without looking after something to maintain them as a portion. Now there is no portion like this, like the testimony of the Lord; there is none so full as this, God's covenant notion is all-sufficiency; here is all things to be found in God. When God came to indent with Abraham, 'I am God all-sufficient.' He that hath the testimony of the Lord for his portion, hath God's all-sufficiency engaged to give him everything he stands in need of.

2. This is a portion will go along with you wherever you go. If you go into exile, a foreign land, into prison, into the grave, your heritage will follow you there. Your estate, though it lay in jewels, cannot be carried safe with you; but this portion you may carry with you, they cannot plunder and deprive you of it. There is a notable expression: Prov. xiv. 14, 'A good man shall be satisfied from him self.' A very strange expression: it is the highest sacrilege and usurpation that can be to be sufficient to ourselves; it is an encroachment upon God. Man, when he first fell from God, self was the next pretender. To seek that in ourselves which is only found in God, now is it meant a good man shall be satisfied from himself?' What! shall the Lord be laid aside? shall he be sufficient to his own happiness? No; it is not meant in opposition to God, but in opposition to external things that lie without him. He is satisfied from himself; that is, from the comfort God lets into his own

heart. A godly man is independent, his comfort doth not hang upon the creature; if you take away the creature, you do not take away his portion. As the philosopher could say, when all were he wailing the loss and spoil of the enemy, I carry all mine with me; so a Christian carries all his treasure about him. There is the same expression, Heb. x. 34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' A Christian hath a substance that is out of the reach of spoiling, since inward comfort is far better than riches, and all this lumber that is without.

3. All other things will never give you satisfaction. A worldly heritage may give us a bellyful, but cannot give us a heartful: Ps. xvii. 14, 'Their bellies are filled with hid treasure.' They which are rich and great in the world have more dishes at their tables, but those have a more delicious feast in their souls that have chosen God for their portion. All other heritages do but yield more matter for sin, more fuel for wickedness, to be spent upon lust, pride, luxury, appetite; that is all the difference. The heart of man is not satisfied with these things; and yet if the heart could be satisfied, conscience could not, for that is a sore place; still our sore will run upon us. Thus you see there is no heritage like this, that lieth out of the reach of the world, and that will fill up the whole heart, and yield satisfaction. You know all other things cannot help us in many worldly cases. In sickness spiritual comfort doth only relish of sweetness. A man doth never relish the comfort of the covenant as when he is under sickness, and-deprived of other things. For all other heritages, we know the best of them at first, but this is a heritage that grows upon us; here we have the pledge and earnest of our inheritance: an earnest is a small thing to bind the bargain in lieu of a greater sum.

4. This heritage sanctifies all our heritages. Oh! it is a sad thing to enjoy a heritage with a curse and the wrath of God. 'First seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added;' then they are cast in over and above, as paper and pack thread into the bargain, and are cast in in a sanctified way. A man may grow worse for every other portion, all the world will not bring one dram of grace; but this improves the world, and betters us.

5. Again, this is a good sign of adoption, when we have the spirit of God's children, both in God's gift and our choice. When men take the promises for their portion, it is a sign they have a good spirit. There is no mark put upon them that have an excellent disposition and dexterity to grow great in the world; but to be labouring and striving after an interest in the testimony of the Lord, it is a sign we have a child's spirit.

6. Again, this is a peculiar portion, and always goes along with the favour of God. Other things a man may have with the hatred of God; God giveth gifts to all his creatures. Isaac had the inheritance, but the children of the concubines had gifts. So every creature may have common gifts, a common portion, abundance of supplies in outward things, but no right in the promises of God; and all this may be without the love of God.

7. Again, they that refuse this heritage the Lord will cause his vengeance to seize upon them. It is not arbitrary whether you will take the testimony of the Lord for your heritage or no. God cannot endure to be despised. When Nabal despised David's kindness, 'I will cut off every one that pisseth against the wall.' So when the Lord hath made such an offer of himself and his Christ in covenant, and love hath gone to the uttermost to save, and we turn hack, then 'snares, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup,' Ps. xi. 6. It would make a man's heart tremble to think of the heirs-apparent of the land of darkness, that is, wicked men: God will give them their portion with hypocrites in 'everlasting burnings.' Therefore take heed of refusing this portion; you can look for nothing but terrible things from God, for his love is despised. Well, then, go in God's name, and take hold of the covenant.

146

Again, this may be of use to press believers to live answerable to such an heritage. Am I an heir of heaven, and so uncomfortable and dejected? Can I have an interest in the promises and be no more affected? This returning upon our hearts, Rom. viii. 31. When the apostle had spoken that we should be co-heirs with Christ, and laid forth the privileges of the covenant, he concludes, 'What shall we say to these things?' So, Christians, go home, return upon your heart, and say, Have I an interest in him, and live at such a low rate both for comfort and grace? Do I walk in such a low and unsuitable manner? Do I look upon this as the only sure heritage for my soul. Urge your heart with such questions as these.

Doct. 2. The taking of God's testimonies for our heritage breeds joy and rejoicing in the heart.

Now this joy ariseth partly from the portion itself, partly from the disposition of the saints, and partly from the dispensation of God.

1. From the portion itself. It is a portion that deserves to be rejoiced in, it is so full, and God cannot be possessed without great joy. A man cannot think of a little pelf and worldly riches that is his own without some comfort; and can a man think of these great things without comfort? Consider both what we have in hand and hope, and still it is matter of joy. In hand, there is reconciliation with God. Oh, to have God in amity with us! Rom. v. 1. If one have but a great man to his friend, it comforts him that he hath such a prop and stay. Oh, but now to have God reconciled! And then to have the care of providence, to have God engaged as a father—God caring for us—to be under a promise that he will never fail us till he hath brought us to heaven. And then to have heaven kept for us, those glorious things: 'We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.' Joy is pitched upon our hopes in many places, something in possession, and something in reversion; this must needs breed a joy in our soul: Heb. iii. 6, 'The rejoicing of hope;' and Rom. xii. 12, 'Rejoice in hope.' A Christian hath cause to rejoice for what he hath in hand. God is at peace with him, he can go to him as a friend, as a God in covenant with him; he is bound to provide for him as a father; and then, at the end of all, a glorious happiness that is to be enjoyed.

2. It ariseth from the disposition of the hearts of God's people; partly from their esteem, their faith, their assurance; they take it for their heritage, they esteem it as their portion, they believe it, and reflect upon their own interest; and all this causeth joy. It comes from their esteem; that which I esteem I will delight in: Mat. vi. 21. 'Where the treasure is, there will the heart be.' Affection follows esteem, and above all the affection of delight. A man may desire a thing that is nothing worth; when he comes to enjoy it, then he slights it. We are not acquainted with the imperfection of all worldly things until we come to enjoy them; but delight, that is an argument of esteem, the choicest affection. And then it comes from faith. Many hear of such great promises, but they hear like men in a dream. But now a believer, that hath a piercing sight, that seeth the reality and truth of them, his heart leaps within him. Heb. xi. 13, it is said, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' When a man is persuaded of the truth, the reality, and goodness of the promise, oh! his heart leaps. They hugged the promises. Here is a promise that will yield glory, heaven, and happiness, and all that I stand in need of. Spiritual sight makes way for spiritual persuasion, and spiritual persuasion for holy rejoicing; that is the order: 'In whom believing, we were filled with joy.' Faith is the immediate ground; and that is the reason why carnal men do not feel such lively joy, they do not believe it. Then it comes, too, from assurance and reflection upon their own interest, when they can challenge it as theirs, when it is made over to them. The rejoicing of faith is not only good in common, but propriety is a ground of rejoicing, and delight is nothing but a complacency in our portion: 1 Sam. xxx. 6, 'David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.'

147

3. It comes from the dispensation of God; for when we esteem the promises and delight in them, then the Lord fills the heart with sweetness: Rom. xv. 13, 'The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.' The Lord rewards delight with delight. Thou shalt 'call the Sabbath thy delight' in one place, then, presently 'Thou shalt delight thyself'—there is the promise. There is a delight and rejoicing that is our duty, and a delight and rejoicing that is God's dispensation. God loves to reward grace with grace. Look, as in a way of judgment he punisheth sin with sin, as when security is punished with sottish obstinacy and hardness of heart; so it is a sweet mercy when grace is rewarded with grace, when our delight in the promises is rewarded with a sweetness and taste of the promises.

Use 1. The portion of God's children and religion is no dark gloomy thing. The people of God have hidden joys. As the sun shines many times when it rains, so, though they be under affliction, yet they have the shine of God's face, the comfort of God's promises. Let me show the excellency of the spiritual heritage above the carnal. A carnal heritage, alas! that is a poor thing; there is no strong consolation in it. The comforts of wicked men are poor, weak comforts, they cannot comfort us in any affliction, poor things soon overcome; but to God's people their heritage affords strong consolation, in overcoming worldly lusts, in spoiling the relish of other pleasures, overcoming worldly care and worldly sorrow, in bearing us out in all. afflictions; nay, the strength of it is seen in overcoming the terrors of the Lord, death, hell, judgment to come, the fears and doubts of our

own conscience. It will not only swallow up the sense of poverty, disgrace, and affliction, but will bear us out in life and death; they have a joy that will make them to do and to suffer the will of the Lord. When once they have tasted the comforts of God's presence, other things will go down easy. I might press you to look after this rejoicing of heart. It makes much for the glory of God, for the honour of our portion, that we do not repent us of our choice, that we bear up cheerfully. And it is of abundant profit: the joy of the Lord is a Christian's strength; it bears him out in doing for God. To this purpose you should beware of sin; that is a clouding, darkening thing. Men or angels cannot keep their hearts comfortable that sin against God. Sin takes away all joy, peace, and the whole strength of men; and an angel cannot make the conscience of a sinner rejoice: therefore the children of God must take heed that they do not allow sin. In Acts ix. 31, 'They walked in the fear of God and comfort of the Holy Ghost.' Usually these two go together, and the oil of grace makes way for the oil of gladness; and usually obedience concurs to the establishing of our joy. Above all, look after communion with God, for he is the fountain of joy; and the more communion we have with him, the more we rejoice. The more communion in prayer: 1 Sam. i. 6, when Hannah prayed, 'she was no more sad.' Prayer hath a pacifying virtue in it. And then in the use of the seals, for these are assuring ordinances. Now the more we revive the grounds of assurance, the stronger the consolation; that appears Heb. vi. 18, Acts viii. 39. The eunuch when he was baptized 'went away rejoicing.' When a man hath an inheritance made over to him, passed in court, all things done, the title not to be made void, then he goes and rejoiceth. So when the promises have been confirmed by a solemn ratification, it makes joy. Then meditation and thanksgiving keep this joy alive; thanksgiving gives vent, and meditation that maintains it.

SERMON CXXIII.

I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always to the end.—VER. 112.

DAVID did not only feast his soul with comforts, but also minded duty and service. In the former verse he had professed his comfort and joy, resulting from an interest in the promise; now he expresses the bent of his heart to God's statutes. Ephraim is represented as an heifer that is taught, that would tread out the corn, but not break the clods. It is a fault in Christians when they only delight to hear of privileges, but entertain coldly enforcements of duty and obedience. David was of another temper; first he said, 'I have taken thy testimonies for an heritage,' and then, 'I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always to the end.'

In which words you have all the requisites of God's service.

1. The principle of obedience, *I have inclined my heart.*

2. The matter of obedience, *thy statutes*.

3. The manner of doing—(1.) Accurately to *perform*; (2.) The universality and uniformity, *always*; (3.) Constantly, *to the end*.

First, That which the Psalmist bringeth in evidence for himself is the frame of his heart; he beginneth there, not with eyes or hands or feet, but my heart. Secondly, This heart is spoken of as inclined, poised, and set, to show his proneness and readiness to serve God; not compelled but inclined. The heart of man is set between two objects; corruption inclineth it one way and grace another; the law of sin on the one side and the law of grace on the other; when the scales are cast on grace's side, then the heart, is inclined to God's statutes. Now he saith, 'I have inclined.' It is the work of God's Spirit to incline and bend our hearts, as David expresseth himself, ver. 36. But it is not unusual in scripture to ascribe to us what God worketh in us, because of our subservient endeavours to grace as we pursue the work of God. *Certum est nos facere quod facimus, sed Deus facit ut faciamus*, saith Augustine. It is our duty to incline our hearts to God's law, which naturally hang sin ward, but it is God's work. God beginneth by his preventing grace, and the soul obeyeth the impression left upon it: 'Turn me and I shall be turned,' Jer. xxxi. 18. Yea, he still followeth us with his subsequent and co-operating grace; we do but act under him: I inclined my heart after thou hadst filled it with thy Spirit; when I felt the motions of thy grace, my consent followed; preventing grace made me willing, and subsequent grace that I should not will in vain. Now, what was his heart inclined to? To 'perform thy statutes;' not to understand them only, or to talk of them, but inclined to perform them, to go through with the work; that is the notion of performing: Rom. vii. 18, 'How to perform.' We render κατεργάζεσθαι by it; to be complete in God's will, to do his utmost therein; this not by fits and starts, but always, a continual care and conscience to walk in God's law, not suffering ourselves for any respect to be turned out of the way. Many have good motions by starts, temporise a little; their goodness is like the morning dew; it is thus not for a time, but to the end. A holy inclination while the fit lasteth is no such great matter; this was to the last. Some stop in the middle of the journey, or faint before they come to the goal, but David held out to the last. Or this is brought as an evidence of his sincerity (the sum is a bent of heart carrying him out to perform whatsoever God doth command all the days of his life). I shall speak of what is most material, and observe this point—

Doct. They that would sincerely and thoroughly obey God must have a heart inclined to his statutes.

Here I shall show—

1. What is this heart inclined.

2. The necessity of it.

First, What is this heart inclined. God expects the heart in all the service that we do him: Prov. xxiii. 26, 'My son, give me thy heart;' not the ear or the eyes or the tongue, but the heart. The most considerable thing in man is his heart; it is *terminus actionum ad intra*, and *fons actionum ad extra*—it is the bound of those actions that look inward. The senses report to the fancy, that to the mind, and the mind counsels the heart: Prov. ii. 10, 'If wisdom enter upon thy heart.' It is also the well-spring of those actions that look out ward to the life, Prov. iv. 23; Mat. xv. 19. You have both these in one place: 'Let thy heart keep my precepts, let thine heart receive my words,' Prov. iv. 4. In taking in we end with the heart; the statutes of God they are never well lodged till they are laid up in the heart. In giving out duty and service, we begin with the heart; we must go so deep, or else all that we do is of no worth. The heart is the spring of motion, that sets all the wheels a-working: Ps. xlv. 1, 'My heart inditeth a good matter, my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer,' ready to praise God and serve him. When the prophet would cure the brackishness of the water, he cast salt into the spring. Our heart is blind: 1 Chron. xxii. 19, 'Now set your heart to seek the Lord.' There is a setting and fixing the heart which is the fruit of grace and ground of obedience.

150

1. It is the fruit of grace. By nature the heart is averse from God, desireth not to serve or enjoy him. See what the scripture saith of man's heart: Prov. x. 20, 'The heart of the wicked is nothing worth,' a sty and nest of unclean birds; Gen. vi. 5, 'Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart are only evil continually.' The scripture doth much set out the heart of man; it is foolish, vain, deceitful, Jer. xvii. 9, vain, earthly, unclean, proud. There is a strange bead-roll: Mark vii. 21-23, 'Out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.' It was in, or else it would never come out. If a man should vomit nothing but knives, daggers, pistols, and other instruments of destruction, of what a monstrous complexion would you judge that man to be! Oh, no such monster in the world as man's heart! If let alone to its own bent, it would grow worse every day, as putrid flesh grows more noisome every day. But now God by his grace giveth 'a new heart,' that hath other dispositions and inclinations, a heart that loveth God, and delights in God, tends to God. A new heart is the great blessing of the covenant, Ezek. xxxvi. 26; a new heart is a new placing of our desires and delights, for by these the heart is known.

2. It is the ground of obedience; for the heart is the main wheel of the soul, that moveth other things: a bowl is made round before it runneth round: Deut. v. 2, 'Oh, that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me!' There must be somewhat to bear up our resolutions. But more particularly, what is this bent and inclination of heart?

And first negatively.

1. It is not a simple approbation of the ways of God. Many go so far as to approve what is good, to condemn themselves for not doing it, to praise others that are holy, can be content that those that are under their power should take to the ways of God, as dissolute parents would have their children soberly brought up, *video meliora proboque*: Acts v. 13, 'The people magnified them,' yet durst

not join themselves with the disciples of Christ. Saul said unto David, 1 Sam. xxiv. 17, 'Thou art more righteous than I;' yet David was fain to go to his hold; as the woman, in Luke xi. 27, 28, cried out, 'Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck;' but Christ said, 'Rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.'

2. It is not a bare desire or wish. Many that live ill could wish to live well. Balaam had his wishes, but went on in his course, Num. xxiii. 10. Some flashes they have; a spark is not enough to set the heart on fire in holy things; in carnal things it is enough. Many such languid motions carnal men have, yea, many cold prayers, that God would make them better, but 'the soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing, for his hands refuse to labour;' they do not set themselves in good earnest to get that grace they wish for. Would I were at such a place! but never stir a foot. Would I had written such a task! and never put pen to paper.

3. It is not a hypocritical will; or, as one called it, a copulative will. We would, but with such or such a condition. I would, if it did not cost me so dear; if I were not to mortify lusts, to deny friends, interests, relations. They would come to the supper, Mat. xxii., but one had married a wife, another had a yoke of oxen to prove, another had found merchandise; this is no full and perfect will. No doubt but the chapman would have the wares, but he will not come to the price; a Christian should say, I will whatever it cost me, I will what ever come of it: Ps. xxvii. 4, 'One thing I have desired of the Lord, and this I will seek after.'

Secondly, Positively. Then is the heart inclined:—

1. When the judgment determineth for God, and comes to a full decree about obedience to him. Acts xi. 23, Paul exhorted them, 'That with full purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord;' that is the fruit of conversion; not a little liking or hovering or faint resolution, but a full purpose, an absolute positive decree in the will, to own God and his ways whatever it cost us, a full consent to the duty of the covenant.

2. When the will is poised and swayed with love and delight, and the heart is made suitable to obedience: 'Thy law is in my heart, and I delight to do thy will, O God,' Ps. xl. 8. Many times the law of God is written in the mind; many have good apprehensions, but the will is not swayed, bent this way. *Amor meus est pondus meum, eo feror quocunque feror*; when there is a natural inclination.

3. When this bent of the will is seconded with constant endeavours to attain what we resolve upon, and there is a continual striving to make good the articles of our perfect resignation or first surrender of ourselves to God: Phil. iii. 12, 'I follow after that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ.' God taketh hold of us by his grace, and we carry on this grace in the way of diligent pursuit or constant obedience. It is not one endeavour or two, but such as hath its constant force; hath not its pangs of devotion, but τὸ θέλειν παράκειται, 'to will is present with me,' Rom. vii. 18. It is a daily habitual constant will; not a volatile devotion, that cometh upon us now and

then, but such a will as is present as constant as evil is, Rom. vii. 21: κακὸν παράκειται. Wherever you go, or whatever you are about, you carry a sinning nature about with you; it is urging the heart to vanity, folly, and lust. So this will is present, urging the heart to good, and stirring up to holy motions.

152

Secondly, Let me now show you the necessity of this inclined heart, that we may yield to God cheerful, uniform, and constant obedience.

1. That we may yield to God cheerful obedience in all our services. God looketh for a ready mind. God, that accepts the will for the deed, never accepts the deed without the will. The dregs of things come out with squeezing and wringing; duty is best done when, like live honey, it droppeth of its own accord; cheerful and hearty service only pleaseth the Lord. Now, that is cheerful service which cometh not from the influence of by-ends and foreign motives, or the compulsion of a natural conscience or legal fears, but from the native inclination and bent of the heart: 1 John v. 3, 'This is love, to keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.' The work is not grievous, but pleasant, because suitable to the principles that are in us; it is not done against the hair: Cain offered sacrifice, but with a grudging mind. It is somewhere said, 'They offered to the Lord whose hearts made them willing.' When the heart is in it, it is not constrained, forced service, but natural and genuine; not like water out of a still, but like water out of a fountain.

2. For uniform obedience, to serve God in the whole tenor of our lives, that needs a heart inclined, that may be as a constant spring of holiness. A man may force himself now and then to actions displeasing to himself, but his constant course is according to his natural tent and inclination. Haman could refrain himself from murder, but his heart still boiled with rancour and malice. When men look only to the refraining of outward actions, or the restraining the outward man, it will never hold; the bent of the heart will discover itself, and so they will be off and on with God. The compulsion of conscience will sometimes urge them to God, but the inclination of the heart will draw them to evil; therefore God wisheth that his people had 'a heart to serve him,' Deut. v. 29.

3. Constant obedience; that can never be till the heart be inclined. Judas was a disciple for a while, but 'Satan entered into 'his heart, Luke xxii. 3. Ananias joined himself to the people of God, but 'Satan filled his heart.' Simon Magus was baptized, but 'his heart was not right with God,' Acts viii. 22. Here is the great defect. But now, when God gets possession of the heart, there he dwelleth, Eph. iii. 17, there he abideth, as in his strong citadel, and from thence commandeth all the faculties of the soul and the members of the body.

Use 1. To press you to get this bent of heart, otherwise all your labour in religion will be in vain, every difficulty will put you out of the way, and make you think of a revolt from God; till this the work of grace is not begun. God's first gift is a new heart: Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 'A new heart also will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you.' Without this you can never hold out, but you will be uncertain and mutable in the profession of godliness; whatever restraints are

upon you for a time, sin will be breaking out ever and anon with violence; and at length men will 'return with the dog to the vomit, and with the sow to her wallowing in the mire,' 2 Peter ii. 20. Oh! then, go to God for it: Jer. xvii. 10, say, 'Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved.' Carry forth the work of God so far as you receive it; follow after to 'apprehend that for which we are apprehended of Christ,' Phil. iii. 12.

153

Use 2. Have we such a heart, a heart inclined to do the will of God?

1. Though there be such a bent and inclination, there will be failings, yea, reluctances and oppositions: Rom. vii. 18, 'To will is present with me, yet how to perform that which is good I find not.' There is a ready will asserted, and a weak discharge complained of. Observe, it is a will, not a wish; a weak discharge; not that nothing is done, but not all that good that is required, nor in that purity; the work doth not perfectly answer the will, nor the motions of the spirit by which it is excited; and mark, this weakness is not rested in, but complained of; and not only complained of, but resisted: 'I find not,' that implieth he sought it; for the word 'finding' implieth a diligent search; he laid about him on every side, he did not expect it should come by chance or a lazy inquiry.

2. If wrought:—

[1.] How was it wrought in you? Did God turn thee, and thou wast turned? Were you ever brought to self-resignation? By what steps was this work carried on? Thy heart was naturally wedded to thy lusts and to carnal vanity; did ever God make you see the odiousness of sin, the vanity of the creature, the insufficiency of self? Evil men seek contentment in the world as long as conscience will let them hold out in that way. You cannot cleave to God till you are rent off from the world and self. Was there ever such a separation? such a rending work? Conversion, or the altering the bent of the heart, lieth in three things—in turning from the creature to God, from self to Christ, from sin to holiness. How to God? By making us a willing people, to yield up ourselves to his service. How drawn from self to Christ? To seek all this good in him. How from sin to holiness? By seeing the beauty of God's ways. Paul found it a sensible work before he was brought to this self-resignation: Acts ix. 6, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' How did God draw you or drive you to this?

[2.] How is this bent of heart kept up towards God? Nature is apt to recoil, and the heart to return to its own bent and bias again. David beggeth, ver. 36, 'Incline my heart to thy testimonies.' It is a hard matter to keep up a bent of heart towards God; it will cost us much watching, striving, praying, to keep it fixed. The frame of man's heart is changeable and various, doth not always continue at the same pass; and lust will waken, and be pressing and importunate; deadness will creep upon us. The great business of the spiritual life is to keep the bent of the heart steady: neglected grace will suffer decay, and worldly vanities and listlessness and deadness to holy things will incroach upon the soul, and a gracious heart is much discomposed. As a needle that bendeth towards the pole may be jogged and put aside, though it cannot rest there, but turneth thither again, so the

bent of the soul towards God may be much disordered, and we may lose much of our free spirit and ready mind, and grow uncomfortable and uncheerful in God's service, and it may cost us much sorrow and deep humiliation to get in frame again. A cold profession is easily maintained, but to keep up a spiritual inclination is the work of labour and cost.

[3.] How doth it work in you? This bent of heart is seen in two things:—

(1.) In pulling back the heart from those sins to which corrupt nature doth incline us. Nature carrieth us to carnal things. There is something within that puts you on, and something without to draw you forward. Nature thrusteth, occasion inviteth, but grace interposeth and checketh the motion: Gal. v. 17, 'The spirit lusteth against the flesh;; it is against the bent and inclination of the new nature; there is a back bias. Joseph had a temptation; we read of occasion inviting, but not of nature inclining; but presently his heart recoiled. The heart of man is seldom without these counterbuffs. It is an ad vantage to have the new nature as ready to check as the old nature to urge and solicit: 1 John iii. 9, 'He cannot sin, for his seed remaineth in him.'

(2.) In putting on the heart upon duties that are against the hair and bent of corruption. Such acts of obedience as are most troublesome and burdensome to the flesh, as are laborious, costly, dangerous. Laborious, as private worship, wrestling with God in prayer, holding the heart to meditation and self-examination; sluggish nature is apt to shrink, but 'love constraineth,' 2 Cor. v. 14. Spiritual worship, and such as is altogether without secular encouragement, that is tedious; to work truth into the heart, to commune with God, to ransack conscience, it is troublesome, but thy striving will overcome it. So there is costly and chargeable work, as alms, contributions to public good; there must be a striving to bring the heart to it. Then for actions dangerous, as public contests for God's glory, or keeping a good conscience, though with cost to ourselves. Our great work is to keep the will afoot, nature is slow to what is good. A coachman in his journey is always quickening his horses, and stirring them up; so must we quicken a sluggish will, do what we can, though we cannot do all that we should; the will must hold up still. A prisoner escaped would go as far as he can, but his bolts will not suffer to make long journeys, but yet he thinketh he can never get far enough; so this will is a disposition that puts us upon striving to do our utmost for God.

Secondly, The matter resolved on, to 'perform thy statutes always unto the end.' Uniform obedience, always, or all his days. As long as life lasteth we must be always ready to observe all God's commands, which notes the continuity of our obedience, sincerity, and perpetuity of it. We are to engage our hearts by a serious resolution to serve him, and that not by fits and starts, but always; not for a time, but to the end. Resolve to cleave to him, to hold him fast that he may not go, to keep our hold fast that we may not go. Take notice of the first decays, and let us keep our hold fast, and bewail often the inconstancy of our hearts, that we are so inconstant in that which is good. Every hour our hearts are changed in a duty. What a Proteus would man be, if his thoughts were visible, in the best duty that ever he performed! Rom. vii. 18, 'Evil is present with me, but

how to perform that which is good I find not.' Our devotion comes by pangs and fits, now humble, anon proud; now meek, anon passionate; not the same men in a duty and act of a duty, unstable as water. Compare it with God's constancy, his unchangeable nature, his love to us, that we may be ashamed of our levity. From everlasting to everlasting, God is where he was, the same; the same to those that believe in him. Secondly, This 'to the end.' God's grace holdeth out to the end; so should our obedience: 'He that hath begun a good work will perfect it,' &c. Consider how unreasonable it is to desire God to be ours unto the end, if we are not his: Ps. xlviii. 14, 'He is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide till death.' He doth not lay down the conduct of his providence. So Ps. lxxiii. 24, 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.' We can give nothing to God, our obedience is but a profession of homage. If God be always in our eye, we shall be always in his. We receive life, breath, and motion from him every moment; he sustaineth us, every day and hour yieldeth new mercy. God watcheth over us when we are asleep, yet how much of our time passeth away when we do not perform one act of love to God! The devil is awake when we sleep, to do us a mischief, but the God of Israel never slumbereth nor sleepeth. How can we offend him? Let us then take up this serious resolution, to perform God's statutes always to the end.

SERMON CXXIV.

I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.—VER. 113.

THERE are in men two great influencing affections—love and hatred; one serves for choice and pursuit, the other for flight and aversation. The great work of grace is to fix these upon their proper objects. If we could but set our love and hatred right, we should do well enough in the spiritual life. Man fallen is but the anagram of man in innocency; we have the same affections, but they are misplaced; we love where we should hate, and hate where we should love; our affections are like a member out of joint, out of its proper place, as if the arms should hang backward. If men knew how to bestow their love and hatred, they would be other manner of persons than now they are. In the text we are taught what to do in both by David's example. See how he bestowed his love and hatred: 'I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.' Love was made for God, and for all that is of God's side, his law, his ordinances, his image, &c.; but hatred was made for sin. All sin must be hated, of what kind and degree soever it be. Every drop of water is water, and every spark of fire is fire; so the least degree of sin is sin. Thoughts are but a partial act, a tendency towards an action, and yet thoughts are sin. Of all the operations of the soul, the world thinketh a man should be least troubled about his thoughts; of all actual breaches of the law these are most secret; therefore we think thoughts are free, and subject to no tribunal. Most of the religion that is in the world is but man's observance, and therefore we let thoughts go without dislike or remorse, because they

do not betray us to shame or punishment. These are most venial in man's account, they are but partial or half acts. What! not a thought pass but we must make conscience of it? this is intolerable. Once more, of all thoughts, vain thoughts would escape censure. A thought that hath apparent wickedness in it, a murderous or an unclean thought, a natural conscience will rise up in arms against it; but vain thoughts we think are not to be stood upon. Oh! but David was sensible that these were contrary to the law of God, transgressions as well as other thoughts, and therefore inconsistent with his love, to God: 'I hate vain thoughts.' Secondly, He bestows his love on the law. Naturally men hate God as a lawgiver and as a judge; they cannot hate him as a creator and preserver; under that formality they do not hate God, but the ground of our hatred to God is his law: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither in deed can be.' But now, saith David, 'I love thy law;' I do not fear it, but love it. I do not only keep it, but love it. A child of God will bless God for his commands as well as his promises; he owns God in the holiness of his law, and looks upon it as a copy and draught of God's own perfection; it is a good law; there is a suitableness between it and a renewed heart, and therefore I love thy law. The one of these is inferred out of the other, his love to the law is mentioned as a ground of his hatred against vain thoughts. Love is the great wheel of the soul, that sets all a-going. Therefore sin is hated because the law is loved. He that hath a true respect to the law of God is sensible of the least contrariety to it, for hatred is uniform. The philosopher tells us it is to the whole kind; as Hainan, when he hated Mordecai, sought to destroy all the people of the Jews; and when a man hates sin, he hates all sin, even where he finds it, in thoughts, words, speeches: love will not allow it.

Well, then, I love thy law, therefore do I hate vain thoughts; that is, though I cannot wholly keep them out of my heart, yet I hate them, resist them, watch against them, they are not allowed there. Without further glossing, the point is this:—

Doct. It is a sign of an unfeigned love to the law of God when we hate vain thoughts.

I observe it, because a man never begins to be really serious and strict till he makes conscience of his thoughts, his time, and is sensible of his last account. Of his thoughts, for that is a sign he minds an entire subjection to the law of God, that he may obey it from his very soul. Of his time, that it may not pass away before his great work will be done. Of his account, that is not far off; the Christian that lives in a due sense of his great account is always preparing to reckon with God. The one of these doth enforce the other. A man that is sensible he shall be called to a reckoning will be careful how he spends his time, and he that is careful how he spends his time will make conscience of his thoughts.

1. To give a taste of the vanity of thoughts.

2. Show what sins most occasion vanity of thoughts.

3. The reasons why a godly man will make conscience of his thoughts. First, Some taste of the vanity of thoughts. There are three

solemn words by which the New Testament expresseth thoughts:—(1.) Λογισμοὶ, discourses with its compound διαλογισμοὶ, which we render *imaginations*. (2.) Θυμήσεις, and sometimes ἐνθυμήσεις, *musings*. (3.) Νοήματα, which we render devices. These three ways the dunghill of corruption reeks out by our thoughts; sometimes in our vain arguings and reasonings, by way of image and representations in our musings, sometimes by way of foolish inventions and devices that are in the heart of man.

157

1. Λόγισμοι, carnal discourses of the mind, come under the notion of vain thoughts. If our more refined reason came to scan them, how light and vain would they be found! Our reasonings are usually against the sovereignty of God: Rom. ix. 20, ‘Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?’ We cannot see how it is just that by one man’s transgression all should be made sinners, that God should choose some and endow them with grace, and leave others in their corruption; how he should have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and harden whom he will harden. Man would be free from God, but would not have God free; and therefore, contrary to these reasonings and vain discourses, the scriptures plead the sovereignty of God, Mat. xx. 15, to show he may do with his own as pleaseth him. And as against the right and sovereignty of God, so there are strange discourses against the providence of God, many anxious traverses and debates in our minds; and therefore the scripture takes notice how distrust works by our thoughts: Mat. vi. 25, ‘Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink,’ &c.; and ver. 27, ‘Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?’ We are tortured with many suspensive workings and discourses of mind within ourselves, whereas a little trust in God would save many of these vain arguings: Prov. xvi. 3, ‘Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.’ He showeth that want of trust in God, and his word and providence, and committing all to his dispose, is the cause of a great deal of confusion and darkness in our thoughts, and breedeth such perverse reasonings against the providence of God. So against the truth of the gospel. The law is natural, and runneth in by its own light, with evident conviction upon the heart; but the gospel is suspected, looked upon with prejudice, received as a golden dream, and as a well-devised fable. We have reasonings in ourselves against that which is discovered concerning the salvation of sinners by Christ; therefore the apostle saith, 2 Cor. x. 5, ‘Bringing into captivity every thought,’ imaginations, or λόγισμοι, reasonings, those thoughts that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God in Christ. Then disputes against Christian faith, the mysteries of the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ; we are saying, as the Virgin Mary when the angel brought her tidings of it, ‘How can these things be?’ So we have perverse reasonings against positive institutions: 2 Kings v. 12, ‘Are not Abana and Pharpar better than all the rivers of Israel?’ We are apt to say, Why is this? The means of grace seems foolish and weak: 1 Cor. i. 19, ‘It pleaseth God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.’ So our arguings in perverting the truth of the gospel and holy principles of the word

to the countenance of our lusts, as Deut. xxix. 19; when we reason thus within ourselves: ‘We shall have peace though we walk in the imagination of our own hearts;’ we need not be so nice and strict; God will be merciful, he will pardon all: Jude 4, ‘Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness;’ wresting the truth from its purpose to countenance a laziness. It is good to observe the different arguings in scripture from the same principle. To instance in this principle, our time is short, what doth a holy man argue from it? 1 Cor. vii. 29, ‘Let those that have wives be as those that have none, those that weep as though they wept not,’ &c. Therefore we should be strict, temperate, sober in the use of all these things. Now, let a carnal wretch work upon this principle, and what inference doth he draw? ‘Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die,’ 1 Cor. xv. 32. See this other principle, ‘The grace of God brings salvation ‘to poor sinners, Titus ii. 12. How doth a gracious heart work upon it? ‘Teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,’ &c. Oh! what shall be done for this God, the grace that offers such salvation by Christ? Let a carnal wretch work upon this principle, and he will take liberty to sin that grace may abound: Rom. vi. 1, ‘Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid.’ Such kind of reasonings there are in the hearts of the godly: 2 Sam. vii. 2, saith David, ‘I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.’ God hath fenced me with his providence, what then? Here I may sit down and rest, and take my ease and pleasure, and gratify my sensual lusts? No; he doth not argue so, but what shall I do for God, that hath done so much for me? Now see those ungracious Jews after their return, how they reason: Hag. i. 2, ‘The time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built;’ no matter for God’s house. It is the Lord’s hand, let Eli work upon that: 1 Sam. iii. 18, ‘Let him do what seemeth him good;’ he draws from it a submissive patience. Oh! the sovereign God will take his own way, and the creature must not murmur, repine, and set up an anti-providence against him. But now saith that carnal wretch, 2 Kings vi. 33, ‘Behold, this evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?’ He murmurs, and frets, and grows impatient. Solomon tells us, Prov. xxvi. 9, ‘As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools.’ A thorn was their instrument of sewing; now when a drunkard should manage his needle, he wounds and gores himself; so is a parable in a fool’s mouth: a carnal heart wounds and gores himself with the most holy principle of religion.

158

2. The second sort of vain thoughts are ἐνθυμήσεις, *musings*; and here take notice the vanity of our thoughts appears—

[1.] In the slipperiness and inconstancy of them. We run from object to object in a moment, and our thoughts look like strangers one upon another, wandering like those ‘vagabond Jews,’ Acts xix. 13; so they are called because of their uncertain station and frequent removes. Eccles. vi. 9. ‘Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire;’ in the original, it is the working out of the soul; Usually we have a straggling soul, roving, wandering here and there, and all in an instant; especially this roving madness may we take notice of when we are employed in holy things, hearing, prayer, meditation. It is strange to see what impertinent, sudden discursions there are from good to lawful, from lawful to sinful, and how far the heart is removed from God when we are

before him; when a man hath brought his body to God, his heart is turned back again. These vain thoughts pursue and haunt us in duties, so that we mingle sulphur with our incense (it is Gregory's comparison), even in our prayers and holy addresses to God.

159

[2.] The unprofitableness and folly of our musings. Our thoughts are set upon trifles and frivolous things, neither tending to our own profit nor the benefit of others: Prov. x. 20, 'The heart of the wicked is little worth;' all their debates, conceits, musings are of no value. 'The tongue of the just is as choice silver;' but all their thoughts are taken up about childish vanity and foolish conceits: Prov. xxiv. 9, 'The thought of foolishness is sin;' not only the thought of wickedness, but foolishness. Thoughts are the first-born of the soul, the immediate issues of the mind, yet we lavish them away upon every trifle. Follow men all the day long, and take an account of their thoughts. Oh! what madness and folly are in all the musings they are conscious to! Ps. xciv. 11, 'The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity.' If we did judge as God judges, all the thoughts, reasonings, discourses of the mind, if they were set down in a table, we might write at the bottom, Here is the sum and total account of all, nothing but vanity.

[3.] The carnality and fleshliness- of our thoughts: Phil. iii. 19, 'They mind earthly things.' How sweet is it to us to be thinking of worldly matters, how to grow great, to advance ourselves here! This carnal mind is very natural to us. We are in our element, and do with a great deal of savour and sweetness think of these things; it makes our heart merry: but when we come to think of that which is good, we are tired presently, and it is very tedious to spend our thoughts upon them. Good things come upon us like a flash of lightning, soon gone, but on carnal things we can spend our thoughts freely. These carnal musings are stirred up by carnal desire or carnal delight; sometimes by a desire of worldly things, so they are forming images and suppositions of those things they hope for; as faith works in a godly man, forming images and suppositions of that happy time when they shall be gathered to God, and all holy ones, and rejoice in his presence. He hath a faith, 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1, which represents his hopes to him. So carnal men dream of preferment, riches, honours, vain glorious applause; they are looking out after their hopes, they send their thoughts as messengers of the soul to forestall the contentment of those carnal things which they do expect. Sometimes they are employed by carnal delight, when the thing we muse upon' is enjoyed. The complacency men take in any carnal enjoyment, it is part of this vanity when we go musing upon our own worth and our own excellency; as that king, Dan. iv. 30, 'Is not this great Babel that I have built for the honour of my majesty?' Men take some time every day to worship the idol of self, and dote and gaze upon their own excellencies and achievements, their wisdom and wit: Hab. i. 15, 'They gather them in their drag, therefore they rejoice and are glad.' Or else pleasing themselves in their estates, dialogising within themselves, as the word is, Luke xii. 13, 'Soul, take thine ease; thou hast goods laid up for many years,' &c.

[4.] By the impiety and apparent filthiness of them. When men are taken up with sin so as to act it over in their own minds, delighting themselves in fancying of sin, either by way of revenge or lust, or any other such thing, as an unclean person sets up a stage in his own heart: 2 Peter ii. 14, 'Eyes full of adultery,' or the adulteress; their fancy is upon the beauty of women, their soul is set upon it.

3. The third thing is νοήματα, devices. There are many devices and carnal inventions in the hearts of men which the scripture takes notice of; as—

[1.] When men devise, debate in their judgments by carnal means, without complying with God: James iv. 8, 'Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.' By vain thoughts they mind carnal projects, how to get from under the judgment without reformation, humiliation, and complying with God, by human means or sinful shifts, without God's warrant and allowance: Isa. ix. 10, when it was ill with them they hope to mend it: 'The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.' The state of our affairs is bad, but we can work it into better.

[2.] When men spend their time wholly to compass their carnal end; as he, Luke xii. 18, 'I will pull down my barns, and build greater,' &c. When they sacrifice their precious thoughts to their interest and lusts, and catering and progging how to satisfy carnal nature, making provision for the flesh to fulfil it in the lusts thereof. Or—

[3.] When men's designs are plainly wicked, and tend to the mischief of others: Prov. xvi. 30, 'He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things; moving his lips, he bringeth evil to pass.' Moving the lips and shutting the eyes are gestures and postures of men that are pensive and musing: Micah ii. 1, 'Woe unto them that devise evil upon their beds;' when men seek to spin and weave out a web of wickedness, and carry on their sins with the greatest secrecy. This, in short, is some taste of the vanity of our thoughts.

Secondly, What are the sins that do most usually engross and take up our thoughts? I answer—

1. Uncleanness. Speculative wickedness makes way for active: 'He hath committed adultery in his heart,' Mat. v. 28. There is polluting ourselves by our thoughts, and this is a sin usually works that way.

2. Revenge. Liquors are soured when long kept; so when we dwell upon discontents they turn to revenge: Prov. xiv. 17, 'He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly, and a man of wicked devices is hated.' He that is passionate and soon angry is a fool; but when a man is not only angry but malicious, that puts him upon wicked devices; when he doth concoct his anger, he is a fool to purpose. Purposes of revenge are most sweet and pleasant to carnal nature: Prov. xvi. 14, 'Frowardness is in his heart; he deviseth mischief continually.' When men are full of revengeful and spiteful thoughts.

3. Envy. It is a sin that feeds upon the mind, 1 Sam. xviii. 9. Those songs of the women that Saul had slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands, they ran in Saul's mind, therefore he hated David. Envy is an evil disease, that dwelleth in the heart, and bewrays itself mostly in thoughts.

4. Pride. Either pride in the desires or pride in the mind, either vainglory or self-conceit; this is entertaining our hearts with whispers of vanity: therefore it is said, Luke i. 51. 'He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.' Proud men are full of imaginations.

5. Covetousness, which is nothing but vain musings and exercises of their heart: 2 Peter ii. 14, 'A heart they have, exercised with covetous practices.' And it withdraws the heart in the very time of God's worship: Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 'Their heart goeth after their covetousness.'

6. Distrust is another thing which usually takes up our thoughts, distracting motions against God's providence.

Thirdly, Upon what grounds we are to make conscience of our thoughts?

1. Because they are irregularities contrary to the law of God. It is said, Ps. xix. 7, 'The law of God is pure, converting the soul.' The law of God differs herein from the laws of men. The commands of the greatest and most mighty potentates upon earth can go no further than the regulating of the conversation, for that is all they can take account of; but the law of God reacheth to the motions of the inward man, and to the reducing of our thoughts to the obedience of God; for God hath a tribunal in the heart and conscience, he searcheth and trieth the reins, knows all our thoughts afar off, and therefore it is proper to him to give laws to our thoughts.

2. God hath declared much of his displeasure against them. The devil's sin, for which he was cast out of heaven, was a sin of thought, an. aspiring thought, possibly against the imperial dignity of God. And so great were his judgments upon men, that he doth not so much take notice of outward acts as of inward thoughts; therefore, Gen. vi. 5, he threatened the old world for the imagination of the thoughts of their hearts. We look to the stream, but God looks to the fountain. Acts are hateful to men, because liable to their cognisance; so Jer. vi. 19, 'I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened to my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.' Nay, in God's process at the last day, when God comes to judge the world, it is said, 'The secrets of their hearts shall be made manifest,' 1 Cor. iv. 5. Men's inward debates, counsels, reasonings, and thoughts, they shall be brought into the judgment.

3. Make conscience of thoughts, because among all sins thoughts are most considerable, and that in these respects:—

[1.] In respect of the subject. They are the sins of the highest part of man, the mind, which is the leading part of the soul. The errors and irregularities of the lower part of the soul are not so considerable as the counsels, debates, reasonings, principles that we are seasoned and guided by:

Rom. viii. 7, ‘The wisdom of the flesh is enmity against God.’ That which should be the guide to man, his wisdom, puts him upon opposition. If sensual appetite were only in the fault, it were not so much.

[2.] From their nature. They are the immediate issues of the soul, the first-born of original corruption. The free acts of the heart do discover more of the temper of it than words and actions that are more remote. A man may be known by his thoughts, but not so much known by his words and actions, for words and actions may be overruled by by-ends and restraints of fear and shame. Men may speak not as they would, do not as they would, but think as they would. To curry favour with others, a man may refrain his tongue, and do some unpleasing actions, or may profess opinions contrary to his own mind; but inward thoughts, being the immediate births of the soul, very much discover the temper of the man. Hereby you may take the best measure of your spirits. A gracious man is full of gracious thoughts, and a wicked man full of wicked thoughts: Prov. xii. 5, ‘The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.’ Our thoughts we can best judge by, being the purest offspring of the mind, and the freest from restraint: Isa. xxxii. 8, ‘The liberal man deviseth liberal things.’ The unclean man is devising unclean things, the earthly man is always talking with himself about building, planting, trading; these things take up his mind. You cannot judge of a fountain by the current of water at a distance, six or seven miles off; it may receive a tincture from the channel through which it passeth; but just at the fountain where it bubbles up, there you can judge of the quality, whether sweet or bitter water: so you cannot judge of the soul by things that are more remote, and where by-ends may interpose: Mat. xv. 19, ‘Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications,’ &c. Evil thoughts come first; other things come from the heart, but not so immediately; therefore, thoughts being so considerable, we should make conscience of them.

162

[3.] They are considerable from their kind, here are the roots of all evils. Everything that we do, every deliberate act that is done by a reasonable creature argueth some foregoing thought, every temptation is fastened upon the heart by some intervening thought. Before sin be formed, brought forth, and becomes a complete sin, there are musings, which are, as it were, the incubations of the soul, or sitting a-brood upon the temptation: Isa. lix. 4, ‘They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.’ The mind sits a-brood upon sin. It is thoughts that bring the heart and object together. First men think, then they love, then they practise. Beating the steel upon the flint makes the sparks fly out; so when the understanding beats and knocks upon the will by pregnant thoughts, by inculcation, that stirs up the affections. These are the bellows which blow up those latent sparks of sin that are in our souls; therefore, if you would make conscience of acts, you should make conscience of thoughts. It is the greatest imprudence that can be to think to do anything in reformation when we do not take care of our thoughts. See, when God adviseth us to return to him, Isa. lv. 7, he saith, ‘Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.’ In vain do we lop off the branches and let the root live. If we would forsake our way, we must first forsake our thoughts. When certain fowl pestered a man, he asked how he should be rid of them? The answer

was, The nest must be destroyed, and they must be crushed in the egg. So here is the best way of crushing the egg, by dashing Babylon's brats against the wall. So much is implied in that place, Jer. iv. 14, 'Wash thine heart from. wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?' Wash thy heart, begin there. Medicines applied to the outward parts will do no good, unless the inwards be cleansed and purged; so until the soul be cleansed and purged from these evil thoughts, outward reformation will be to no purpose.

[4.] They are considerable in regard of their number, they are most numberless acts of the soul, Isa. lvii. 20. The sea is. always working, so the heart of man is always casting forth mire and dirt: Gen. vi. 5, 'Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually.' There is a mint in us that is always working towards that which is evil. This is a means to humble us. The Lord knows the best of our thoughts are but vain; this is that which raiseth the account in God's book of remembrance, which makes us more admire the riches of his grace even to the very last. 'Let him forsake his thoughts,' Isa. lv. 7. What then? 'I will multiply to pardon.' Certainly, if thoughts be sins, God must not only pardon, but multiply to pardon.

Use 1. To humble us all, the best of us, from first to last. Vanity of heart sticks to us. Oh, how many carnal thoughts haunt us wherever we go! As thou walkest in the streets up and down, whereupon do thy thoughts run? The common vain thoughts should be laid to heart. Have we not a God, a Christ to think of, sweet and precious promises, heaven and glory, and the great concernments of our souls? and yet with what chaff do we fill our minds! We go thinking of every toy and trifle, grinding chaff instead of corn every day. Oh! how do we throw away our thoughts, rather than God should have them, upon every vain thing! It is very irksome a little to retire and recollect ourselves, and think of God, Christ, and heaven; but what a deal of vanity do we take into our minds! If our hearts were turned inside outward, and all our thoughts liable to the notice of men, as they are to the notice of God, what odious creatures should we be! and have we no reverence of the great God? The Lord knows our hearts; he knows we have thoughts enough and to spare, more than we know what to do withal, and he knows we are backward to exercise them upon him, and things that lead to communion with him. These thoughts are aggravated from the time, as upon God's day, for then we are not to 'think our own thoughts,' Isa. lviii. 13; a Christian is then to sequester himself only for God. Nay, our vain heart bewrayeth itself in solemn duties; a man cannot go to prayer but the vanity of his thoughts will trouble him, and run about him when he is hearing the word; how do we course up and down like spaniels hither and thither! Yea, to humble ourselves because of our wicked thoughts, our desperate thoughts against the being of God: Ps. xiv. 1, 'The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.' Though we cannot open our eyes but the creature presently doth show us something of God, and call upon us whether we look upward or downward, yet how do we vent this thought? If there were no God, then we could live as we list, without check and restraint. Thoughts which arise within us against the truth of the gospel, as if it were but a well-devised fable; thoughts against the purity of God's laws, that we need not be so strict, that it

is but nice folly, that we shall do well enough without repenting, believing, minding the work of our salvation. Yea, we have thoughts against the light of nature, filthy, unclean thoughts, such as defile and stain the heart. Of earthly thoughts, how natural is that, in musing upon that esteem, honour, greatness that we shall have in the world! How do carnal thoughts haunt us, and this not only when we are in our natural condition, but even after grace! And Christians are mistaken that do not think those thoughts evil, though there be no consent of the will. I confess there are thoughts cast into the mind by Satan, but these not resisted, these cherished, fostered, they become ours; though they are children of Satan's getting, and may be cast in, as the tempting of Christ was, by injection of thought; but then we entertain these things; as weeds thrown over the wall are not to be charged upon the gardener, but the envious man; but if the gardener lets them lie there and root there, then it is his fault.

Use 2. Do we love the law of God? Do we aim at a complete and entire subjection to the will of God? Do we desire to serve him in spirit? Here is the evidence. Do we hate vain thoughts? We cannot be free from them, but are they your burden? A child of God is pestered with them, though he hates them.

1. Do we give them entertainment? Jer. iv. 23, 'How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?' They may rush into a gracious heart, but they do not rest there. Wicked men may have good thoughts, but do not give them entertainment; take a snatch and away, but do not make a meal upon any spiritual truth; there is an occasional salute sometimes in wicked men of good things, but their heart doth not dwell upon them.

2. Do you make conscience of them? Do they put you upon remorse, caution, watchfulness, frequent recourse to God for pardon and grace? Acts viii. 22, 'Pray, if perhaps the thoughts of thine heart may be forgiven thee.' Are you humbled for them, as well as for other sins, because these grieve the Spirit of God, are conceived there where he hath his residence, chiefly in the heart? Doth this trouble you, that the Spirit should be grieved?

Use 3. It presseth us to take care of our thoughts. Thoughts fall under the judicature of God's word, Heb. iv. 12. Thoughts are hateful to God: 'The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord,' Prov. xv. 26. And as they are hated of him, so he knows them all, it is his prerogative to tell man his thoughts; he under stands our thoughts afar off, Ps. cxxxix. 2. What thoughts we have when we are walking, praying, employed in our calling, what comes in, what goes out; there is not a thought but God regards, and God will reckon with us about our thoughts.

1. Look more earnestly after a principle of regeneration, Rom. viii. 5. They that are after the flesh, employ their wisdom about the flesh, they are contriving for the flesh, savouring the things of the flesh; and they that are after the Spirit savour the things of God, savour spiritual things. We must be renewed by the Spirit, The ground brings forth weeds, but not flowers of itself; so our hearts naturally bring forth vain thoughts, but they must be cultivated and dressed. We must be

renewed in the spirit of our mind. There is nothing discovers the necessity of regeneration so much as this, that we must take care of our thoughts. Moral restraints may prevent the excesses of life, or regulate the outward man. If sin did lie only in words and deeds, human laws and edicts would be enough, and we needed no other discipline to bring us to heaven. There are excel lent laws for bridling man's speech and practice, for these things man can take notice of; but he that is only good according to the laws of man, his goodness is too narrow, is not broad enough for God. It is the peculiar privilege of that judicature God hath set up to bring the thoughts under. Look that there may be within you a spring of holy thoughts.

2. Get a stock of sound knowledge. The mind of man is always working, and if it be not fed and supplied with good matter, it works upon that which is evil and vain. If there be not a plenty of good matter wherein to exercise yourselves, the soul will necessarily spend itself in vanity of thoughts. Now abundance of knowledge supplies and yields matter. It is a good thing when our reins instruct us in the night season, Ps. vi. 7, in the darkness and silence of the night; when we are taken off from all company, books, worldly employment, and distractions of sense, and the soul is left to itself, to its own operations, then to draw out knowledge, and have our reins instruct us. But men are barren of holy thoughts, and so are forced to give way to vanity: Deut. vi. 6, 7, 'Bind them upon thy heart.' What then? 'When thou awakest it shall talk with thee;' that is, as soon as you awake, before you have received images from abroad, a man is to parley with his soul about the course of his service that day. Words and thoughts are both fed by abundance in the heart. Thoughts are but *verba mentis*, words of the mind, and words are but thoughts expressed and languaged. Now if a man would have these things present when he is lying down and sitting up, then these words must be in his heart. A man must have a good treasure within, that he may bring forth out of his treasure things both new and old, Mat. xiii. 52. When the mind is the storehouse of truth, he will ever be drawing forth upon all occasions. He that hath more silver and gold in his pocket than brass farthings, brings forth gold and silver oftener than brass; so he that is stored with divine truths, and full of the knowledge of the Lord, his mind will more run upon these things, and will often out of the treasure of his heart bring forth things that are good.

3. Inure yourselves more to holy meditation. There must be some time to wind up the plummets, and lift up our hearts to God, Ps. xxv. 1. For want of this, no wonder if men's thoughts are loose and scattered, when they are left at random, when they are never solemnly exercised in consideration of divine truth; ver. 99 of this psalm.

4. Begin with God: Ps. cxxxix. 8, 'When I awake,' saith David, 'I am still with thee.' As soon as we awake, our hearts should be in heaven; we should leave our hearts with God over-night, that we might find them with God in the morning. We owe God the first-fruits of our reason before we think of other things, for every day is but the lesser circle of our lives. We should begin with God before earthly things encroach upon us. Season your hearts with the thoughts of his holy presence; that is the means to make the fear of God abide upon us all the day after; and it is some recompense

for those hours spent in sleep, wherein we showed not the least act of thankfulness to God, to exercise our reason again; and when we are awake we should be thinking of God.

166

SERMON CXXV.

Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I hope in thy word.—VER. 114.

IN these words you have—(1.) A privilege which believers enjoy in God, and that is protection in time of danger. (2.) David's right to that privilege, 'I hope in thy word.' From both the note will be this:

Doct. They that hope in God's word for the protection which he hath promised, will find God to be a shield and a hiding-place to them.

1. I shall speak of the nature of divine protection, as it is here set forth under the notions of a shield and hiding-place.

2. Of the respect which the word hath to these benefits.

3. Of the necessity and use of faith and hope in the word.

First, For the nature of this protection; it is set forth in two notions, a hiding-place and a shield. Upon which I observe:—

1. David was a military man, and therefore often makes use of metaphors proper to his function; when he wandered in the wilderness and the forest of Ziph, and they yielded to him many a lurking-hole, and so he knew the benefit of a hiding-place; and being a man of war, he was more acquainted with the use of a shield in battle. That which I observe is this, that it is good to spiritualise the things that we often converse with, and from earthly occasions to raise heavenly thoughts. You will ever find our Lord Jesus so doing. When he sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, he discourseth of eating bread in his Father's kingdom, Luke xvi. 14. When he was at the well of Samaria, he falls a discoursing of the well of life, of the water that springeth up to eternal life, John iv. Again, when he was at the feast of tabernacles, you will find there it was the fashion of the people at that feast to fetch water from the pool of Siloam, and to pour it out until it ran in a great stream; and then at the feast of tabernacles Christ cried out, 'He that cometh to me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water,' John vii. He spiritualiseth that occasion. Thus should we learn to turn brass into gold, and by a holy chemistry to extract useful thoughts from these ordinary objects that we are cast upon. Thus doth David; he had been acquainted with the use of a hiding-place and with a shield, and accordingly expresseth his confidence by these notions. The Septuagint renders it simply

and without the metaphor, My help and my undertaker; but we, from the Hebrew, My hiding-place, my shield.

2. Observe, again, both the notions imply defence and protection. A shield is not a weapon offensive but defensive. Indeed elsewhere, Deut. xxxiii. 29, God said to Israel, 'I am the shield of thy strength, and sword of thy excellency.' God is a sword as well as a shield, a weapon offensive as well as defensive, in behalf of his people. But here both metaphors imply only defence and protection. It is not here a hiding-place and a sword, but a hiding-place and a shield. Why? The godly are subject to many dangers and perils, from adverse powers, spiritual and bodily, and therefore need much preservation and defence.

167

[1.] The soul is in danger of Satan and his temptations. There are spiritual enemies, that will put us upon the need of a shield and a hiding-place: Eph. vi. 12, 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood,' &c.; that is, not principally. We do not wrestle against bodily or human powers; outward agents are not principals but instruments. Our chief war is with devils and evil spirits, who have a mighty power over a great part of the world; they are the rulers of the darkness of this world, the ignorant and carnal part of the world; and they assault us with much cunning and strength; and invisible enemies are the worst, none like to them for craft, for strength, for malice, for number. They easily get the advantage over us by their crafty insinuations, and applying themselves to our humours, and feeding every distemper with a bait suitable; and they are always about us, unseen and unperceived; they lie in ambush for our souls, and assault us in company and alone, in business and in recreations, in the duties of religion, and in our ordinary affairs; they follow us in our retirements, and pursue us with unwearied diligence. No such enemies as these for craft and subtlety of address. And then for their power and strength, they have their fiery darts to throw upon us, ver. 16. They inject and cast in blasphemous thoughts, and enkindle and awaken in us burning lusts, or fire us with rage and despair; their power is exceeding great, because they have the management of fiery darts. And their malice is great; it is not to hurt our bodies chiefly, that is but the shell of the man, but the chiefest part, our immortal soul; and therefore we need a hiding-place and a shield when we have to do with spiritual wickednesses, that are always assaulting us in this manner upon all occasions. And for their number, there are many of them, and all engaged in this spiritual warfare against the saints: we cannot dream of ease if we would be Christ's soldiers. In the Gospel we find one man possessed with a whole legion of them: Mark v. 9, 'My name is legion, for we are many.' They cease not in this manner thus continually to assault and vex us, and therefore we need a hiding-place and shield.

[2.] The bodies of God's people and their temporal lives are exposed to a great deal of hazard and danger from evil men, who are ready to molest and trouble us, sometimes upon one pretence, and sometimes upon another. They that indeed would go to heaven, and have a serious sense of the world to come upon their hearts, they are a different party from the world, and therefore the world hates them, John xvii. 14; and Rom. xii. 2, 'Be not conformed to this world.' It was never

yet so well with the world but they were forced to stand upon their defence; and usually, as to any visible interest, they are the weakest when their enemies are mighty and strong; and therefore they had need of a hiding-place to run to, and a shield to defend them, to run to the covert and defence of God's providence.

168

3. Observe the difference between these two notions, hiding-place and shield. Sometimes God is said to be our strength and our shield, Ps. xxviii. 7. He furnisheth us within and without; he strengthens and fortifies the heart, then shields us and keeps off dangers. And sometimes again he is said to be a sun and a shield, Ps. lxxxiv. 11. We have positive and privative blessings, or a sun to give us light, and a shield to give us strength. He promiseth to be both; but usually he so attempereth his providence, that where he is more a sun there he is less a shield; that is to say, the more sparingly he vouchsafeth the knowledge of heavenly comforts, the more powerfully doth he assist his people in their weakness by his providence. As the Jews that were conversant about the shadows of the law, and lived under the darkness of that pedagogy, God was less a sun to them than he is to us; but yet they knew more of his powerful providence, of his temporal protection. Now here it is a hiding-place and a shield; what is the difference between these? God is a hiding-place to keep us out of danger, and a shield to keep us in danger. Either we shall be kept from trouble, that dangers shall not overtake us; or, if they do over take us, they shall riot hurt us; they shall only serve for this use, to make us sensible of God's defence, and to increase our thanksgiving for our protection: for God hides us, and as a shield interposeth him self between us and the strokes of our adversaries, those fiery darts which are flung at us. Well, then, they imply, either God will keep us from seeing the evil, or fortify us that the evil shall not hurt us. One of these notions was not enough to express the fulness of God's protection: a hiding-place, that is a fixed thing; but a shield and buckler, we may constantly carry it about with us wherever we go, and make use of God's power and love against all conflicts whenever we are assaulted. Again, on the other side, a shield were not enough to express it, for that only respects actual assaults; but God saves us from many dangers which we are not aware of, prevents troubles which we never thought of, Ps. xxi. 3.

4. Let us view these notions apart, and see what they contain for our comfort.

First, Let us look upon God as a hiding-place. Men in great straits, when they are not able to make defence against pursuing enemies, they run to their hiding-place, as we shall see the Israelites did from the Philistines: 1 Sam. xiii. 6, 'When the men of Israel saw that they were distressed, they hid themselves in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in high places, and in pits;' and so God's children, when they are too weak for their enemies, seek a safe and sure hiding-place: Prov. xxii. 3, 'A wise man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself.' Certainly there is a hiding-place for the saints, if we had but skill to find it out; and where is it but in God? Ps. xxxii. 7, 'Lord, thou art my hiding-place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble.' I do not delight to squeeze a metaphor, and to make it yield what it intends not; yet these four things are offered plainly in this notion of a hiding-place—there is secrecy, and capacity to receive, and safety, and comfort.

169

1. Secrecy. It is not a fortress wherein a man does profess himself to be, and to stand out assaults, but it is a hiding-place: Ps. xxvii. 5, ‘In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock.’ God’s protection of his people is a secret hidden mystery, as every thing is to a carnal man. The person hidden is seen abroad every day following his business, serving his generation, doing that work which God hath given him to do; yet he is hidden while he is seen, by the secret power and love of God dispensing of all things for his comfort and protection; the man is kept safe by ways which the world knows not of. So Ps. xxxi. 20, ‘Thou shalt hide him in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man.’ There is a secret power of God by which they are upheld and maintained by one means or other, which they see not and cannot find out.

2. The next thing considerable in a hiding-place is capacity to receive us; and so there is in God; we may trust him with our souls, with our bodies, with our peace, with our goods, with our good name, with our all. Our souls, all that concerns us between this and the day of judgment, as St Paul did, 2 Tim. i. 12, ‘I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.’ He calls his soul and all the concernments of it a thing that was left, and that he durst trust, in the hands of God. Our soul is much sought after. Satan, that hath lost the favour of God himself, envies that others would enjoy it, therefore maligns the saints, pursues them with great malice and power; but put it into the hands of God, he is able to keep it. And so for outward things, this hiding-place is wide enough for all that we have, for goods, body, and good name: Ps. xxxi. 20, ‘Thou shalt keep them secretly as in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.’ As the hearts of men are in the hands of God, so are their tongues. There is the same reason why we should trust in God for all things, when we trust in him for one thing. And indeed, did we truly and upon scripture grounds trust him for one thing, we would trust him for all things. If we did trust him with our souls, we would without anxious care trust him with our bodies and secular interests and concernments also.

3. Here is safety till the trouble be over, and we may be kept as quiet in God as if there were no danger: Ps. lvii. 1, ‘Under the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge until these calamities are overpast.’ There is an allusion to a chicken under the dam’s wing, when hawks, kites, and birds of prey are abroad; that are ready to seize upon them with their sharp beaks and talons; they run to the dam’s wings, and there they are safe. So Isa. xxvi. 20, ‘Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut the doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.’ There we have an allusion to a storm that is soon over, it is a little cloud that will easily be blown over; but in the meantime here is a covert and a defence. The use of God’s protection and love is best known in a time of straits and difficulties.

4. There is not only safety but comfort; as under the dam’s wings the chickens are not only protected but cherished. Christians, it is not a dead refuge or hiding-place, but like the wings of the

hen, which yield warmth and comfort to the young brood: Ps. xxxiv. 22, ‘None of them that trust in him shall be desolate.’ There is sweet support, and spiritual experience, and inward comforts; so that a believer that is hidden in the secret of God’s presence fares better than all those that have the world at will, and flow in ease and plenty, if he would judge of his condition by spiritual considerations. Thus we have seen the first notion, God is a hiding-place.

Secondly, God is a shield. He is often called his people’s shield in scripture. Now the excellency and properties of a shield lie in these things:—

1. In the largeness and breadth of it, in that it hides and covers the person that weareth it from all darts that are flung at him, so as they cannot reach him: Ps. v. 12, ‘Thou wilt bless the righteous with favour, thou wilt compass him as with a shield.’ There is the excellency of a shield, to compass a person round about that the darts flung at him may not reach him. There is a comfortable promise; it runs in other notions indeed, yet I will mention it upon this occasion, because the expressions are so notable and emphatical: Zech. ii. 5, ‘For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about.’ Mark every word, for every word hath its weight. It was spoken when the returning Jews were discouraged at their small number; they had not enough to people their country and build their towns, nor to defend themselves against their numerous and potent adversaries. Now what shall they do? God makes them this promise of a future increase, ‘I will be a wall,’ &c. And there are three promises included in this one, viz., that he will be a wall, a wall round about them, and a wall of fire round about them, which is a further degree. A wall! there is a promise of that, Isa. xxvi. 1, ‘We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.’ And a wall that doth encompass them on every side round about, there is a promise of that, Ps. cxxv. 2, ‘As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth even for ever;’ he will be instead of all guards and defences. So likewise a wall of fire; not of brass or of stone, but of fire, that affrights at a distance, and consumes near at hand. Here is enough for a refuge, and to stay our hearts in the Lord’s keeping. An allusion to those countries; when they travelled in the wilderness they were wont to make a fire about them, to preserve them from wild beasts. Thus doth God express his all-encompassing protection, he that is our shield.

2. The excellence of a shield lies in that it is hard and impenetrable. So this answers to the invincible power of God’s providence, by which he can break the assaults of all enemies; and such a shield is God to his people: Ps. cxiiv. 2, ‘My strength and my shield, in whom I trust.’

3. Shall I add one thing more? Stones and darts flung upon a hard shield are beaten back upon him that flings them; so God beats back the evil upon his enemies, and the enemies of his people: Ps. lix. 11, ‘Bring them down, O Lord, our shield.’ Shall I speak in a word? The favour of God is a shield: Ps. v. 12, ‘With favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.’ The truth of God is a

shield: Ps. xci. 4, ‘His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.’ And the strength and power of God, that is our shield: Ps. xxviii. 7,. ‘He is my strength and my shield.’

171

Well, now, you see how this defence and this protection is set forth, ‘Thou art my hiding-place and my shield.’ God accommodates him self to lisp to us in our own dialect, and to speak in such notions as we can best understand, for the help of our faith. Having opened the nature of this defence, the next thing I am to do is to show—

Secondly, The respect to the word, ‘I hope in thy word.’

1. The word discovers God to be such a protection and such a defence to his people everywhere: Ps. lxxxiv. 11, ‘God will be a sun and a shield, grace and glory will he give.’ As a sun, so he will give all things that belong to our blessedness; as a shield, so he will keep off all dangers from us. The scripture shows not only what God can do herein, but what he will do for our sakes. So Gen. xv. 1, saith God to Abraham, ‘I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.’ Abraham might be under some fear that the kings which he had lately vanquished would work him some trouble, and then God comes and appears to him and comforts him, and tells him, ‘I am thy shield.’

2. As the scripture doth discover God under these notions, so it invites us and encourageth us to put God to this use: Isa. xxvi. 20, ‘Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, shut the door about thee, and hide thyself as it were for a little moment.’ There are chambers where we may rest; where are they but in the arms of God’s protection, in the chambers of his attributes, promises, and providence? The word invites us so to make use of God, to enter into him as into a chamber of repose, while the storm is furious, and seems to blow hard upon us. So Ps. xci. 1, ‘He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.’ He that committeth himself to God for refuge shall not be thrust out, but suffered to dwell there, and enjoy the benefit of a covert and defence.

3. The scripture assureth us of the divine protection, that certainly it shall be so: Prov. xxx. 5, ‘Every word of God is pure; he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.’ Do not think that these are careless expressions, that dropped into the scripture by chance. No; they are the sure and pure words of the Lord, that will yield a great deal of comfort, peace, and happiness. So Ps. xviii. 30, ‘As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.’ God hath passed his word, which he hath ever been tender of in all ages of the world; he invites us to depend upon it. Thus it assures us of the divine protection.

4. It directeth us as to the qualifications of the persons who shall enjoy this privilege. Who are they?

[1.] You might observe, all those that believe, and none but those that believe; he is a buckler and a shield to all those that trust in him, Prov. xxx. 5; Ps. xviii. 30. Trust and have it. If you will glorify God by faith, and depend upon him according to his word, you will find it to be so. We miss

of our protection and defence by our doubts, unbelief, and distrust of God. All those that in time of danger are duly sensible of it, and make use of God as their refuge and hiding-place, shall find him to be that to them which their faith expects from him.

[2.] The qualification which the word directs us unto is this: those that sincerely obey his covenant: Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'God is a sun and a shield to those that walk uprightly;' and the same is repeated Prov. ii. 7, 'God is a buckler to them that walk uprightly;' and Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16, where God saith they that seek him shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of the rocks; they shall be preserved safe that fear him, and walk with him according. to the tenor of his covenant. If you will not be faithful servants to God, how can you expect he should be a good master to you? Sincerely give up your heart to walk with God exactly and closely, and he will not be wanting to you. Others may be preserved by general providence, or rather reserved to future judgment; they may be kept until the pit be digged for the wicked, Ps. xciv. 13, as a malefactor is suffered to live till the place of execution be prepared. But to have this protection in mercy, it supposeth we are in covenant with God, and walk sincerely with him.

5. It directeth us how to expect this blessing, in what manner; only in the way and manner that it is promised, Zeph. iii. 3. Seek righteousness, seek meekness, it may be you shall be hid; not absolutely, but as referring it to God's will. There is the keeping of the outward man, and the keeping of the inward man. As to the out ward man, all things come alike to all; the Christian is safe, whatever becomes of the man; the Lord will keep him to his heavenly kingdom, 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18. That which the Christian desires mainly to be kept is his soul, that he may not miscarry, and blemish his profession, and dishonour God, and do anything that is unseemly. I say, we cannot absolutely expect temporal safety. The righteous are liable to many troubles, therefore in temporal things God will not always keep off the temporal stroke, but leave us to many uncertainties, or at least hold us in doubt about it, that we may trust his goodness. When we trust God we must trust all his attributes, not only his power, that he is able to preserve, but his goodness, that he will do that which is best, that there may be a submission and referring of all things to his will; as David, 2 Sam. xv. 26, 'If he say, I have no delight in thee; be hold here am I, let him do unto me as seemeth good unto him.' God will certainly make good his promise, but this trust lies not in an absolute certainty of success. However, this should riot discourage us from making God our refuge, because better promises are sure enough, and God's keeping us in suspense about other things is no evidence he will not afford them to us; it is his usual course, and few instances can be given to the contrary, to have a special regard to his trusting servants, and to hide them secretly. They that know his name will find it, that he never hath forsaken them that put their trust in him, Ps. ix. 10. It is the only sure way to be safe; whereas to perplex our souls with distrust, even about these outward things, that is the way to bring ruin and mischief upon ourselves, or turn aside to crooked paths. Well, then, you see what respect the word hath to this privilege, that God is a shield and a hiding-place. The word discovers God under these notions, the word invites and encourageth us to put God to this use, the word assures

us of the divine protection, it directeth us to the qualification of the persons that shall enjoy this privilege, they that can trust God, and walk uprightly with him; and it directeth us to expect the blessing, not with absolute confidence, but leaving it to God.

Thirdly, The third thing I am to do is to show this word must be applied by faith, 'I hope in thy word.' Hope is not strictly taken here, but for faith, or a certain expectation of the blessing promised. What doth faith do here? Why, the use of faith is—

1. To quiet the heart in waiting God's leisure: Ps. xxxiii. 20, 'Our soul waiteth for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.' If God be our help and shield, then faith is quietly to wait the Lord's leisure; till he sends deliverance, the word must bear up our hearts, and we must be contented to tarry his time: Isa. xxviii. 16, 'He that believeth shall not make haste,' will not outrun God.

2. In fortifying the heart against present difficulties, that when all visible helps and interests are cut off, yet we may encourage ourselves in the Lord. When they were wandering in the wilderness, and had neither house nor home, then Moses, the man of God, pens that psalm, and how doth he begin it? 'Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations,' Ps. xc. 1. What was wanting in sense they saw was made up in the all-sufficiency of God. And so here is the use of faith, when in defiance of all difficulties we can see an all -sufficiency in God to counterbalance that which is wanting in sense. So doth David, Ps. iii. 3, 'Lord,' saith he, 'thou art my shield and glory, and the lifter up of my head.' Look to that psalm; it was penned when David was driven from his palace royal by Absalom: when he was in danger, God was his shield; when his kingdom and honour were laid in the dust, God was his glory; when he was under sorrow and shame, and enemies insulting over him, when the people rose against him, and he was in great dejection of spirit, God was the lifter up of his head. This is getting under the covert of this shield, or compass of this hiding-place.

3. The use of faith is to quicken us to go on cheerfully in our duty, and with a quiet heart, resting upon God's love, power, and truth. So David, Ps. cxxxi. 5, 'Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.' David was then in great danger; the net was laid for him, as he saith in the former verse; and when he was likely to perish, what doth he do? He casts all his cares upon God, and trusts him with his life, 'Into thy hands I commit my spirit,' that is, his life, safety, &c.

Use 1. Admire the goodness of God, who will be all things to his people. If we want a house, he will be our dwelling-place; if we want a covert, he will be our shield, our hiding-place; whatever we want, God will supply it. There is a notable expression: Ps. xci. 9, 'Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation.' Mark that double notion; a habitation is the place of our abode in time of peace, a refuge the place of our retreat in a time of war. Be it peace or war, God will be all in all; he will be a fountain of blessing to us in a time of peace, he

will be our habitation there where we have our sweetest comforts; and then in time when dangers and difficulties are abroad, God will be a refuge and a place of retreat to our souls.

Use 2. To persuade us to contentation in a time of trouble. Though we have not a palace, yet if we have but a hiding-place; though our condition be not so commodious as we do desire, yet if God will vouch safe a little liberty in our service we must be content, if he will give us a little safety though not plenty, for here is not our full reward. And therefore it is well we can make this use of God, to be our shield and hiding-place, though we have not that ample condition which a carnal heart would fancy. God never undertook in his covenant to maintain us at such a rate, nor thus to enlarge our portion; if he will vouchsafe a little security and safety to us during the time of our pilgrimage, we must be content.

Use 3. This should more encourage us against the evil of sin, since God assures us of protection and defence against the evil of trouble. If God did leave us to shift for ourselves, and never expressed himself in his word for our comfort, then we were more excusable, though not altogether, if we did shift and turn aside to crooked paths, because we are under an obligation to obey, whatsoever it cost us. But when he hath offered himself to be our shield and our hiding-place, to stand by us, be with us, carry us through fire and water, all dangers and difficulties, shall we warp now and turn aside from God? Gen. xvii. 1, saith the Lord, 'I am God all-sufficient; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' There is enough in God; why should we trouble our selves, or why should we run to any practices which God will not own?

Use 4. It presseth us to depend upon God's protection. Shall I urge arguments to you?

1. This is one. Every one must have a hiding-place. Saith Solomon, The conies are a feeble folk, yet they have their burrows and holes. All creatures must depend upon somewhat, especially the children of God, that are exposed to a thousand difficulties. You must expect to have your faith and patience tried if ever you come to inherit the promises, and during that time it is good to have a hiding-place and a shield.

2. Your hearts will not be kept in safety unless you make God your strong defence. When Phocas fortified cities to secure his ill-gotten goods, a voice was heard, Sin within will soon batter down all those walls and fortifications. Unless God be our hiding-place and shield, the strongest defences in the world are not enough to keep us from danger. All the shifts we run into will but entangle us the more, and drive us the more from God, and to greater inconvenience: 2 Chron. xxviii. 20, as the king of Assyria to Ahaz; he distressed him, but helped him not. So many run away from God's protection, and seek out means of safety for themselves, and will not trust him, but seek to secure themselves by some shifts of their own. They do but plunge themselves into troubles so much the more, and draw greater inconveniences upon themselves. There is a great deal of sin and danger in departing from God, and he can soon blast our confidences. All those places of safety we fancy to ourselves can soon be demolished and battered down. God will blast our carnal shifts.

3. It is a thing that we owe to God by virtue of the fundamental article of the covenant. If you have chosen God for your God, then you have chosen him for your refuge. Every one in his straits runs to the God he hath chosen. Nature taught the heathens in their distress to run to their gods. You may see the pagan mariners, a sort of men usually not much haunted with religious thoughts, yet when the storm arose, the sea wrought and was tempestuous, danger grew upon them, and they were afraid: 'They called every man upon his god,' Jonah i. 5; they were sensible that some divine power must give them protection. It immediately results from the owning of a God, that we must trust him with our safety; and so, if we have taken the true God for our God, we have taken him for our refuge and hiding-place: Ruth ii. 12, 'A full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.' When Ruth came to profess the true God, by taking the God of Israel for her God, it is expressed thus; she did commit herself to his providence and protection: and therefore covetousness, because of its trust in riches, is called idolatry; it is a breach of the fundamental article of the covenant, taking God for our God.

175

4. This trust ever succeeds well. It will be of great use to you to still and calm your thoughts, and free you from many anxious cares, and in due time it will bring deliverance according to his promise. How may we thus trust in God? Why! commit and submit your persons and all your conditions and affairs to his providence. This is to trust in God, to make him your hiding-place and your shield. These notions are often used in scripture, 2 Tim. i. 12; Prov. xvi. 3; Ps. xxxvii. 5. If there be a thing to be brought about for you, commit it and submit it to God; he is able, wise, loving, and faithful; he will do what shall be for the best. Commit your comforts, your health, liberty, peace, your all into God's hands, for he is the author of all; let the Lord do what he will. This is to trust in God, when you can thus without trouble or anxious care refer yourselves to the wise disposal of his providence.

[1.] No hurt can come to you without God's leave. No creature can move or stir, saving not only by his permission, but by his influence. Others may have a will to hurt, but not power unless given them from above, as Christ told Pilate. The devil is a raging adversary against the people of God, but he is forced to ask leave to touch either Job's goods or his person; he could not touch his skin, or any thing that belonged to him without a commission from God, Job i.; nay, he must ask leave to enter into the herd of swine, Mat. viii. 31. And Tertullian hath a notable gloss upon that. If God hath numbered the bristles of swine, certainly he hath numbered much more the hairs of the saints; if he cannot enter into a herd of swine, he cannot worry a friend of Christ's, without God's leave.

[2.] Consider how much God hath expressed his singular affection, and his care and providence over his people. There are many emphatical expressions in scripture; that is one, Mat. x. 29, 30, 'The very hairs of your head are numbered.' Mark, he doth not speak of the heart, or hands, or feet, those that we call parts which are necessary to the conservation of life; but he speaks of the excrementitious parts, which are rather for convenience and ornament than necessity. What is more

slight than the shedding a hair of the head? Thus he expresses the particular care of his people. Again, Zech. ii. 8, 'He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.' No part is more tender than the eye; and the apple of the eye, how hath nature guarded it, that it may receive no prejudice! So Isa. xlix. 15, 'Can a mother forget her sucking-child?' &c. See how his tender affection and yearning bowels are expressed; passions in females are most vehement, therefore God alludes to mothers' affections. And mark, it is not a child that can shift for itself, but a sucking-child, that is wholly helpless, that was but newly given her to draw her love. Nature hath left tender affections on the hearts of parents to their tender infants; yet if a woman should be so unnatural, 'Yet will I not forget thee,' saith the Lord. Now, shall we not trust him, and make him our hiding-place? Isa. xxvii. 3, 'I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.' God will keep his people by day, lest by force they break in upon his heritage; and keep them by night, lest they steal in privily, and by secret machinations hurt them.

176

[3.] Again, consider how many arguments there are to work us to this trust. Sometimes the scripture teacheth us to argue from the less to the greater: Mat. vi. 30, 'If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?' Sometimes the scripture teacheth us to argue on the contrary; from the greater to the less, Rom. viii. 32. If God hath given us his Christ, will he not with him freely give us all things? Sometimes the scripture teacheth us to argue from things past. God hath been your shield and helper, he hath delivered from the mouth of the lion and bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, 1 Sam. xvii. 37. Some times from things past and present to things to come: 2 Cor. i. 10, 'Who hath delivered from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver.' Sometimes from things to come to things present: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' *Anne dabit regnum, et non dabit viaticum?* If he give a kingdom, will he not give daily bread? Will he not preserve you while he hath a mind to use you? Thus our unbelief is overpowered by divers arguments to press us to this trust. Well, then, run to your security. How so?

First, In defiance of all difficulty, own God as your hiding-place and shield. David when he was driven from his palace royal, and wandered up and down for his life, and when his enemies began to say, Now there is no help for him in God, Ps. iii. 3; all Israel were against him. Many there be which say thus: his son drives him from his palace; now there is no safety, nor defence; but saith he, 'Lord, thou art my shield and my glory, and the lifter up of my head.' This is the way to get under the covert of his wing, when in the face of all difficulties we will own God as our hiding-place.

Secondly, Sue out your protection by earnest prayer. God hath given us promises as so many bonds upon himself, and we must put these bonds in suit. Our necessity leads us to the promises, and the promises lead us to the throne of grace: Ps. cxli. 9, 'I fly to thee; hide me, O Lord; keep me from the snare which they have laid for me.' Plead with him, and say, Lord, thou hast said thou

wilt be my refuge and hiding-place; whither should a child go but to its father? and whither should I go but to thee, for thou art my God? Challenge him upon his word. See how David expresseth himself: Ps. xvii. 7, 8, ‘Show thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee. Keep me as the apple of thine eye: hide me tinder the shadow of thy wings.’ Go challenge God upon his word: Lord, thou hast said thou wilt save those that trust in thee, those that depend upon thee. The eye is offended with the least dust, and nature hath provided a fence and covert for it. Thus may we go to God, and challenge such kind of protection: Keep me as the apple of thine eye, hide me under thy wings. As the dam is ready to flutter and spread her wings over the young brood when they fly to her, so will God.

Thirdly, Take notice whenever it is made good; give God his honour when he hath been a hiding-place and protection to you, that you may observe his providence: Ps. xviii. 30, ‘As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.’ Well, I have waited upon God according to these promises, and lo! it is come to pass as the Lord hath said. So Ps. xxviii. 7, ‘The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusteth in him, and I am helped;’ Gen. xlviii. 16, ‘The angel of the covenant, which hath fed me all my days, and redeemed me from all evil.’ He speaks of the faithfulness of God and of the mediator in all those promises of protection.

Fourthly, Constantly make use of God. You may think this discourse may be of no use to you, because you are out of fears and dangers: why, you are constantly to make use of God, be it well or ill, and to live upon God. All our comforts are from God, as well as our support in trouble. Certainly he that lives upon God in prosperity, will live upon him in adversity. Oh! when you are well at ease, and abound in all things, you take these things out of the hand of God; you will learn better to make him your refuge. But he that lives upon the creature in his prosperity, when the creature fails he will be in utter distress, and know not what to do.

SERMON CXXVI.

Depart from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.—VER. 115.

MOST of the passages of this psalm are directed to God himself; but now he speaks to carnal men, shaking them off, as Christ will at the last day. His speech is then, Mat. vii. 22, ‘Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity;’ and so saith David, ‘Depart from me, ye evil-doers.’ Whether David speaks this for his own sake, or for others’ instruction, as he doth many things in this psalm, I will not dispute. But certainly the drift of this verse is to show, that if we intend to walk constantly with God, we should keep at a distance from wicked men. Separation from them is necessary for a

conjunction with God. If they be not God's, they should be none of yours, for you are his: 'Depart from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.' Here—

1. Take notice of the persons to whom he speaks, *ye evil-doers*.

2. What is said; he renounceth all commerce with them, *depart from me*.

The reason of this renunciation, *for I will keep the commandments of my God*.

Where you may note—

[1.] The fixedness of his resolution, *I will*.

[2.] The matter resolved upon, *I will keep the commandments*, which they broke or made light of, and so their friendship and company was a hindrance to him.

[3.] The inducing consideration, *my God*; he is the comfort and refuge of my soul, more than all men are to me. Friends are dear, but God should be dearer. None is ours so much as he is; he is my God, therefore it is him that I will please; my God's commands I will conform myself to.

All the business is to show on what grounds David bids the evil doers depart from him.

1. It is either because of his confidence in God; as ver. 114, 'Thou art my hiding-place and my shield,' therefore depart. He did not fear their disturbance or persecution, because God would protect him, so as he should peaceably and cheerfully attend his service. This form of speech is so used, Ps. vi. 8, 'Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping;' that is, Now I reckon not of your assaults and molestations; my God will carry me through his work. Or—

2. It is a renouncing of their aid and assistance offered upon ill terms; and so the meaning would be, that he would not stand by their interest, or cry up a confederacy with them, and admit of any other ways of safety but what were fully consistent with his duty to God. Depart from me, as repelling their temptations and carnal counsel. Christ saith to Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, when he came with carnal counsel; so David saith, Depart from me; you labour in vain to draw me to commit wickedness with you: I must keep in with my God, not with you: do his commandments, not follow your fancies. Or—

3. It is a renouncing of all society with them, lest he should be corrupted by their evil examples or their carnal suggestions and enticements. He seems to speak this as fearing a snare and hindrance by their company and intimacy. This is the consideration that I prefer. The points may be two:—

1. That they which would have God for their God must keep his commandments.

2. They that would keep his commandments must avoid the company of the wicked.

Doct. 1. They that would have God for their God must keep his commandments.

This point I shall soon despatch, for it often comes in this psalm.

1. A covenant relation inferreth a covenant duty. You know the tenor of the covenant runs thus, 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people,' Jer. xxxi. 33; Ezek. xi. 20; Zech. xiii. 9; and other places. Where observe this: the stipulation is mutual; there is something which God offers, and something which God requires. A covenant is not made up all of promises; there is a stipulation of obedience, as well as a promise of happiness; and both must concur: a keeping the commandments must be, as well as taking hold of the privileges of the covenant: Ps. ciii. 18, 'To such as keep his covenant, that remember his commandments to do them.' Both must concur.

179

But let us observe distinctly what God offers and what God requires.

[1.] What God offers: He offers himself to be our God; that is, to be a God to bless, and a God to govern and rule; and so the offer of God infers not only dependence upon him as he will be a God to bless, but subjection to him as he will be a God to rule and govern. Those that would have God's blessing must be under his dominion, for the notion of our God implies a sovereign as well as a benefactor; he doth not leave us to our liberty to live as we list, for then he is not God nor supreme. Therefore it is but equal and reasonable he should rule and govern, and we obey.

[2.] But what he requires; that maketh it the more plain. You shall be my people; that noteth separation from all others, and a dedication to God's use, and a walking according to the tenor of that dedication: Deut. xxix. 9, 10, 'This day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God; therefore obey the voice of the Lord thy God, and keep his commandments, to love him, obey him, fear him, trust in him.' Well, then, as God offers himself to be a God to rule and govern us according to his will, so we, in giving up ourselves to be his people, resign ourselves up to his government.

2. In point of gratitude as well as covenant obligation. If God, the other contracting party, were our equal, as he is our superior, yet the kindness we receive from our God should move us to do him all the service we can. His kindness and grace in the covenant should make us fearful to offend: 'They shall fear the Lord and his goodness,' Hosea iii. 5; and careful to please God: 'To walk worthy of God unto all well-pleasing,' Col. iii. 10. And therefore love is said to keep the commandments: love, which is enkindled by a sense of God's love to us in the covenant of grace, will put us upon obeying and careful pleasing of God.

Use 1. Information, to show us how we should make sin odious to us, both by way of caution and humiliation; caution against the admission of sin, and humiliation because of the commission of it.

1. Caution. When thou art sinning, remember it is against thy God, who hath made thee, who hath kept thee, who hath bought thee, whom thou hast owned in covenant, who never showed any

backwardness to thy good. Is this thy kindness to thy friend, as he said, to sin against God, thy best friend? See, the covenant interest is produced to stir up indignation against the offences of others: Jude 4, 'They turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness.' There is very much in that, that the grace of our God should be abused. So Isa. vii. 13, 'Is it nothing to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?' Wilt thou grieve the spirit of thy God, and violate his holy law? If we cannot endure an offence in another, much less in ourselves.

2. For humiliation. This should wound us to the quick, to sin against the Lord our God, Jer. iii. 25. Every sin is a breach of covenant. What is simple fornication in others, is adultery in you, or breach of marriage vow: Luke xv., 'I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.'

180

Use 2 To press us to behave ourselves to God, as he is the Lord our God. Why?

1. Otherwise you do but mock him: Luke vi. 46, 'Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' *Cui res nomini subjecta negatur, nomini illuditur*, saith Tertullian—it is but a mockery of God to give him the title, and deny him the duty included in that title. As the soldiers which saluted Christ with, Hail, king of the Jews, yet at the same time spat in his face and buffeted him; so for us to say, My God: Mal. i. 6, 'If I be a lord, where is my fear? If I be a father, where is mine honour?'

2. Consider, God will not be mocked, but will avenge the quarrel of his covenant, Lev. xxvi. 25. A people that profess God to be their God, all the judgments that shall come upon them, they come in pursuance of God's quarrel, because they give God the covenant title, and do not perform the covenant duty. There is hypocrisy in them, in that they call him Our God, and make a show to be his peculiar people, and in the meantime do neither serve him, love him, nor obey him as our God. And there is plain treachery, in that we set up another god, the lust and sin which we would gratify with the displeasure of God; so that we are not a people for him according to the covenant.

3. This God will bear us out in our work: Dan. iii. 17; 'Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.' You may promise yourselves all that a God can do for you; therefore let this persuade you to do as David, firmly to resolve, and exactly to observe, all that he hath required of us. First, Firmly to resolve upon a strict course of obedience. I will, saith David in the text; I am resolved of it, whatever cometh on it, or whatsoever temptations I meet with to the contrary. Many are convinced of their evil courses, and that there is a necessity to leave them, but want resolution, therefore are inconstant in all their ways. Secondly, Exactly to observe; I will keep the commandments of my God. He that is our God, it is fit he should be obeyed in all things: Micah vi. 8, 'Walk humbly with thy God.' You deny his sovereignty by interpretation, if you stick at any precept of his.

Doct. 2. They that would keep the commandments of God must avoid the company of the wicked.

1. I shall show how far the company of the wicked is to be avoided.

2. Why they that would keep the commandments of God are to do so.

First, How far the company of the wicked is to be avoided. On the one hand—

1. There is necessary civil converse allowed; for otherwise, as the apostle saith, we must needs go out of the world, 1 Cor. v. 10. Necessary converse in buying, selling, trading, performing the duties of our relations, it is allowed.

2. We must not forsake the church because of some wicked men therein. In God's floor there is wheat and chaff. Saith Augustine, *Fugio paleam, ne hoc sim; non aream, ne nihil sim*—I fly from the chaff that I may not be it; but I may not, I do not fly from the floor, lest I be nothing. Christ maintained communion with the church wherein there were men corrupt in manners, and bids us to hear those that sit in Moses' chair, though they say and do not, Mat. xxiii. 1, 2.

3. We are not hindered from endeavouring the good of their souls; whilst there is hope and opportunity to gain them, we may converse with them for their good. Thus Jesus Christ did converse with sinners to gain them: Luke xv. 2, 'The Pharisees murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.' It is one thing to converse with sinners to harden them in their sins, another thing to converse with them to gain them to God; as physicians to heal the sick, not as their associates to delight in their company. So we may converse with them with all gentleness, remembering that we ourselves were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, &c. Thus we must not avoid them.

But yet we should avoid them so—

1. That we should not be familiar with them. Eschew all unnecessary voluntary fellowship and familiarity: Ps. xxvi. 4, 'I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.' We are not to choose them for our companions, lest we be corrupted and deadened by their example.

2. We are not to enter into a durable relation with them, such as will put us upon continual converse. When we are at liberty, 2 Cor. vi. 15, 'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' Parents, upon any conveniences of estate or outward emoluments, are not to dispose of their children there where they may necessarily converse with wicked persons: Exod. xxxiv. 15, 'Thou shalt not take of their daughters to thy sons, lest they go a-whoring after their gods.' Instances there are many of the great mischief that hath come by entering into these durable relations with wicked men: Gen. vi. 2, 'The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.' Men in the visible church are called the sons of God, they that were of the line of Seth;. and they that were of the line of Cain are called the daughters of men: to go in to them, because they are fair, or they are noble, or because they are of our rank, this was the provoking sin that helped to bring the flood upon them. So Ps. cvi. 35, 'They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.' Solomon gave an instance that he was corrupted by his wives. So it is said of Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, 2 Kings viii. 18, 'That he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab; for the daughter of Ahab was his wife, and he did evil in the

sight of the Lord.' In ecclesiastical stories we read of Valence the emperor, who married with an Arian lady, and so was ensnared thereby, and became a cruel persecutor of the catholics; as the best metals, mixed with baser metals, are embased thereby.

3. If necessitated to keep company with them, because of our dwellings, relations, and business, let us not comply with them in their sins: Eph. v. 11, 'Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.' We may freely converse with such as we are bound to by the laws of necessity, but we must converse with them with a great deal of caution, that we may not be ensnared. David had no great liking to his companions, yet he was forced to abide with them in the deserts: Ps. cxx. 5, 6, 'Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar; my soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.' The apostle would have the wife to abide with the husband, 1 Cor. vii. 12, and servants to abide with their masters, 1 Peter ii. 18, and children with their parents, Eph. vi. 1; but no tie of that kind doth bind us to partake with them in their sins. And being thus necessitated to their converse, we ought to have the more fear and caution. And thus Joseph lived in Egypt untainted, and Nehemiah in Ahasuerus's court, and Lot in Sodom, and Daniel in the court of Persia; necessity forced them thither, but all their care was to keep themselves unspotted from the world in the places where they lived.

182

Secondly, Why they that would keep the commandments of God are to do so.

1. Because it is hard to keep familiarity with them, and avoid and escape the contagion of their example. Example in general hath a great force, especially evil example; the force of example is great. Why? Seneca gives the reason. *Homines plus oculis credunt, quam auribus*, because an example strikes more upon the heart than a bare word. Man, being a sociable creature, is mightily encouraged to do as others do, especially in an evil example; for we are more susceptible of evil than we are of good. Sickness is sooner communicated than health; we easily catch a disease one of another, but those that are sound do not communicate health to the diseased. Or rather, to take God's own expression, that sets it forth thus, by touching the unclean the man became unclean under the law, but by touching the clean the man was not purified. The conversation of the wicked hath more power to corrupt the good, than the conversation of the virtuous and holy to correct the lewd. The prophet tells us, Isa. vi. 5, 'I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.' We soon increase our pollution by living among them. Josephus relates that Agrippa at first was a lover of virtue and of his country, that he stood for the liberty of the people of the Jews; but by conversing with Caligula the Roman emperor, being intimate and familiar with him, learned his manners; and as he affected divine honours, so Agrippa too, and God smites him with lice, Acts xii. In infected places we get a disease, though we feel it not presently; so secretly our hearts are tainted by example. As a man that walks in the sun, unawares before he thinks of it his countenance is tanned, so our hearts are defiled: Prov. xxii. 24, 'Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go.' The furies of passion are so uncomely and so displeasing, that a man would think that he should not take infection there, that the sight

should rather deter than invite him; but insensibly we learn their ways when we make friendship with furious and angry men; for saith Solomon, in the next verse, ‘Lest you learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.’ Melancthon saith, By converse familiarly with the wicked, insensibly we grow wicked. He that toucheth pitch is defiled, and a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, 1 Cor. v. 6.

183

2. They will molest and disturb us in the exercise of godliness by their scoffs and persecutions; you can never be acceptable to them if you live as you should. Why? For you will upbraid their consciences by your lives, dart conviction and reproofs into them; as Noah condemned the world, Heb. xi. 7. Christ saith, The world hates me because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil, John vii. 7. You that live up to your profession, and do not run into the same excess of riot with others, your estrangement of course revives guilt upon their conscience, and therefore not to follow them in all things will be distasteful. As sore eyes cannot endure the light, so they cannot endure you if you are faithful to God. Diversity of humours cannot long agree together. You must either be like them, or be hated by them. You must either jump with them in all things, or expect a greater trouble. Now there is less danger in the flight than fight. Now a total withdrawment is better than a partial compliance.

3. They will seek to pervert us by carnal suggestions and counsels; as the Psalmist speaks, Ps. i. 1, ‘Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.’ Like troublesome flies, they will always be buzzing about us to take share and lot with them, and importunate suitors will prevail at length, Prov. i. 10-15, the enticings of the wicked are spoken of: ‘My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not; walk thou not in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path,’ &c.

4. Familiarity with them will be a blemish and scandal upon your good name. Every man’s company declares what he is. Birds of a sort flock together. So that, if they rob not the conscience, they wound the reputation, and we are polluted and defiled by being of the same society, which a Christian should be tender of. When a scandalous sin breaketh out in the church, the blot lies upon all. The apostle tells us in Heb. xii. 15, ‘When any root of bitterness springs up, thereby many are defiled;’ many are defiled, not only by the contagion of the example, but the imputation of the fault; much more in private and intimate familiarity doth this hold good. A carnal man delights in such as are like him, and run with him in the same folly and sin. But when a man is changed, he will change his company: Ps. cxix. 53, ‘I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.’ That is one thing David avoucheth for his innocency. One wicked man falls in with another, as the tenon doth into the mortise, and their spirits suit frequently: Ps. lx. 18, ‘When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.’ There is no such out ward sign to discover our temper.

5. If we have any love for God, and zeal for his glory, their company must needs be grievous and offensive to us; for how can they that love God delight in their company that are always grieving the Spirit of God with unsavoury speeches and a vain conversation? Ps. cxxxix. 21, ‘Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them

with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.' So 2 Peter ii. 8, Lot's 'righteous soul was grieved from day to day.' It is not only said his righteous soul was vexed, which is passive, but he is said to vex himself at their wickedness, which is an active word. Injuries done to God should touch us no less nearly than injuries done to ourselves; it will be a continual grief and vexation of heart to us. Well, then, how can their company be acceptable to us, unless we have a mind to vex and bring trouble upon ourselves?

184

6. Our familiarity with them may be a means to harden them in their sin, and our withdrawing a means to humble them: 2 Thes. iii. 6, 14, 'Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly: and if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.' While you company freely with them, you seem tacitly to approve their doing, and make them more obstinate in their way. An alien from the faith may be melted with kindness, but a brother that walketh' disorderly is more ashamed if you withdraw from him, whereas otherwise you seem to show approbation. He that biddeth him God-speed is par taker of his evil deeds, 2 John 10, 11, as he seemeth to countenance them in their damnable errors; but now when a man lives as an outcast from God's people, this may work upon his heart. Society with God's children is not only a duty, but a privilege; by the loss of this privilege we are to make them sensible of the evil course wherein they are.

7. The great judgments that follow evil company; therefore we must riot voluntarily cry up a confederacy with them: Rev. xviii. 4, 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.' In conversing with the wicked there is a double danger—infection of sin, and infliction of punishment: Prov. xiii. 20, 'A companion of fools shall be destroyed; not only fools, but their companions.' Lot, living among the wicked Sodomites, he suffered with them. You know, when Sodom was assaulted, Lot was taken prisoner, and his goods plundered as theirs were, Gen. xiv. 12. Jehoshaphat being associated with Ahab, was in danger of death, 1 Kings xxii. 37. The heathens were sensible that wicked men were marked out for vengeance. The Athenians would not wash in the same bath with the persecutors of Socrates; so Polycarp would not go into the same bath with Cerinthus, but said, The enemy of truth is here; let us depart hence, lest the bath fall down upon us.[10]

Use 1. Reproof of their foolhardiness that rush upon evil company, and fear nothing. What! are your hearts so good that you think scorn that any company should hurt you? Consider, is sin grown less dangerous than it was? or are we come to such a height of perfection as to be above temptation to sin? Or have we so good a command of ourselves that we need not take such care of our company? that we shall do well enough though we play about the cockatrice's hole, and run into all companies and societies without fear? Good David here in the text is fain to proclaim, 'Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity,' and to banish them out of his company: and David exceeded us in holiness,

10 Irenaeus relates this of the apostle John, giving Polycarp as his authority: *Adv. Haer*. iii. 3.—ED.

and surely we live in more wicked days than he did. See how it succeeded with Peter: he would venture into the high priest's hall, and sit with the company there, and how did it succeed with him? It brought him to a denial of Christ. Eve was bold with the serpent, and the Virgin Mary shamefaced with an angel, Luke i. 29, 30; and you know how it fell out both with the one and the other: one was a means to ruin all mankind, and the other to repair it. What is the matter? Is not sin the same as it was? and is not human nature as bad as ever? What spells and charms have we about ourselves that the people of God had not heretofore? Or are we more fortified, and so are less watchful? Shall we be running still upon the pit's brink, and show how far we can go and not fall in? Are all those cautions out of date that bid us shun the occasions of sin? and is not evil company one of the chiefest of them? Yet some men can frolic it in all companies, revel and dance, run to plays, and no harm they think of all this. Solomon says, Prov. iv. 14, 15, 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.' See how he heaps up words. Did he trifle and speak needlessly when with such earnestness he pressed this, that we would be careful of associating with wicked men? Surely no; and yet men are for all companies, as if there were no danger to their souls.

185

Use 2. Let us be persuaded to shake off the society of the wicked. Depart from them that depart from God, and would draw you along with them. But chiefly should we shun them, because bad company is the pest and bane of godliness. Under the law, a man that had a running issue, whoever touched him was unclean, Lev. xiv. 4. And so it is here; you are defiled by your conversing with them. Men of different humours, spirits, interests, how can they agree? Either you must abate somewhat of your zeal, or you can never suit if you enter into friendship with them. You cannot deal so plainly against their sins, or gainsay them in their evil practices, but will wax cold by little and little. If you be in defiance with them, that will make way for calumny and all manner of injuries; therefore it is better never to begin acquaintance with them. Consider, again, if none of this fall out, yet their company will be a loss to you; as it spendeth time and hindereth you of many opportunities of religious privacy and service of God; so, if no other way you had a loss by them, they would not better you; for they are not company you expect to gain by. As he said, *Nunquam ad te accedo, quin doctior recedam, quin sanctior*—I never came to such an one but I went away more learned and holy. Certainly a Christian should choose such for his company that he might say, I go away more holy, otherwise his company would be a loss to us.

But to pursue this argument a little further. To give some observations, then some helps against evil company.

First, Some observations.

1. This concerns young ones especially, and those that are not in a radicated state of grace. Indeed, it concerns all. If you mean to keep close to God, you must divorce your heart from them; but chiefly young ones, that are either left to choose, or not confirmed in their choice, for the danger to them is greater than to others. Oh! how many young ones are undone by carnal company! Eusebius

tells us of a young man that was bred up under St John, who by evil company was not only drawn to be a robber, but the prince and captain of robbers (Euseb. lib. iii. c. 23), until St John went out and met him. And Gregory the Great speaks of Gordiana, his own aunt, that was drawn off from the love of God, and the strictness of a holy life, after the death of her two sisters, Tharsylla and Æmiliana, by her companions. And St Augustine, lib. viii. Confess. cap. 8, *Quem fructum habui miser aliquando in iis quae nunc recolligens erubesco, maxime in illo furto, in quo ipsum furtum amavi, nihil aliud; et ipsum esset nihil, et ego eo miserior, et tamen solus id non fecissem. Sic recordor animum tunc meum, solus omnino id non fecissem, ergo amavi consortium eorum cum quibus id feci*—O Lord, what cause have I to be ashamed when I remember these things, especially the theft, where I loved the theft for the theft's sake! What was the gain but a few apples stolen? And yet, saith he, I had never done it if I had been alone; oh! it was the company of them that drew me to this theft. Then afterwards, It was my companions drew me to this. *O nimis iniqua amicitia! seductio mentis investigabilis*—O cruel friendship! when they said, Come, let us go and do it; I was ashamed not to be shameless, and as evil as they. When, then, in this waxen age, youth are above all to avoid the company of evil-doers.

186

2. We must not only take heed that we be not inured to evil, but also that we be not deadened to that which is good. Example may corrupt us either way. Neglect of God will keep us out of heaven, as well as profaneness. Now, alas! how easily are we leavened with deadness and formality by our company! Frequent society with dead-hearted formalists, or persons merely civil and moral, whose conference is empty, unsavoury, barren, may much divert our hearts from heaven, and do us a great deal of mischief. The apostle tells us, Heb. x. 24, we should 'consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.' Our dulness and backwardness is such that we need the most powerful helps.

3. Of all evil company, the company of seducers, those that cause divisions and offences in the church, and broach novel opinions, ought to be avoided: Rom. xvi. 17, 'Mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them;' 2 John 10, 'If any man bring another doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed;' 1 Tim. vi. 5, and men that are given to perverse disputings, 'from such withdraw thyself.' Error is more catching than vice, and more spreading. It is more catching, the face of it being represented with the loveliness of some pretence or other; whereas foul actions are found hateful and more contrary to natural conscience; and besides, it is more spreading. Vice is like a duel; it killeth but one. Error is like a war that destroys many at once; therefore we should not be familiar with these. Erroneous apprehensions in religion carry a marvellous compliance with a man's natural thoughts.

4. It is not enough to avoid bad company, but we must choose that which is good. A man must have friends; the use of them in this life is very great. Man. is a sociable creature, as Aristotle speaks; company and friendship we must have. Christ himself was not without his peculiar friends; there was Peter, James, and John, that were the flower of the apostles, that were conscious to his

transfiguration and his agonies. We must have our friends and our society, so that the advantage of good company is very great: Prov. xiii. 20, ‘He that walketh with wise men shall be wise;’ their example will allure and excite to holy emulation, and their counsel and instruction will he a great help in the business of religion. Even Saul, being among the prophets, had his raptures, 1 Sam. xix. 23. So living in the company of godly men, and seeing, hearing, and conferring with them of good things, leaveth some impression.

187

Secondly, Some helps and considerations.

1. Consider what is our chiefest good. This is *principium universalissimum*. The last end or chiefest good is the principle which doth influence all our actions. And certainly, if men fix their last end aright, it will have an influence upon all they do; our company, our business, our recreation, our holy duties. Well, now, consider what is your chiefest good and your last end. If pleasure were our chiefest good, and if we had nothing else to do but to pass away the time, and to get rid of melancholy, there would need no great care in the choice of our company. But enjoying the blessed God, that is our last end and chiefest good: everything must be answerable to help you to heaven.

2. A sincere resolution to walk with God, to keep in with God firmly set; for here David saith, ‘Depart from me, ye evil-doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God.’ His resolution was set, therefore he shakes them off. When Ruth’s resolution was set, Naomi left off persuading. When Paul’s company saw his resolution, that he went bound in the spirit, they ceased, saying, ‘The will of the Lord be done’ Acts xxi. 14. So this will fortify against all suggestion; they will be discouraged from haunting you more when you are resolved.

3. Our company will be a great part of our happiness in heaven: Heb. xii. 22, ‘We are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven;’ and Mat. viii. 11, ‘They shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.’ Company will be a great part of our happiness, and for the present it will be a great hindrance or a great furtherance; therefore, when we think of this, it will make us choose those with whom we shall converse to all eternity, that we may say, Now I shall change places, but not my company; I shall but go from saints to saints.

4. Bad company can yield you no comfort hereafter when trouble of conscience comes. When your heart begins to wound you, they cannot or will not help: Mat. xxvii. 4, ‘What is that to us? see thou to that.’ If they draw you to inconvenience, when it comes upon you they will yield you no relief or comfort. Well, he that considers he is to die and give an account, will not displease God to please men.

188

SERMON CXXVII.

Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope.—VER. 116.

IN the former verse, David had bound himself by a firm resolution to keep the commandments of his God. Now presently he turneth to prayer, 'Lord, uphold me according to thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope.' Our purposes and resolutions will not hold out without God's confirming grace. David, that would have the wicked depart from him there, would have God draw nigh to him here. Both are necessary if we would keep the commands. The company of the wicked, as a great impediment, must be removed: 'Depart from me, ye evil-doers;' and then the assistance of God must be entreated: 'Uphold me according unto thy word,' &c. Two things he begs of God in this verse:—

1. Confirmation in waiting.

2. The full and final accomplishment of his hope.

In the first request there is—

1. The blessing prayed for, confirmation or sustentation, *uphold me*.

2. The ground or warrant of asking, *according unto thy word*. Some translations have it, 'by thy word,' making it the instrument of his support.

3. To what end, *that I might live*.

In the second request an argument is intimated, that frustration or disappointment of his hope would bring shame.

I begin with the first, the blessing prayed for, sustentation and support, 'Uphold me.' David speaketh not this with respect to his outward man, as if God should keep him alive, maugre the rage of his enemies. Indeed, God doth uphold his creatures in that sense, by his outward providence and divine maintenance. But he speaketh this of his inward man, the support of the soul, that God would sup port him in a way of faith and comfort. In ver. 114, 'Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I hope in thy word.' Now, Lord, that I might live, keep up the life of this hope. And ver. 115, 'I will keep the commandments of my God.' And now he desires God would support him in a way of courage and obedience. Hence observe—

Doct. Sustaining grace is necessary to the saints. Confirmation in a state of grace is as necessary to them as conversion to it.

There is a twofold grace which God gives—habitual and actual; either he works upon us *per modum habitus*, infusing grace, *permanentis*, or else *per modum auxilii transientis*.

First, There is habitual grace, called in scripture the new heart and new spirit, Ezek. xxxvi. 26; and by St John called σπέρμα αὐτοῦ, 1 John iii. 9. the abiding seed; and by St Paul, 2 Cor. v. 17, καινὴ κτίσις, the new creature. All these expressions intend those fixed and permanent habits which are the principles of holy actions.

Secondly, There is actual grace, for the former is not enough to carry us through all duties, and to uphold us in all the varieties of this mortal condition. Why? *Quia non totaliter sanat*—habitual grace works not a total, but only a partial cure. Though there be the new creature wrought, though there be an abiding seed, yet there is something of sin, and something of the flesh still left in the soul. Therefore we want perpetual supplies of actual grace. Now this kind of grace serveth for divers uses.

189

1. To direct us in the exercise of grace formerly received. A ship already rigged needs a pilot; so, although God hath renewed the heart, yet there needs direction how to exercise and put forth that grace that we have received; therefore David, Ps. cxix. 5, 'Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes;' and 2 Thes. iii. 5, 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God,' &c. In the exercise of every grace we need new directions from God.

2. To excite and quicken the habits of grace. This is like blowing up the sparks of fire that are buried under the ashes. There needs continual excitation, which is often sought by the saints: 'Quicken me, O Lord, according to thy word.' And draw me, saith the spouse, Cant. i. 4.

3. This actual grace serves for this use, to strengthen them in the operation, and to facilitate the work. This is that which is expressed Ps. cxix. 32, 'When thou shalt enlarge my heart;' that when the inclination of the renewed heart to good things is powerfully set a-work, this is like filling the sails with a good wind, which carries on the ship merrily to its port and haven.

4. Use it to sustain, protect, and defend the grace that we have against the assaults and temptations and varieties and casualties of the present life. And this is that which is meant here, 'Uphold me, Lord, that I may live.' Now this use of God's actual assistance by way of sustentation and protection is necessary for us upon three grounds—(1.) Because of the natural changeableness of our spirits. (2.) Because of daily assaults from Satan. (3.) Because of the great impression which our temporal condition makes upon us.

[1.] Because of the natural changeableness of our spirits. Man of himself is an unstable creature. Take him at the best, he is but a creature, and to be a creature and to be mutable is all one. God found no stability in the angels; they are creatures, and therefore they might sin. God only is impeccable; and why? *Quia Deus est*, because he is God. But all creatures may fail; angels fell, and Adam fell in innocency; and how can we hope to stand unless God uphold us? The best of

God's children are often troubled with fits of unbelief and decays of love; their faith and love are not always at one stay and tenor, but sometimes more and sometimes less. David felt the waverings, and was afraid of himself; therefore saith to God, 'Uphold me, that I may live.' And so all that have any spiritual experience see that without continual grace they cannot live, and keep body and soul together. They find that often purposes and resolutions are upon them to those things that are good, but within a while their hearts sink again. Such is the inconstancy and uncertainty of their affections; now, they hope, anon they fear; now a great flush of affections, anon dead again; now humble, anon proud; now meek, anon passionate; now confident, then full of fears and anguish; like men sick of an ague, sometimes well and sometimes ill. What a Proteus would even a good man seem, if all his affections and passions were visible and liable to the notice of the world! None differ so much from them as they seem to differ from themselves. Sometimes they are like trees laden with fruit, at another time they are like trees in the winter, which, though they seem to have life in the root, yet to appearance they differ little from those that are stark dead. Nay, in those very particular graces for which they are eminent, how have they failed! Abraham, that was the father of the faithful, so eminent for faith, yet in Abimelech's country he discovered much carnal fear, Gen. xx. Moses, that was the meekest man upon earth, yet in what a froward passion was he when he struck the rock twice, Num. xx. 10, 11, 'And he spake unadvisedly with his lips,' Ps. cvi. 33, which God took so heinously, that he only gave him a sight of Canaan, and would not permit him to enter. Peter is noted to have the greatest fervency and zeal of all the apostles (you know he had so much courage that he ventures against a band of men that came to attack Christ), and yet how was he surprised with cowardice and sinful fear at a damsel's question! And therefore we need this sustaining grace, and to go to God: 'Lord, uphold me.' The wards of the lock are held up only while the key is turned, so God must uphold us or we fall. Or let me express it thus: As meteors are kept up in the air while the sun stays, that which first drew them up must keep them up, or else they fall to the ground; so we sink presently when this sustaining grace is withdrawn. Or as Moses, when he was but a while in the mount with God, how soon the people fell to idolatry! So if God be but away we shall be found as unstable as water.

190

[2.] Because of the daily assaults of Satan. When a poor soul is gotten out of his hands, he pursues him with continual malice, 1 Peter v. 8; no less doth he aim at than the utter destruction of our souls, and wrestles to recover the prey, to plunge us in that estate of misery wherein himself lies; therefore we must be defended and protected every day. When cities are besieged, they are not left to their ordinary strength and standing provision, but fresh supplies of men and ammunition are sent to their relief; so God deals with us. As we are unstable creatures, we need the continual assistance of God, for all depends on him, in esse, *conservare*, and *operari*. But here is another consideration to help to uphold us under assault. When the disciples were tossed to and fro, and shaken with sundry temptations, then Christ prays than their faith may not fail, begs further assistance, Luke xx. 31; so when Paul was buffeted by Satan, God makes him a promise of additional

grace: 2 Cor. xii. 9, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee.’ We need further help from God, that we may stand against his batteries and assaults.

[3.] Because of the great impression which our temporal condition makes upon us. We are now happy, anon afflicted. Now, as unequal uncertain weather doth afflict the body, so do our various conditions distemper the soul. To abound and to be abased, to be up and to be down, to carry an equal hand in unequal conditions, is very hard, and will call for the supporting strength of God’s Spirit. So the apostle, Phil. iv. 12, 13, ‘I know how to be abased, and how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.’ From that place let me observe something.

(1.) That we are subject to change of conditions in outward things; sometimes in credit, sometimes in disgrace; sometimes rich, some times poor; cut short by the providence of God; sometimes sick, sometimes in health; sometimes enjoy all things comfortably, at other times reduced to great necessity. Now it is very hard to go through all these conditions, not to be dejected on the one side or puffed up on the other.

(2.) Observe again from that place, either of these conditions have their snares, so that we need all the grace that possibly we can get to avoid them. Some think that snares and temptations lie but on one side, namely, they think it is easy to be rich, and to maintain hope and comfort in God then; but it is hard to be poor, and to be destitute of all things. When they have nothing to live upon, they cannot see how they should live by faith, or keep from murmurings, repinings, or uncomely dejections and sinkings of heart. On the other side, some think it easy to be poor and religious; but how to keep a good conscience in a full estate, where there is so rough to draw them from God, to keep down pride and security, and to live under a lively sense of the comforts of the other world, to do this in the midst of opulency, this is hard. There are indeed temptations on both hands.

(3.) Observe, again, some that have held well in one condition have failed in another. One sort of temptations have a greater force upon some spirits than others have. When God hath kept men low, they have been modest and humble; but when they have been exalted, then they have showed themselves, their pride, their disdain, their forgetfulness of God, their mindlessness of the interest of Christ. On the other hand, others have carried it well in prosperity, yet when the bleak winds of adversity are let loose upon them, they are withered and dried up. Some cannot encounter terrors, others blandishments. As the prophet saith of Ephraim, he is a cake not turned, that is, baked only of the one side, very dough on the other; so it is with many men; on one side of providence they seem to do well, but when God puts them in another condition they have foully miscarried. 1 Kings xiii. the young prophet that could thunder out judgment against the king, when the old prophet enticed him, he is gone.

(4.) Nay, and which is more, to have these conditions to succeed one another makes the temptation the greater. To be cast down, after that we have got on the top of the wheel, and have

tasted of the world's happiness, is the greater trial. And so on the other side, to be lifted up after extreme misery; sudden changes affect us more. Now, to possess things without love, or lose them without grief; to be temperate and sober in the enjoyment of worldly happiness, or to be meek and patient in the loss of it; or to exercise a Christian mode ration as to all these dispensations; it is a very hard thing to keep the heart steady and right with God; and therefore we need the influence of God's special grace, as the apostle presently adds, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.'

192

Use. To press us to look after this upholding and sustaining grace, that as we come to God, so we may keep with God. In some cases perseverance is more difficult than conversion; it is a harder thing to persevere than to be converted at first. In the first conversion we are mainly passive, if not altogether, but in perseverance active. It is God that plants us into Christ, but when we are in Christ we ought to walk in him. As an infant in the mother's womb before it is born lives by the life of the mother, and is fed and grows by the mother's feeding, without any concurrence of its own; but when born, indeed it is suckled by the mother still, but the child sucks itself, and applies nourishment to itself; and the more it grows, the more the care of its life is devolved upon itself; so the first conversion is chiefly God's work, and when converted we cannot persevere without his help, but the care of the spiritual life is more devolved upon us than before. God doth give perseverance as well as conversion: 2 Peter i. 5, 'We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;' but so that more is required to be done by us when converted than in conversion itself. Eph. ii. 10, the apostle tells us that we 'are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works;' there is an action required of us. What is conversion? A consent to the terms of the gospel convenant, that is the great act of conversion on our part. But now perseverance is the fulfilling of the duty of this covenant. Now it is more easy to consent to the terms than to make them good. As in the matrimonial contract, the promise of the duties proper to that relation is more easy than the performance; so the consenting to God's covenant, all the business is to make it good, because of our unstable nature, manifold temptations, and great discouragements in the way of holiness. Certainly, to keep in the life of grace in the soul is a very hard thing. The Israelites, after they were brought to consent to receive Moses for their captain to lead them to Canaan, yet when they came out of Egypt, and had trial of the difficulties of the way, and were exposed to so many dangers, they were ever and anon desiring to return. So it is with us; it is hard to hold out against all assaults; many things will be interposing, and breaking your resolutions, and taking you off from God. The flesh will be interposing, so that you must often say, as Rom. v. 12, 'We are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh,' to fulfil it in the lusts whereof. And the world will be threatening, and you must say as they, Dan. iii. 16; 'We are not careful to answer thee in this matter,' Dangers will grow upon us and increase, and then we must say, as Esth. iv. 16, 'If we perish, we perish.' Friends will be soliciting, and you must say, as Paul, Acts xxi. 13, 'What mean you to break my heart? I am ready to die for Christ;' or as Christ said to his mother, John ii. 4, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' 'Must I not be about my Father's business?' Seducers will be persuading, and we must be

ready to say, as Acts iv. 19, ‘Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.’ Nay, God himself will seem to discourage us, and to be against us; and you must even say to God, as Job xiii. 15, ‘Though thou slay me, yet will I put my trust in thee.’ To keep up this life in this vigour of faith and this courage of obedience in the midst of all these interposings, is a very difficult, hard work. What then? Therefore go to God: ‘Lord, uphold me, that I may live.’

1. Ask it of God earnestly, because of your necessities. Secondly, In faith, because of his all-sufficiency. First, earnestly, because of your necessities. Without God’s upholding a man, he hath within himself no power to withstand any the least temptation or occasion unto sin. There is no evil so foul, nor sin so grievous, but there is a possibility that we may fall into it. Ps. xix. 13, David saith, ‘Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.’ Mark the expression, ‘keep back;’ it implies that he felt an inclination and readiness in his heart, and therefore desires God to hold the bridle of grace the more hard upon him: Lord, keep back thy servant. When Satan disguiseth a gross sin with a plausible and tempting appearance, and when he bribes the flesh with some pleasure or advantage, oh! how soon is lust set agog and the heart overborne by the violence of its own affections! and how soon do we faint and are discouraged when we are exercised variously with divers assaults on this hand and that! Secondly, In faith, because of God’s all-sufficiency: 1 Peter v. 10, ‘The God of all grace make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.’ Observe the title that he gives to God, ‘The God of all grace;’ it notes that he hath good store, and hath a gracious inclination to give it. And then he reckons up the several kinds of graces. What would you have? Would you keep that which you have already attained to? The Lord establish you. Would you increase what you have? The Lord perfect you. Would you act what you have with life and vigour, and grow more resolute? The Lord strengthen you. Would you grow more resolute against difficulty? The Lord settle you. So the apostle, 2 Thes. ii. 17, ‘The God of all grace comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.’ There is an all-sufficiency in God to help you, and carry you through all trials and all your difficulties. Therefore ask it of God.

2. Do not forfeit this assisting grace by presumptuous sins. God withdraws his protection and defence when we provoke him: Isa. lii. 2, ‘Your sins have separated between you and your God, and made him hide his face from you;’ and Hosea v. 15, ‘Now I will go to my own place,’ I will leave them to themselves, ‘till they acknowledge their iniquity.’ David prays for this after he had fallen foully: Ps. li. 12, ‘Lord, uphold me with thy free Spirit.’ He had lost his strength in God, his largeness of love; he wanted the assistances of God’s grace; he had been tampering with forbidden fruit: Lord, come again; ‘Lord, uphold me with thy free Spirit.’

3. Do not expose yourselves to temptation, for you are weak and cannot stand without confirming grace, which is not at your beck, not given out according to your pleasure, but he giveth us ‘to will and to do,’ κατὰ εὐδοκίαν, ‘according to his good pleasure,’ Phil. ii. 12. Christians! when we will try mysteries, and run into the mouth of danger, and be dealing with them that are apt to seduce us

into evil, God will no more show the power of his grace than Christ would show a miracle to satisfy Herod's curiosity and wanton fancy. Oh! therefore, let us not unnecessarily and unwarrantably throw ourselves upon the enticements of sin. For instance, as if no evil company could infect, or no carnal sports corrupt, or ambitious affectation of high places, when God doth not call us up by the voice of his providence; this doth but increase our temptation. When we will be rushing into places of danger, as Peter into the high priest's hall, we go thither without our defence. A man that is sensible what will do his body hurt is very cautious how he meddleth with it. The like care should we have of our souls.

194

The second thing in the text is the ground and warrant of his request, 'According to thy word;' or by thy word, as some read it. God hath promised support to those that wait upon him: Isa. xl. 29, 31, 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.' Before their full and final deliverance come, they shall have present support and strength renewed to them every day. This note should quicken us:—

1. To pray to God for grace to stand with the more confidence. God hath promised to uphold those that cleave to him, and run to him; therefore say, Lord, thy word bids me to hope; though I am an unstable creature, I will hope in thy word: Ps. xxxi. 24, 'Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.' Though nothing else be stable, yet this is stable.

2. Bless God and own his grace; look upon it as a fulfilling of his promise, if you have sustentation, or any strength renewed upon you, though your trials and temptations are yet continued to you: Ps. cxxxviii. 3, 'In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.' It is an answer of prayer, fulfilling of a promise, when we have strength to persevere without fainting; though we be not delivered, to have support before the deliverance come. I thank God, saith St Paul, for the sustentation I have. Great sustentation I have, though spiritual suavities I taste not many. It is matter of thanksgiving and comfort if we have but sustentation, and keep up the life of grace in the soul, though we taste not Christ's banquets and dainties.

The third circumstance is the end, 'That I may live.' David speaks not this of bodily life, not the life of nature, but the life of grace. And then the note is this—

Doct. The children of God do not count themselves to live, unless their spiritual life be kept in good plight.

David, that enjoyed the pleasure and honour of the regal state, he doth not count that to live, though he were king in Israel, of an opulent and flourishing kingdom, and had mighty successes and victories over the people round about him, but when his heart was upheld in the ways of God.

So Col. iii. 3, ‘Your life is hid with Christ in God.’ They had a life visible, as other men had; but your life, that which you chiefly esteem, and indeed count to be your life, is a hidden thing.

Here I shall inquire—(1.) What is this spiritual life. (2.) Show that there is a spiritual life distinct from the natural. (3.) The excellency of the one above the other. (4.) When this spiritual life is in good plight.

1. What is meant by spiritual life? It is threefold—a life of justification and sanctification and glorification.

[1.] The life of justification. We are all dead by the merit of sin. When a man is cast at law, we say he is a dead man: ‘Through one man’s offence all were dead,’ Rom. v. 5. We are sensible of it when the law cometh in with power, Rom. vii. 9; we begin to awaken out of our dead sleep. God’s first work is to awaken him and open his eyes, that he may see he is a child of wrath, a condemned person, undone, without a pardon. When the law came, ‘sin revived and I died;’ before he thought himself a living man, in as good an estate as the best; but when he was enlightened to see the true meaning of the law, he found himself no better than a dead man. Now, when justified, the sinner is translated from a sentence of death to a sentence of life passed in his favour; and therefore it is called justification of life, Rom. v. 18, and John v. 29, ‘He that believeth shall not enter into condemnation, but hath passed from death to life;’ that is, is acquitted from the sentence of death and condemnation passed on him by the law.

[2.] The life of sanctification, which lies in. a conjunction of the soul with the spirit of God, even as the natural’ life is a conjunction of the body with the soul. Adam, though his body was organised and formed, was but a dead lump till God breathed the soul into him; so till our union with Christ, by the communion of his Spirit, we are dead and unable to every good work. But the Holy Ghost puts us into a living condition: Eph. ii. 4, 5, ‘We were dead in trespasses and sins, yet now hath he quickened us.’ There is a new manner of being, which we have upon the receiving of grace.

[3.] Life eternal, or the life of glory, which is the final result and consummation of both the former; for justification and sanctification are but the beginnings of our happy estate; justification is the cause and foundation, and sanctification is an introduction or entrance into that life that we shall ever live with God.

2. Now this life is distinct from life natural, first, for it hath a distinct principle, which is the Spirit of God; the other a reasonable soul: 1 Cor. xv. 45, ‘The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.’ Parents are but instruments of God’s providence to unite body and soul together: but here we live by the Spirit or by Christ, Gal. ii. 20; God and we are united together. Then we live when joined to God as the fountain of life, whence the soul is quickened by the Spirit of grace. This is to live indeed. It is called the life of God, Eph. iv. 18, not

by common influence of his providence, but by special influences of his grace. Secondly, It is distinct in its operations, *Unumquodque operatur secundum suam formam*, as things that move upward and downward according to their form; so the new nature carrieth men out to their own natural motion and tendency. Walking as men, 1 Cor. iii. 3, and walking as Christians, are two distinct things. The natural and human life is nothing else but the orderly use of sense and reason; but the divine and spiritual life is the acting of grace in order to communion with God, as if another soul dwelt in the same body: *Ego non sum ego.* Old lusts, old acquaintance, old temptations, knock at the same door, but there is another inhabitant. Thirdly, Distinct in supports. Hidden manna, meat indeed, drink indeed, John vi. 55. There is an outward man and an inward man; the inward man hath its life as well as the outward. And as life, so taste: *Omnis vita gustu ducitur.* The hidden man must be fed with hidden manna, meat and drink that the world knows not of; its comforts are never higher than in decays of the body, 2 Cor. iv. 16. A man is as his delight and pleasure is; it must have something agreeable. Fourthly, Distinct in ends. The aim and tendency of the new nature is to God; it is from God, and therefore to him, Gal. ii. 19. It is a life whereby a man is enabled to move and act towards God as his utmost end, to glorify him, or to enjoy him. A carnal man's personal contentment is his highest aim: water riseth not beyond its fountain. But a gracious man doth all to please God, Col. i. 11, to glorify God, 1 Cor. x. 31; and this not only from his obligations, Rom. xiv. 7, 8, but from his being, that principle of life that is within him, Eph. i. 12. A man that hath a new principle cannot live without God; his great purpose and desire is to enjoy more of him.

196

3. The excellency of the one above the other. There is life carnal, life natural, and life spiritual. Life carnal, as much as it glittereth and maketh a noise in the world, it is but a death in comparison of the life of grace: 1 Tim. v. 6, 'She that liveth in pleasure is dead whilst she liveth;' and 'Let the dead bury their dead,' Luke ix. 60; and dead in trespasses and sins. None seem to make so much of their lives as they, yet dead as to any true life and sincere comfort. So life natural, it is but a vapour, a wind, and a little puff of wind, that is soon gone. Take it in the best, nature is but a continued sickness, our food is a constant medicine to remedy the decays of nature: most men use it so, *alimenta sunt medicamenta*. But more particularly—(1.) Life natural is a common thing to devils, reprobates, beasts, worms, trees, and plants; but this is the peculiar privilege of the children of God, 1 John iv. 13. Therefore God's children think they have no life unless they have this life. If we think we have a life because we see and hear, so do the worms and smallest flies. If we think we are alive because we eat, drink, and sleep, so do the beasts and cattle. If we think we live because we reason and confer, so do the heathens and men that shall never see God. If we think we have life because we grow well and wax strong, proceeding to old age, so do the plants and trees of the field. Nay, we have not only this in common with them, but in this kind of life other creatures excel man. The trees excel us for growth in bulk and stature, who from little plants grow up into most excellent cedars. In hearing, smelling, seeing, many of the beasts go before us; eagles in sight, dogs in scent, &c. Sense is their perfection. Some see better, others hear better, others smell better; all have a better appetite to their meat, and more strong to digest it. For life rational, endowed with

reason, many philosophers and ethnics excel Christians in the use of reason. Our excellency then lieth not in the vegetative life, wherein plants excel thee; nor in sensitive, which beasts have better than thou; nor in the reasonable, which many reprobates have, which shall never see the face of God; but in life spiritual, to have the soul quickened by the spirit of grace. (2.) Life natural is short and uncertain, but this eternal grace is an immortal flame, a spark that cannot be quenched. All our labour and toil is to maintain a lamp that soon goeth out, or to prop up a tabernacle that is always falling; when we have made provision for it, taken away this night, &c.; it is in the power of every ruffian and assassin: but this is a life that beginneth in grace and endeth in glory. (3.) The outward life is short, but yet we soon grow weary of it; but this is a life that we shall never be weary of. 1 Kings xix. 4, Elijah requested for himself that he might die. The shortest life is long enough to be encumbered with a thousand miseries. If you live to old age, age is a burthen to itself: ‘Days come in which there is no pleasure,’ Eccles. xii. 1; but you will never wish for an end of this life. (4.) In the preparations and costs which God hath been at to bring about this life at first. Without any difficulty God breathed into man the breath of life, Gen. ii. 7; but to procure this life of grace, God must become man, and set up a new fountain of life in our natures, John x. 20. And not only so, but to die: John vi. 51, ‘My flesh which I give for the life of the world.’ Consider the price paid for it. God would not bestow it at a cheaper rate than the death of his only Son. (5.) In the provisions of it: Isa. lvii. 10, ‘the life of thy hands.’ With a great deal of toil and labour we get a few supports for it; but this is fed with the blood of Christ, influences of grace, and comforts from the Spirit; not with gross things, but sublime, high, noble. (6.) In the use for which it serveth. It fitteth us for communion with God, as the other fits us for communion with men. Things can have no communion with one another that do not live the life of one another. We dwell in God, and God dwelleth in us. (7.) Its necessities are greater, which show the value of the life. The higher the life, the more dependence. Things inanimate, as stones, need not such supplies as things that have life. Where plants will not grow, they must have a kindly soil. Among plants the vine needs more dressing and care than the bramble; beasts more than plants; their food appointed God hath most left to man’s care, as the instrument of his providence; man more than beasts, saints more than men, much waiting upon God. No creature so dependent, in need of such daily supplies, as the inward man. (8.) Its sense is greater. There is a greater sensibleness in this life than in any other life. All life hath a sweetness in it. As any life exceedeth another, so more sensibleness; a beast is more sensible of wrong and hurt than a plant. As the life of a man exceedeth the life of a beast, so more capable of joy and grief. As the life of grace exceedeth the life of a man, so its joy is greater, its grief is greater, trouble of conscience, a wounded spirit. So the joy of saints is unspeakable and glorious, peace that passeth all understanding.

197

4. When is this life in good plight? It showeth itself in these two effects—(1.) A comfortable sense of God’s love. (2.) A holy disposition to serve and please God. The vitality of it lieth in these two graces—faith and love; when they are kept up in their height and vigour, then it is a life begun. It lieth in the height of faith, apprehending and applying God s love to the soul: I live by faith; and

the height of love swaying and inclining the heart to obedience, 2 Cor. v. 14. Therefore they desire God to uphold them, that they might be kept in heart and comfort, and in a free inclination to serve him. Now when they find any abatement of faith, so that they cannot rejoice in the promises as they were wont to do, they count themselves dead; or when their inward man doth not delight itself in the law of God, but they are dull and slow to good things, they look upon themselves as dead. But on the other side, when they find the vigour of this life in them, they are merry and glad; when they feel their wonted delight in prayer and holy exercises, this is that they mainly prize. That which is not seen and felt is as if it were not to their comfort, not to their safety.

198

Use. To exhort us all to look after this life, and when you have got it, to be very chary of it. First, look after this life. You that are alienated from the life of God through ignorance and hardness of heart, be invited to come to him; it is for life: Job ii. 4, 'Skin for skin, and all a man hath, will he give for his life.' We all desire life; vile things that live excel more precious that are dead: 'A living dog is better than a dead lion,' Eccles. ix. 4. A dog was an unclean beast, and of all creatures a lion is the most noble and generous. A worm is more capable of life than the sun. Now, if life natural be so sweet, what is life spiritual? No such life as this; it fits us for communion with God and blessed spirits. Christ chideth them, 'You will not come to me that you might have life.' Better you had never lived, if you live not this life of grace. When beasts die their misery dieth with them, but yours beginneth. Secondly, If you have this life begun, be chary of it. If the bodily life be but a little annoyed we complain presently; but why are you so stupid and careless, and do not look after this, to keep the spiritual life in good plight? Let your prayers and desires be to have this life strengthened; make this your prayer, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. A Christian maketh this to be his main comfort and his main care. Oh! how busy are we to provide for the outward man, that we may be well fed, well clothed! Most men's care is for back and belly. Oh! be more careful for the inner man; let that be refreshed with the blood of Christ and the comforts of the Spirit. Be careful for the soul, that you may keep up a lively faith, and a constant sense of blessedness to come, and so rejoice in God. Oh! how much time and pains do men waste in decking and trimming the body, when in the meantime they neglect their souls! We may all fall a-weeping when we consider how little we look after this inner life, to keep that in heart and vigour.

SERMON CXXVIII.

And let me not be ashamed of my hope. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe; and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.—VER. 116, 117.

IN the former verse I observed David begs two things—confirmation in waiting, and the full and final accomplishment of his hopes.

Something remains upon the 116th verse, ‘Let me not be ashamed of my hope.’ Hope follows faith, and nourisheth it. Faith assures there is a promise; hope looks out for the accomplishment of it. Now David, having fixed his hope upon the mercies of God, begs, ‘Let me not be ashamed;’ that is, that hope may not be disappointed, for hope disappointed brings shame. Man is conscious of the folly and rashness in conceiving such a hope: Job vi. 20, ‘They were confounded, because they had hoped; they came thither, and were ashamed.’ They looked for water from the brooks of Tema, but when they were dried up they were confounded and ashamed. That breeds shame when we are frustrated in our expectations. There is a hope that will leave us ashamed, and there is another hope that will not leave us ashamed; for David goes to God, and desires him to accomplish his hope. There is a Christian hope that is founded upon the mercies and promises of God, and encouraged by experience of God, that will never deceive us. I shall speak of that hope that will bring shame and confusion; and that is twofold—worldly hope and carnal security.

199

1. Worldly hopes, such as are built upon worldly men and worldly things. Upon worldly men, they are mutable, and so may deceive us; sometimes their minds may change, the favour of man is a deceitful thing. As Cardinal Wolsey said in his distress, If I had served God as diligently as I have done the king, he would not have given me over in my grey hairs; but it is a just reward for my study to do him service, not regarding the service of God to do him pleasure: ‘Let God be true, and every man a liar.’ A man makes way for shame that humours the lusts of others and wrongs his conscience; and first or last, they will find it is better to put confidence in God than the greatest potentates in the world, Ps. cxviii. 8; and therefore it should be our chief care to apply ourselves to God, and study his pleasure, rather than to please men, and conform ourselves to their uncertain minds and interests. To attend God daily, and be at his beck, is a stable happiness; the other is a poor thing to build upon. Men’s affections are mutable, and so is their condition too: Ps. lxii. 9, ‘Surely men of high degree are a lie, and men of low degree are vanity.’ Whoever trusts in men, high or low, are sure to be deceived in their expectations. And therefore we should think of it before hand, lest we be left in the dirt when we think they should bear us out: 1 Kings i. 21, ‘When my Lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders. When the scene is shifted, and new actors come upon the stage, none so liable to be hated as those that promised to themselves a perpetual happiness by the favour of men. This is a hope that will leave us ashamed. And then worldly things, they that hope in these for their happiness will be ashamed. There are two remarkable seasons when this hope leaves us ashamed—in the time of distress of conscience, and in the day of death. In time of distress of conscience: Ps. xxxix. 11, ‘When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.’ When sin finds us out, and conscience goes to work upon the sense of its own guilt, oh! then what will all the plenty of worldly comforts do us good! The creatures then have spent their allowance, and can help us no more. What good will an estate do? And all the pomp and bravery of the world will be of no more use to us than a rich shoe to a gouty foot: Prov. xviii. 14, ‘A wounded spirit who can bear?’ But now he that hath chosen God for his portion, in all distress and calamities can revive

200

his hopes. So also in the hour of death: Job xxvii. 8, ‘What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God shall take away his soul?’ When God puts the bond in suit, though man hath gained, where is his hope, when God delivers him over to the executioner, to chains of darkness?

2. Carnal security will leave us ashamed. Men living in their sins hope they shall do well enough, and expect mercy to bear all and pardon all; though they be not so strict and nice as others, yet they shall do as well as they. This hope is compared to a spider’s web, Job viii. 12, a poor slight thing, that is gone with the blast of every temptation; when the besom comes, both spider and web are swept away. And it is said, Job xi. 20, ‘The hope of the wicked is like the giving up of the ghost;’ and these in a moment take an everlasting farewell of their hopes. So their hopes fail in the greatest extremity. This carnal and secure hope in God, presumption of his mercy, it is but a waking dream, as a dream fills men with vain delusions and phantasms. It is notably set out by the prophet, Isa. xxix. 8, ‘They shall even be as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty.’ There will an awakening time come, and then the dream of a hungry man torments him more. Carnal men are like dreamers, that lose all as soon as they awake; though they dream of enjoying sceptres and crowns, yet they are in the midst of bonds and irons. Vain illusions do they please themselves with, that make way for eternal sorrow and shame.

Let us see how this false hope of the wicked differs from the true hope of God’s children.

1. This hope is not indeed built upon God, God hath the name, but indeed they trust upon other things; as those women the prophet speaks of, Isa. iv. 1, ‘We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.’ So they call their hope after God’s name, but their hearts are borne up with other things, as appears; because when outward things fail they are at a loss, and begin to awake out of their dream, especially in a distressed case when it pincheth hard.

2. It is not a serious and advised trust, but a slight and superficial hope, that grows upon us we know not how, a fruit of ignorance and incogitancy; when they are serious they begin to feel it a foolish kind of presumption, upon which no account can be given, 1 Peter iii. 15. How can they give a reason of their hope? But gracious souls, the more they consider their warrant and the promise of God, the more their hope is increased.

3. It is a dead and a cold hope, not a lively hope, 1 Peter i. 3. They have no taste, no groans, no ravishing thoughts about the happiness which they expect, no strong desires after the thing hoped for: Rom. xii. 12, ‘Rejoice in hope,’ saith the apostle; they have but cold apprehensions of such great things. And the hope that we expect is so excellent, that it should stir up the greatest longings, the greatest waiting, and put us upon earnest expectation.

4. It is a weak inconstant hope, a loose fond conjecture, a guess rather than a certain expectation: 1 Cor. ix. 26, ‘I therefore so run, not as uncertainly,’ not at random, but upon sure and solid grounds.

A child of God hath a due sense of the difficulty, yet withal an assurance of the possibility and of the certainty of it; and therefore it continues; he presseth on, if it be possible he may attain to his great hopes, the resurrection of the dead.

5. It is a lazy loitering hope. Carnal men would have heaven and happiness, but they make no haste towards it, they give no diligence to make sure of it; it is but a devout sloth. Whereas he that hath a true hope is pressing forward, Phil. iii. 13, and hastening and looking for the coming of Christ, 2 Peter iii. 12.

But then there is a true hope in God, both for final deliverance, present support, and present mercy, that will never leave us ashamed: Ps. xxii. 5, ‘They that hope in thee are not confounded;’ and Ps. xxv. 2, 3, ‘Let none that wait on thee be ashamed: O my God, I trust in thee, let me not be ashamed.’ What is a true Christian hope? It may be discovered by the grounds of discouragement, but most sensibly by the effects.

1. By it the heart is drawn from earth to heaven, earthly desires and hopes abated: Phil. iii. 20, ‘For our conversation is in heaven, whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.’ They live as those that within a few days expect to be with God. Christ in heaven hath a magnetic virtue to draw up the hearts of believers thither; as a man that hath looked steadfastly upon the sun can for a great while see nothing else.

2. By it the heart is enlivened in duty, and quickened with diligence in the business of salvation. Hope apprehends the difficulty, as well as the excellency and possibility, of salvation; therefore what a man truly hopes for in this kind he makes it his business to get it, and look after it: Phil. iii. 13, ‘This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before.’ They mind it seriously, and not superficially, by the by.

3. It engageth the heart against sin, 2 Peter iii. 11. We that look for these things, ‘What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness.’ Holiness implies purity, and godliness dedication to God. Now a false hope is consistent with the reign of sin, suffers a man to be vile, carnal, careless, neglectful of God, full of malice, envy, pride, but without any serious and solid ground; it is but a lying presumption. Now, this hope that is thus fixed upon God will never disappoint us. For—

[1.] The fruition will ever be more than the expectation. God doth for us above what we can ask or think, Eph. iii. 20. When the prodigal son came and said, ‘Make me as an hired servant,’ the father brought forth the fatted calf, and put a ring on his finger, &c. Solomon asked wisdom, and God gave him riches, honour, and great abundance. But much more in the world to come will the fruition be above expectation; for prophecy is but in part; we are not now capable to know what we shall then enjoy; we have but childish thoughts of things to come, as a child comes short of the apprehensions of a man, 1 Cor. xiii. 9-11.

202

[2.] This hope cannot be abated with the greatest evil. To a worldly man death is the king of terrors, and to a godly man it is his last end; though it vanquish his body, it doth not vanquish his soul: Prov. xiv. 32, ‘The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death.’ When other men’s hopes vanish, his hopes go down with him to the grave, Ps. xvi. 9; as in a bed of ease they shall sleep until the waking time.

Use. Oh! be not deceived with false promises. We must expect blessing according to the tenor of the covenant; only things promised, and no otherwise than they are promised; temporal things, with a limitation, as good for us, and with the exception of the cross; spiritual blessings, their essence, rather than degree of grace. And take heed of false hope that is, groundless and fruitless. Groundless; the warrant of true hope is the word of God: ‘I hope in thy word,’ Ps. cxxx. 5. Hope that is without a warrant will be without effect. When men please themselves, they shall do well enough, contrary to the word of God, Deut. xxix. 19. And it is fruitless; it doth not fill the heart with gladness, and quicken to holiness, and stir up to walk with God. And take heed of false experiences; that is, building upon temporal blessings, and bare deliverances out of trouble. Men are not so much preserved as reserved to further trouble: many are spared but for a time, it is but a reprieve.

I proceed to the 117th verse, ‘Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.’ Here observe—(1.) A repetition of his request for sustaining grace. (2.) A renewing of the promise of obedience conceived before, ver. 115.

1. A repetition of his request for sustaining grace, ‘Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.’ Where observe the request, *hold thou me up*: and the fruit and effect promised to himself, *I shall be safe*.

First, The blessing asked, ‘Hold thou me up;’ a metaphor taken from those that faint, or those that slide and are ready to fall. Secondly, The fruit of it, ‘I shall be safe.’ Before he had said, ‘Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live;’ now he promiseth himself more from the divine assistance, *safety*. By safety he means either the safety of the outward or inward man. Why not both? I shall be safe from those warpings and apostasy, and all dangers and mischiefs that do attend it. Turning aside from our duty doth not procure our safety, but perseverance in our duty. God’s children, when they have failed, have run themselves into much temporal inconveniences, as Josiah ran upon his own death by his own folly, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 22.

2. The resolution of his obedience, that is renewed and promised upon obtaining of this mercy. And there take notice—(1.) Of the accuracy of that obedience promised, *I will have respect unto thy statutes*. (2.) The constancy of it, *continually*; not for a moment only, a few days, in a pang, or when the mercy is fresh and warm upon the heart, but constantly, without intermission, without defection.

First, Observe from the repeating of the same request:—

Doct. 1. That sustaining grace must be sought with all earnestness and importunity. ‘Uphold me’ before, and now again, ‘Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.’

Reason 1. They that have a due sense of things upon their hearts will do so; that is to say, that have a sense of their own weakness, the evil of sin, and the comfort of perseverance in obedience.

1. That have a sense of their own weakness, as David was touched with a sense of his own necessity; therefore he repeats this prayer, ‘Hold thou me up;’ and if David need to be held up, what need have we! If pillars are not able to stand of themselves, what shall reeds do? If giants are overthrown and vanquished, children much more: Prov. xxviii. 14, ‘Happy is the man that feareth always.’ How so? With a fear of caution, not a fear of distrust; with a fear of reverence, not with a fear of bondage; otherwise it were a torture, not a blessedness. That man that is sensible of his own frailty is more blessed than other men. Why? Because he will ever have recourse to God to set his power a-work for the good of his soul: Rom. xi. 20, ‘Be not high-minded, but fear.’ Though weakness be a misery, yet a sense of it is a degree towards blessedness, because it makes way for the great Christian grace, which is trust and dependence.

2. They have a sense of the evil that is in the least sin. This is the difference between a tender conscience and a hard heart—one is afraid to offend God in the least matter, the other makes nothing of sin, and so runneth into mischief, Prov. xxviii. 14. Well, then, a man that hath a tender heart is loath to fall into the least sin, he is ever drawing to God to be kept from all sin. When we are earnest in this matter, it is a sign we are sensible what an evil sin is. Men that side with their own lusts and interests may wonder at the frequent requests of the Psalmist here—establishment and preservation from sin. But those that have a tender conscience are like the eye, soon offended, and make it their business to keep it from offence; they are thus solicitous and earnest with God to be upheld.

3. They are sensible of the good of perseverance in obedience. There are two things here:—

[1.] Obedience is good; the more we experiment it, the more we would desire to keep it up in an even tenor of close walking with God, without interruption, without intermission. God appeals to experience: Micah ii. 7, ‘Do not my words do good to him that walketh up rightly?’ And when men wander they have this experience, ‘Am I a barren wilderness?’ Micah vi. 3, ‘O my people! what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.’ The more we find liberty, sweetness, and comfort in the ways of God, the more we should desire to continue in them.

[2.] As obedience is good, so perseverance in obedience is good, for it strengthens grace, especially in an hour of temptation, when many make defection. The choicest discovery of good men is in bad times: ‘Noah was upright in his generation,’ Gen. vi. 9; to stand when others decline, to be like fish that keeps its freshness in salt water, to hold fast there where Satan hath his throne,

Rev. ii. 13, and to be faithful, as is said of Judah, Hosea xi. 12, when ‘Ephraim compassed me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit.’ It is a comfort and honour to persevere with God.

Reason 2. This sustaining grace must be asked, because God will show his sovereignty, that it is not at our beck; it must cost us waiting, striving, and earnest and renewed prayer: 2 Cor. xii. 8, ‘For this thing I besought the Lord thrice.’ God will not answer at the first knock, but at the third, then God came in. So Christ; Mat. xxvi. 44, the third time he came and repeated the same thing; then, if you compare Luke, he received his consolation by an angel. God doth not come at the first knock, therefore we must pray again, ‘Uphold me.’

204

Reason 3. Without continued influences of grace we cannot be safe, therefore they must not be sought once and no more, but daily. As we seek daily bread, so we should seek daily grace. The word σήμερον, this day, hath respect to all the petitions; this day we must have our daily bread, this day lead us not into temptation, this day keep us from evil. While temptations continue, we must continue prayer. Long suits, though often denied, may prevail at length. In short, the continuance of strength and assistance from God is necessary to preserve both habitual and actual grace, therefore they must be continually asked.

1. To preserve habitual grace, the seed that remains in us. We would wonder to see a herb to thrive and grow in the midst of many weeds; so that grace should be there where there is so much pride, love of pleasure, worldly care and brutish lusts, especially when any of these are set a-work by temptations without. The angels and Adam fell when there was nothing within to work upon them but the mutability of their nature; so when there is so much within to work, and temptations without, it is hard to keep grace in the soul.

2. For the quickening and actual stirrings of the soul to good. We should soon faint and tire in the ways that we have begun were it not for God’s sustaining grace; these sparks would quickly go out, if God did not keep them alive. 1 Chron. xxix. 18, when the people were in a high point of willingness, ‘Lord, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people.’ When we have gotten any good frame of spirit, we cannot preserve it without this continual influence.

Reason 4. Renewed prayer is a means of persevering, not only for it, but by it. God keeps us alive in the way of grace, as by the word, so by prayer. Praying in the Holy Ghost is one means of establishment, Jude 20. Prayer is a solemn preaching to our selves, or a serious warming of our souls in our duty in the sight of God. Now means of support must be used, not once, but often. There must be constant meals for the increase of bodily strength. If a man be never so strong, yet he cannot always grow in strength by one meal, there must be new refreshment; so this is one means for our preservation, therefore it must be often used.

Use. For reproof of those that ask sustaining grace customarily and carelessly, without any deep sense or renewed importunity. We are too cold and formal when we say, 'Lead us not into temptation.'

1. Consider, none stand but may fall in some degree, and it is our business to take heed we do not. Every hour we are in danger either of getting some distemper, or letting out some corruption. Of getting some distemper, being spotted and defiled in the world, or at least being made dull and indisposed in the service of God. Or else of letting out some corruptions; if God do not keep our heart and all (Ps. cxli. 3, 'Set a watch, Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips'), how soon should we betray our folly! And therefore it is a happy day, and we have cause to bless God, when we have not by some words or works of ours interrupted our communion with him.

205

2. Consider how many things concur to lead us aside, corruptions within and temptations without, and, it may be, sometimes the example of others that are of esteem in the church. Corruption within, always righting against grace—the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; and temptations without, the favours and frowns of the world. If these things have not, they may befall us, and it is too late to seek armour in time of conflict.

3. And then to see men eminent for knowledge and profession turn back from the holy commandment, and glorious stars fall from their orb and station; this overturns the faith of many, 2 Tim. ii. 18. So that, all these things considered, we cannot stand a moment without God; and therefore we should be more earnest with him for grace.

Doct. 2. The constant safety of God's people lies in sustaining grace.

1. Negatively; without it we cannot be safe, partly because there are so many trials and temptations between us and home, by reason of the sleights of the flesh, the cunning of Satan, and oppositions of the world; and partly because the measure of grace received is so small: Phil. iii. 13, 'I have not attained;' and the danger of sinning against God is so great: Amos iii. 2, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.' So that we are no longer safe from sin and punishment than God puts under his hand.

2. Positively; by God's sustaining grace we are kept safe, both as the power and faithfulness of God are engaged for our defence.

[1.] The power of God is engaged: 1 Peter i. 5, 'Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' The apostle first speaks of heaven, that that is kept for us, and then, presently, you are kept for it by the power of God. An earthly inheritance may be sure enough for the heir, but who can secure the heir from death and all other accidents? But here God provides for our comfort. Not only our inheritance is sure, but we are kept. And how doth God keep us? By his power. Oh! what greater safety can there be? He can mitigate the temptation, or else give a supply of strength; he can keep off trials, or support us under them, 1 Cor. x. 13.

[2.] The faithfulness of God is engaged: 1 Cor. i. 9, ‘God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son;’ and 2 Thes. iii. 3, ‘The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil.’ Certainly God is able, but how shall we know that he will do it? His truth is laid in pawn for what he hath promised, and therefore we may hold up our heads with confidence; and this should comfort us against all fears and doubtful and uncertain thoughts.

Use. Instruction, to show us how constantly God must be sought to in prayer, and relied upon in the use of means for our preservation, both from sin and danger.

1. Sought to in prayer. Our strength lies not in ourselves, but in God: 2 Cor. iii. 5, ‘We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.’ It is not only of God, but in God; there is our treasure kept: 2 Tim. ii. 1, ‘Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;’ and Eph. vi. 10, ‘Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.’ If the stock were in our own hands, besides the danger of embezzling it, we should neglect God; as when the prodigal son had his portion, he went away from his father. Therefore God keeps grace in his own hand, to keep us humble, depending, observing, and to have a constant converse with him, that our eyes may be to him; as Ps. cxxiii. 2, ‘As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us;’ that is, as maid and men servants look for their dole and portion, their allowance given to them, from their master and mistress, so God will still keep us to him. Dependence begets observance, to keep up our allegiance to the crown of heaven.

206

2. As he must be sought to in prayer, so relied upon in the use of means for our preservation. God keeps us, but not without our care and diligence. A Christian is said to keep himself, 1 Tim. v. 22; and this is pure religion, to keep ourselves unspotted, James i. 27; and 1 John v. 18, ‘He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, that the wicked one touch him not;’ and Jude 21, ‘Keep yourselves in the love of God.’ What! doth not this detract from all that was spoken before? No; we act with subordination and dependence upon him. Our keeping is from him, by him, and under him; so we keep ourselves through his blessing upon the use of means, which he hath appointed for us to use.

The third note is taken from the promise of obedience upon the sup position of this help from God, ‘Uphold me.’ What then? ‘And I will have respect unto thy statutes.’ Observe—

Doct. 3. The more experience we have of God’s grace in the preserving us from sin and danger, the more we should be encouraged in his ways. Why so?

1. Because of the obligation. It is his mercy which requires thank fulness. Now gratitude and thankfulness is the true principle which should urge us to perform our duty to God. Observe, there are several principles which put men upon God’s service, some false and rotten, some more tolerable, some lawful, some excellent. Some false and rotten, as carnal custom. Shall we serve God, say

they, as we have done? Zech. vii. 3; when men only do as they have done, it is the manner of the place, they learn it of their fathers, and so customarily worship and serve God. Then vainglory, to be seen of men; that is a rotten thing, Mat. vi. Come and see my zeal for the Lord, saith Jehu. This may put us upon great seeming zeal and activity. So for profit, to make a market of religion; as the pharisees got themselves credit to be trusted with widows' estates by their long prayers; these are rotten principles. Then some are more tolerable, not so bad principles as the former; as when we serve God out of hope of temporal mercy, as when they howl upon their beds for corn, wine, and oil, Hosea vii. 4; or for fear of temporal judgments, when men hang down their heads like a bulrush for a while, or else for mere fear of eternal death, they shall else be damned; when men's duties are a sin-offering, a sleepy sop to appease an accusing conscience. But then there are some that are lawful, good, and sound, as when duties are done out of the impulsion of an enlightened conscience, that urgeth them to that which is good; or upon the bare command of God, his authority swaying the conscience; or when they walk in the ways of God out of the consideration of the reward to come, a respect to heaven; this is very good in its place. Again, there are some excellent principles of grace, and which do most of all discover a gospel spirit, a well-tempered frame of soul to God, and these are love to God because of his benefits and love to us, gratitude, and thankfulness: 1 John iv. 19, 'We love him because he first loved us;' and Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you by the mercies of God;' when we serve him out of love. Again, when we serve him out of delight, out of love to the duty, find such a complacency in the work that we love the work for the work's sake; as David, 'I love thy law because it is pure;' when we love the law for the purity of it; or when the glory of God prevails above all our own interests; or when the promises and covenant of God enabling of us; that is our principle, Heb. x. 16. I observe this, men usually are brought on from one sort of principle to another; from sinful principles they are brought to tolerable and lawful, and from lawful to those that are rare and excellent.

207

2. This is such a mercy as gives us hope of more mercy in that kind. If God hath held us up, and we have been safe hitherto, then we may say, Thou hast held me up. We may look for more; new temptation will bring new strength, every day's work will bring its own refreshment. God, by giving, binds himself more to give, for he loves to crown his own work. When he hath done good, he will do good again: Zech. iii. 2, 'Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' He hath saved us, and he will save us. And it holds good sometimes in temporal mercies: 2 Cor. i. 10, 'He hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver.' But especially it holds good in spiritual mercies: 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18, 'He hath delivered me out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom.' One act of mercy gives us more. God, that hath begun, will make an end; he that hath kept me will keep me.

Use. It serves to reprove two sorts of people:—

1. Those that are unthankful after their deliverance. We forget his care of us, and never think how much we owe to him. When the mariners have gotten to the haven and harbour, they forget

the tem pest; so these forget how God stood by them in the temptation and conflict; they do not abound more in the work of the Lord. These are like those that would have deliverance, that thorns might be taken out of the way, that they might run more readily to that which is evil.

2. It reproveth those that faint and despond in God's ways, after much experiences of his help and presence with them. The Israelites in the wilderness, upon every new difficulty their faith is at a loss, and then back again to Egypt they would go; though they had so often experience of God, they would not believe him because of his wonders, but 'forgat his works and his wonders that he had showed them,' Ps. lxxviii. 11. God had given them wonderful mercy in destroying Pharaoh, that it might be meat to their faith, yet they believed not. Good David was ready to say, 'I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul,' 1 Sam. xxvii. 1, though he had experience upon experience. We should rather encourage ourselves, and go on in our work notwithstanding all difficulties.

208

The last point, from the accuracy and constancy of his obedience, 'I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.' This phrase is diversely rendered. The Septuagint renders it, I will exercise myself in them, or apply my heart to them. David's regard to God's law is diversely expressed in this psalm.

Doct. 4. God's precepts must be respected and consulted with as the constant measure and direction of our lives.

Not only respect, but continual respect: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule;' it notes as many as shall walk in rank and order: there needeth great accurateness and intension, that we may keep within the bounds of commanded duty. So walk circumspectly. Some men are so crafty through their self-deceiving hearts, through their lusts and interests, so doubtful, that there needs a great exactness, and so apt to be turned out of the way, that we need a great deal of care to look to the fountain and principle of our actions, to look to the matter, manner, end, and weigh all circumstances that we may serve God exactly.

SERMON CXXIX.

Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood.—VER. 118.

IN the former verse, the man of God had begged establishment in the ways of God; and now, as a help to what he had prayed for, he ob serves God's judgments on those that err from them. It is a special means to preserve us from sin to observe how mischievous it hath been to those that close with it. So the prophet here, 'I will have respect to thy statutes.' Why? 'Thou hast trodden down them that err from thy statutes.' By this means we learn to be wise at other men's costs, and

are whipped upon others' backs: Zeph. iii. 6, 7, 'I have cut off the nations: their towers are made desolate, their cities are destroyed; there is none inhabitant: I said, Surely thou wilt fear me,' &c. God is very much disappointed if we be not bettered and improved by his judgments. *Exemplo qui peccat, bis peccat.* He that would plunge himself into a quagmire where others have miscarried before, sins doubly, because he neither fears threatenings, nor would take warning by their example. God looks to be the more reverenced for every warning he gives us in his providence, because then what was before matter of faith is made matter of sense, and needs only a little application. Thus it will be with me if I should straggle from God, and go contrary to his direction: Isa. xxvi. 9, 'When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.' We need not doubt any more whether God will punish the disobedient, when we see his threatenings made good; only we should reflect upon our hearts: And will not God visit my transgression if I should go on breaking his laws? And what should hinder making such application? Are not all sinners alike to God? Christ tells us, 'Ye shall all likewise perish except ye repent,' Luke xiii. 5. They contented themselves to censure those on whom the tower of Siloam fell. The desert of sin is the same, and God's justice as exact as ever; therefore, if others are punished, why not we? We are strangely stupid if we do not walk more exactly with God. This use David maketh of it. Whether it were a judgment past, or a judgment expected in faith, this deterred him from doing as they did: 'Thou hast trodden down them that err from thy statutes.' In the words observe—

209

1. An account of God's judgments upon wicked men, 'Thou hast trodden down them that err from thy statutes.'

2. The reason given of that dispensation, 'For their deceit is falsehood.'

First, In the first place observe—

1. The notion by which the judgment is expressed, *thou hast trodden down*.

2. The persons described upon whom this judgment hath lighted, or shall light, *them that err from thy statutes*.

3. The note of universality, all, of what estate or condition soever they be.

From the first of these observe—

Doct. Those that proudly err from God's statutes, God can, hath, and will soon pull them down with ignominy and contempt.

This point will be made good if we consider—

1. The persons described.

2. The notion by which judgment is expressed.

3. Something concerning the certainty of this judgment.

1. The persons described, 'Them that err from thy statutes.' Some err out of weakness, and some out of pride and obstinacy. (1.) To err out of weakness, to wander in by-paths of our own, is not safe: Ps. cxxv. 2, 'As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.' Men that do not sin out of malice, but are discouraged by the rod of the wicked resting upon the lot of the righteous, ver. 3; therefore think to shift for themselves by their own compliances, counsels, and crooked courses, God will deal with them as with his open enemies. (2.) Proudly to exalt ourselves against God, and trample his interest under foot, will bring sure judgment: Ps. cxix. 21, 'Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.' Of such the text speaks, those that oppose themselves against God, and bear themselves high in sinful courses, upon account of their prosperity.

2. The notion by which the judgment is expressed, 'Thou hast trodden down.' The Septuagint ἐξουδένωσας, *ad nihil deduxisti*, thou hast brought to nothing; Acquila, *confixisti*, thou hast stricken through; Symmachus, ἀπήλεγξας, *reprobasti*, thou hast disproved; the vulgar, *sprevisti*, thou hast contemned; Apollinarius, ἀθέριξας, *parvi pependisti*, thou hast little esteemed: all to the same purpose. The phrase of treading under foot, used by us, implies—(1.) A full punishment; (2.) A disgraceful one.

210

[1.] A full punishment. God will pull them down from their altitudes, even to the dust, though never so high and proudly exalting themselves against God. A full conquest of enemies is thus often expressed in scripture: Isa. x. 6, the Assyrian is said 'to take the prey, and to tread them down like mire in the streets;' so Micah vii. 10, the same expression, when an adversary is laid even with the ground, that he may be crushed and trampled upon, as Jehu trode Jezebel under foot, 2 Kings ix. 32; and Isa. xxvi. 6, 'The feet of the poor shall tread it down, even the steps of the needy.' So the utter and final overthrow of Satan is expressed, Rom. xvi. 20, 'He shall tread Satan under his feet.'

[2.] It implies a disgraceful punishment: Ps. cx. 1, 'Until I make thine enemies thy footstool;' an expression to show the ignominy and contempt God will put upon them. Christ keeps his sheep in his hands, John x. 28, his lambs in his bosom, Isa. xl. 11, and his enemies under his feet, Josh. x. 24. When he vanquished the Canaanitish kings, 'Come near,' saith he to his captains; 'put your feet upon the necks of these kings.' Thus Sapores the king of Persia trampled upon Valentinian the emperor, and Tamberlane made Bajazet his footstool. The meaning is, God will not only bring them under, but reduce them to an abject and contemptible condition. So Chrysostom on the text expoundeth this phrase, that God will make them ἐπονειδίστους, καὶ καταγελάστους, ignominious and contemptible. They shall not go off honourably, but with scorn and confusion of face, miserably broken.

3. The certainty of this judgment, that he can, hath, and will do so.

[1.] He can do so, though they be fortified with never so many advantages, for what is too hard for God who made all things? It is easier, we know, to destroy than to build up things. Things long a-building may be destroyed in a moment; and therefore, God, that made them, can destroy them: Isa. xxvii. 4, 'Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.' Briers and thorns are matter to feed the fire, not to quench it. We want faith in the power of God, and therefore we are dismayed when we see wicked men great and high.

[2.] He hath done so, notwithstanding their greatness and proud attempts. That is the Psalmist's expression here; God hath already trodden down many such persons, and hath decreed to tread down all. Of that sort the prophet speaks as a thing already done, either in way of faith, or in part of sense, as begun to be executed: Amos ii. 9, 'I destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.' Potent and mighty enemies, if they stand in the way of his people's mercies, God can pluck them up, root and branch. When Pharaoh advanced himself against the people of God, God trod him down, and flung him into the bottom of the sea. So the Psalmist tells us, Ps. cxxxv. 10, 'He smote great nations, and slew mighty kings for their sakes, all the kingdoms of Canaan, and gave their land for an heritage unto Israel his people.' God will show what respect he hath to his people; therefore, when he ariseth to avenge their quarrel, nothing shall be able to stand before him.

211

[3.] He will do so, tread them down all.

(1.) Because of his invariable justice: 'God is but one,' Gal. iii. 20; that is, one always consonant unto himself, what he hath done he will do; his justice is the same that ever it was, and his power the same; and therefore in all his dispensations he is one; that is, ever like himself, is as ready to take vengeance on the insolences of men now as before, and keepeth a proportion in his proceedings: he is of one mind, and who can turn him?

(2.) Because of the suitableness between judgment and sin. They trample all that is holy and sacred under their feet, therefore God treadeth them under foot; they despise God, therefore are despised, 1 Sam. ii. 30; they trample upon the grace of God in Christ, therefore are said, Heb. x. 29, 'to tread the blood of the covenant under foot;' they trample upon the law of God: Amos ii. 4, 'I will not turn away the punishment there of, because they have despised my law;' they trample upon all godly admonitions and reproofs: Mat. vii. 6, 'Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you;' and they trample the servants of God under foot, and make his saints bow down for them to go over, Isa. li. 23; and therefore are they themselves trodden under foot. They despised God, and he therefore despiseth them, and poureth contempt upon them; and the more they esteem themselves, of the less reckoning are they with God.

(3.) For the undeceiving the world, who usually look to sensible things. While their ways are prosperous, we make another manner of judgment upon them than we do when they are under contempt and disgrace: Mal. iii. 15, ‘We call the proud happy; yea they that work wickedness are set up, and they that tempt God are even delivered.’ We dote too much upon outward things, insomuch that things wicked, if prosperous, seem good and holy. Our affections bribe our judgments, and those things that we would otherwise loathe have a fair gloss and varnish put upon them. It is a mighty temptation, even to good men, and they begin to have other thoughts of things when to appearance they are befriended by God’s providence and succeed beyond expectation; therefore God will tread them down.

(4.) To undeceive sinners themselves, that are hardened by their own prosperity and success, and make God’s providence and forbearing punishment to be an approbation of their actions against his law. So Ps. l. 21, ‘These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee.’ God may for a long time endure very horrible provocations without any act or mark of vengeance, till sinners flatter themselves that the things they do are pleasing to God; but they shall find they have erred when they read their sins in their punishment: Mal. ii. 9, ‘Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.’ The great God aims at the repentance of men, both in his forbearance and his punishment. In his forbearance: Rom. ii. 4, ‘Not knowing that the forbearance of God leadeth to repentance.’ He is pleased to suffer them that offend him grievously to taste the goodness of his providence, and have their turn in this world’s felicity, to see if that will better them; if not, then he poureth contempt and shame upon them, that by his frowns he may further their conviction. When prosperity is a temptation, God will change the dispensation, and instead of general favour and respect, they meet with shame and disestimation and disgrace. This is the punishment of those that are partial in his law. It is true this is not to be taken singly without the foregoing provocation. It was the lot of Christ and his prophets and apostles to be disrespected in a wicked world, and such a trial may befall his faithful messengers. Yet when this is the fruit of foregoing unfaithfulness, and men that had nothing to commend them to the world but their height and grandeur, that only had a testimony in men’s carnal affections because of their greatness, and not a testimony in men’s consciences because of their purity and holiness and good fruits, as good men have been in the consciences of those that hate them, it is to them a judgment. But, however, when those that in the main are faithful are by a righteous providence exposed to ignominy and contempt, they ought the more to search their ways, and to see whether they have been throughout with God in the conscience of their duty to him, and whether some neglect and partiality of theirs hath not brought this judgment upon them.

212

(5.) To give a check to the insolency of men who abuse their power, and think they may do what they please when they have no hindrance and rub in the way: Micah ii. 1, ‘They do evil because it is in the power of their hands.’ Restraints of conscience prevail not with many, but only restraints

of providence. It is no thanks to them if they are not worse than they are; it is not because they want will, but because they want power. Therefore God cuts them short, and treads them down like mire.

Use 1. A warning to them that are in prosperity, that they do not carry it proudly against God, his ways and people. God hath unhorsed many that have held their heads very high; therefore let none presume to do evil because they are high and exalted. There is a foolish and mad confidence which wicked men have in their prosperity, as if they were above the reach of providence, and therefore abuse their greatness to contempt and oppression. When men are up they know nothing moderate. Former judgments upon the proud and disobedient, that contemn God, his people and ways, should a little check them. God, that hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, Luke i. 51, can do it again, and will, when men will not take warning. As Nazianzen, when his heart was like to be corrupted and grow wanton with ease and prosperity, I thought, saith he, of reading the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and of the doleful condition of the church in former times. This means he took to reduce himself to a holy sobriety. This is the thing God aimed at in the ceremonial law. In the thank-offerings, leavened bread was required, which was allowed in no other sacrifice; thereby showing we should not so surfeit and run riot with our mercies as to forget the bitterness of former afflictions, together with the causes of them.

213

Use 2. Not to be dismayed at the prosperity of the wicked, so as to be troubled either about your own persons, or about the cause of God, or to cry up a confederacy with them that err from God's statutes when uppermost. Wicked men are here supposed to be in power, height, and pride of spirit; but God treadeth them down: and to be full of craft and subtlety; but their deceit is falsehood; that is, for all their might and subtlety, they are not able to resist God. David was shaken with this trial, when evil men were great flourished in wealth and authority, Ps. lxxiii. 17; but how doth he settle his heart? 'I went into the sanctuary, and there I understood their end.' When we look to the end of things, that will settle us; but when we see God's work by halves, we miscarry: we make another judgment when we see God's work brought to perfection than we did when we only saw the beginning of it. Therefore let us not be altogether dismayed; a little faith will help us against the temptations from sense. When the Lord shall have tried and humbled his people, then the cup is put into the hand of the wicked, and God will throw them down from the seat of their arrogancy, and trample upon them like dust. What should hinder? Cannot God do it, or will he not? Cannot he do it? Yes; very easily. Poor earthen vessels that oppose him, they do but dash themselves against a rock, they do but break themselves in pieces; all attempts are nothing; God will laugh them to scorn. Or else will he not do it? Doth not he hate sin as much as before, or love his people as much as ever? What God punisheth in one he punisheth in all, if repentance prevent not; he oweth them a shame, therefore will pour contempt and disgrace upon those that dishonour him, Ps. liii. 5. It might soon be known what will become of them, if you would but awaken faith; you may look upon it as a thing accomplished already: he shall tread down all iniquity under his feet, Mal. iv. 3.

Use 3. Observe the judgments upon those that err from God's statutes, that we may fear before the Lord, and believe in him, and learn to obey his statutes. David trembled to see Uzzah smitten, 2 Sam. vi. 7, 8; so should we when God revenges the quarrel of any commandment. Examples of judgments are lively instances, and are apt to strike deep upon the heart. Therefore, when we read or hear or see any of these, we should look upon it as a warning piece let off from heaven to warn us not to sin after the similitude of their transgression. God comes to speak to us in the language of sense; when we cannot understand by faith, he makes good his threatenings. The unbelieving Israelites were destroyed, Jude 5; Aaron's sons for offering strange fire were consumed, Lev. x.; Uzzah for touching the ark; Lot's wife for looking back turned into a pillar of salt; therefore it is said, 'Remember Lot's wife,' Luke xvii. 32. So in every age there are remarkable judgments, how God treads down those that err from his statutes; which should be observed, not to censure others, but for our own caution.

But now, because men are apt to misapply providence by a malicious interpretation, and to make perverse judgments of the sins of others, I shall give you some rules how you may avoid censure on the one hand, yet not hinder profit on the other.

1. It is certain God's judgments upon others must be observed: Jer. vii. 12, 'Go unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel;' Amos vi. 2, 'Pass ye to Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms?' It is stupidness not to take notice of God's hand. Providence is a comment upon the word of God, written many times in blood, and those that will not observe it shall feel it. 'Remember Lot's wife.' One observeth upon those words, *Lege historiam, nefias liistoria*—observe the instances of God's wrath upon others, lest thou be made an instance thyself. Some times God meets with this sinner, sometimes that; any that will go on in a way of sin and disobedience against God.

2. This observation must be to a good end; not to censure others, for that is malice: to speak even to the grief of those whom God hath wounded, this is condemned, as enemies did of the people of God in their affliction, Jer. l. 7. Neither must we do it to justify ourselves; that is pride and self-conceit, condemned Luke xiii. 5, 'Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish;' but for instruction, that we may fear for ourselves: Zeph. iii. 7, 'Surely now thou shalt fear me.' And that we may be cautioned against the like sins, that we may see what an evil and bitter thing it is to forsake the Lord, Jer. ii. 19; and that we may admire the Lord's mercy to us, that we are not set out as marks of his vengeance, that we are not in their condition, Amos vi. 2; that we may give to the Lord the glory of his mercy, justice, and truth. Take one place for all: Rom. xi. 22, there the apostle doth sum up all these three, that we might not boast ourselves over others, that we may admire the justice of God, and mercy to us- ward, and may learn to fear him, and walk cautiously and humbly with him, lest we' contract the like judgment upon ourselves.

3. In making the observation, there must be care that we do not make providence speak a language which it owneth not, the language of our fancies, and pry into God's counsels without warrant.

[1.] When you come to observe judgment, there must be a due reasoning from the provocation to the judgment, but not *e contra*, not judge of the wickedness of the person by the affliction of the person. The barbarians showed little reason, and less charity, in misconstruing the passage of the viper fastening upon St Paul's hand, Acts xxviii. 4. The foregoing provocation must be evident before we interpret the judgment The dispensations of God's providence are common, and fall alike to good and bad, Eccles. ix. 2. God by a sudden stroke may take off the godly as well as the wicked. Good Eli broke his neck, 1 Sam. iv. 18, and Josiah died in the army in the same manner that Ahab did, by an arrow in battle after he disguised himself, 1 Chron. xxxv. 23. Therefore do not reason from the stroke of God. Shimei misinterpreted David's afflictions: 2 Sam. xvi. 7, 8, 'Come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial; the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son.' Job's friends thought him a hypocrite because God smote him with boils and sores. The best of God's children may suffer greatly from his hand; but the judgment must not make you conclude a sin, but the foregoing sin must make you interpret it to be a judgment.

215

[2.] When the sin is written upon the judgment, and there are some remarkable circumstances wherein the sin and the judgment meet; as Judges i. 7, Adonibezek, as he served his vanquished enemies, so was he served himself, his thumbs and toes cut off. God's retaliation is very notable. Many judgments have a signature upon them, as many herbs in nature have a signature to show for what use they serve: Obad. 15, 'As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee; thy reward shall return upon thine own head.' When God payeth men home in their own coin—Gen. ix. 6, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed—it is not only a law, what ought to be done in justice, but a rule of providence, what shall be done. Pharaoh was the author of the execution in drowning the Israelites' children, so Pharaoh and all his host, his nobility and men of war, were drowned in the sea. Ahab's blood was licked up with dogs in the place where they licked up the blood of Naboth. Jezebel was more guilty than he; Ahab permitted it, but Jezebel contrived it; Ahab humbled himself, therefore his body was buried, but Jezebel was entombed in the bellies of dogs. Haman was hanged on the gallows set up for Mordecai. Henry III. of France was killed in the same chamber where the massacre was contrived. Charles IX. flowed with blood in his bed. Thus God will requite men in the same kind. His own people meet with this. Jacob supplanted his elder brother, and therefore the elder is brought to him instead of the younger. Asa put the prophet in the stocks, and he was diseased in his feet. Joseph's brethren were not flexible to his request; afterwards, when they were in extremity, Joseph proves inexorable to them: Gen. xlii. 21, 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.' How comes this into their minds? This was many years after the fact was committed, some twenty years as they computed. So God deals with his

children in like manner as they dealt with others, that their consciences may work the more kindly. The same is observed concerning David and Absalom, 2 Sam. xii. 10-12. He took the wife of Uriah to be his wife, and Absalom took his wives before his eyes. St Paul consented to the stoning of Stephen, and assisted in the execution, 'They laid down their garments at his feet;' therefore, afterwards, Paul himself for preaching the gospel is stoned and left for dead, Acts xiv. 19, 20. Barnabas was not stoned, that assisted Paul; both were alike offensive to the men of Iconium in preaching the gospel. Paul was sensible of this as a great part of his guilt, Acts, xxii. 20, and his conscience works upon that. Many other instances might be given, but this is enough.

[3.] When judgments fall upon them in the very act of their provocation. Thus many are taken away by a violent death in the very heat of their drunkenness. Zimri and Cozbi lost their lives in the very instant when they were unloading their lusts, and many times we see punishment treads upon the heels of sin.

[4.] When they are authors of their own destruction. Not only in such a sensible manner as Saul, Achitophel, and Judas, that murdered themselves; but thus, when men are given up to their headlong counsels, to break themselves: Prov. v. 22, 'His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be hoi den with the cords of his sins.' Wicked men are often whipped with their own rods; and Ps. ix. 15,16, 'In the net which they hid, is their own foot taken. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgajon, Selah.' When by their own errors, mistakes, and furious passions they undo themselves.

[5.] When evil men are brought down, wonderfully, suddenly, contrary to all apparent likelihood and the course of second causes: Ps. lxiv. 7, 'God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded; so they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves.' And Ps. lviii. 7, unto the 11th verse, there is this consolation given to the church, that enemies shall be destroyed before the pots feel the thorns. When they are contriving and boiling somewhat in their minds, before the pots feel the thorns, God takes them away suddenly in an instant, and then men shall say, Verily there is a rewarder of evil.

[6.] When God's judgments are executed by unlikely means and instruments. Sisera, a great captain, destroyed by Jael, Judges iv. 21; Adrian the pope strangled by a gnat; Arius voiding his bowels in a draught after his perjury; Cora, Dathan, and Abiram, when the earth clave to receive them that had made a rent in the congregation; and Herod was eaten up with the lice.

[7.] When such accidents bring a great deal of glory to God, and peace and tranquillity to his people; as hanging Haman with his sons upon his own gallows, Esther vii. 9, and viii. 17.

[8.] When God supplies the defects of man's justice, and their iniquity finds them out, when they think all is forgotten, and shall be no more heard of: Ps. ix. 12, 'When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them; he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.' There are many instances

how God finds out men that seem to escape well enough from man's hands, when they could not be found out by man. Zeph. iii. 5, the prophet tells us, 'Every morning he will bring his judgments to light.' There is some sinner or other which God notably punisheth, that men may own his providence.

[9.] When the word κατὰ τὸ ῥητὸν, in the express letter, is made good upon men: Hosea vii. 12, 'I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.' The word doth fully take effect, and what they would not believe they are made to feel. By these rules we may observe God's judgments with profit. To quicken you to do so, consider—

(1.) It would be a mighty cure to atheism. There are a sort of men 'settled on their lees, that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil,' Zeph. i. 12; that think God is so shut up within the curtain of the heavens, that he takes no notice of what is done below. These vain conceits would soon vanish if men would but turn students in God's providence; they would soon cry out, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth: they would say, There is a ruler of the affairs of the world, and a righteous judge that takes care of all things here below. Usually men think amiss of God, as if, good and evil were of no respect with him, but all things were governed by chance; as Job's wife said, 'Dost thou yet retain thy integrity? Curse God and die.' Mal. ii. 12, 'Ye have wearied the Lord with your words, yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?' We do not see his justice, and so have atheistical and evil conceits of God. When we fancy evil men are in esteem, and the good neglected and despised, it is a temptation to men to think there is no providence—no God. So when the nocent are prosperous, and the good vexed with all manner of displeasure; as Claudian the poet much doubted whether there were any such thing as providence, that had a care of sublunary things; but at length, when he saw Ruffinus was only lifted up that his fall might be the greater, then he no more calls in question God's providence, or taxes him of indifferency to good and evil.

(2.) It will be a notable curb and awe upon us to keep us from sin; for all these things befall them for our learning. It is our stupid incogitancy when God puts these examples before our eyes, and we are not affected with them, and so are of little use to us: Josh. ix. 3, 'When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua did to Jericho and to Ai,' they were wiser than we; they did not expect the coming of Joshua, but sent messengers to meet him and strike up a covenant with him. Or as that captain that came to Elijah, 2 Kings i. 13, when two captains were destroyed with their fifties, he comes and desires the prophet to spare his life, and that those he brought with him might be dear and precious in his eyes. As he did, so should we. God hath smitten this and that for sin; we should the more humble ourselves, and desire terms of grace; but our blindness and stupidness is such that we are not moved with God's judgments on others to look to the state of our souls: Prov. xxii. 3, 'The wise man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the fool goeth on and is punished.'

Secondly, I come now to the reason rendered, 'For their deceit is falsehood.' The Septuagint hath on ὅτι ἄδικον τὸ ἐνθύμημα αὐτῶν—thou hast despised all those that err from thy statutes, for their thought is unjust. But to open the words. These two notions, deceit and falsehood, sometimes are taken for the vanity of outward things, the disappointment of trust; for by an ill-built trust a man deceives himself, and his hopes prove false; and sometimes they are put for craft, guile, and hypocrisy. Now, according to these different acceptions of the word, diverse senses are given. (1.) Some think these words relate to the disappointment of their trust. Thus their confidences wherein they trust will deceive them at last, and be found falsehood. Certain it is that carnal men have many imaginations and carnal confidences wherein they flatter themselves, and hope to avoid their appointed judgments, which prove in the conclusion but lying vanities. If this were the sense, that at length it shall appear how deceitful their trust is, then it concerns us to see to our trust, to see what in probability these confidences might he whereby they deceive their own souls. Is it their greatness and present height? This deceiveth them when they are brought down wonderfully, Isa. xiv. 12-16. Or is it meant of their devices and witty counsels wherein they trust? But their subtle devices fail, and they are often taken in the snares they laid for others: Isa. xxix. 14, 'The wisdom of the wise men shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall be hidden.' All their craft will do them no good; all their cunning and policy, by which they hope to fortify and defend themselves and prevent their ruin, shall come to nought. Or they do not get that by their deceit which they hope for; though they have many methods and stratagems to circumvent the people of God, yet they shall prove but vain. (2.) Most simply it seemeth to be taken for hypocrisy and guile of spirit, manifested either in shows of piety or any guileful course, whereby they would under mine others; for this reason God will bring them down.

218

Doct. All fraudulency and hypocrisy is hateful to God, therefore he will sooner or later discover and destroy those that practise it.

Fraudulency is twofold:—

1. Either falsehood in ordinary commerce, lying or treacherous imposing on the simplicity of upright and honest men. Most men's wisdom and policy lies in their falsehood and deceitfulness; but this shall be manifested, and whilst they think to deceive others, they shall be deceived themselves, Job v. 13, and be taken in their own snares; and whilst they seek to ruin and undermine others, they are ruined and undermined themselves. Or—

2. There is another sort of fraudulency, pretences of piety, whereby such men deceive the world. Now this deceit is threefold either the deceit of the heretic and erroneous person, or the formalist and supertitious person, or the deceit of those that pretend to be truly religious. All these cheats put upon the world shall not long hold.

[1.] The cheat of erroneous persons and heretical seducers, who, under a fair mask and plausible appearance, carry on such designs as prove troublesome and noxious to the church of God. Though

for a while they carry great sway under colour of a godly life, yet at length God will tread them to dust and nothing, and then all will be counted but deceit. The deceit of heretical seducers is often spoken of in scripture: Rev. ii. 9, ‘I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan;’ and 1 Tim. iii. 5, 9, ‘But they shall proceed no farther; for their folly shall be manifest unto all men.’ When, under a form of godliness, they carry on a horrible design unto the great disturbance of the church, of the kingdom and commonwealth, the day shall declare it, 1 Cor. iii. 13; God will bring them down.

[2.] There is the deceit of superstitious persons and formalists, who seem to be devout, and have great zeal for outward things, not commanded by God; such ‘make a fair show in the flesh,’ Gal. vi. 12, by observing outward and carnal rites, as circumcision, difference of meats, legal purifications; all their religion is but a vain show, to be guile a loose conscience. This same sort of men are again described to be those that ‘speak lies in hypocrisy,’ 1 Tim. iv. 7. These also do in time discover the folly of their way, manifested by some notable judgment; for these things take not hold of men’s consciences, but only of their affections; and when public countenance is gone, they are of no more esteem.

[3.] There is the deceit of those that only pretend to be truly religions, and are not so; and because false and counterfeit, they are hateful and abominable to God. Now these God will not only punish in the other world: Mat. xxiv. 51, ‘He shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites;’ hell seems to be their freehold and patrimony; but here, sooner or later, God will pluck off these vizards, and bring disappointment and ruin upon these deceivers: Prov. xxvi. 26, the hypocrite shall be discovered before the congregation. Things that are counterfeit and false do not long hold out. God will discover them, either by some trying judgment, as he that builds upon the sand, when the winds blow and beat upon the house, down it falls. Earthen vessels, when they come to be scoured, the varnish and paint wears off. Or by some scandalous fall, for ‘that which is lame will soon be turned out of the way,’ Heb. xii. 13. This deceitfulness—

(1.) Is contrary to God, who is a God of truth, Ps. xxxi. 5; the author of truth: Eph. iv. 24, ‘Created after God in righteousness and true holiness;’ and a lover of truth: Ps. li. 3, ‘Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.’ So that it is a great affront to God when men deal falsely: Jer. v. 3, ‘O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth?’ Is not that the thing thou lookest after in all the works of men? This is all in all with God.

(2.) It is contrary to justice, charity, and common ingenuity; it destroys the commerce between man and man: Eph. iv. 25, ‘Put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for ye are members one of another.’ It is unnatural and monstrous by lying and deceit to circumvent one another; it is as for one part of the body to destroy another. It is a sin not only unseemly for a Christian, but it tends to the overthrow of all human society, fidelity and mutual trust being the ground of all commerce. Now God will pour out his judgments upon them.

Use. Let this teach us to carry it sincerely both to God and men, for craft will not always succeed. The more real worth in any, the more openly and fairly they carry it. But for motives.

1. You will never else have true solid comfort, until you are real, without dissembling before God and men: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with guile and fleshly wisdom, we have had our conversation in the world.' Truth breeds joy and comfort of heart when a man is sincere and acts according to his conscience.

2. You will never hold out without it; your mask will fall off: James i. 8, 'The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways;; wavering, inconstant, up and down, off and on with God. A hypocrite is compared to a rush that grows in the mire, Job viii. 12; pluck it up, it soon withers: they are like reeds shaken with every wind. And you can have no approbation and acceptation with God; God likes those that are sincere: 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.' Who are those who have pardon of sin sealed up to their souls? Oh! blessed is that man that can say his sins are forgiven him. Who is that man? 'In whose spirit there is no guile;' that is, without dissimulation, fraudulency, and guile: this man enjoys acceptance with God, pardon of sin, justification before God. And the contrary will certainly bring down a heavy judgment.

220

SERMON CXXX.

Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.—VER. 119.

IN these words we have—(1.) God's dispensation; (2.) The effect it had upon David's heart.

In the first branch we have—

1. The character by which they are described, *all the wicked of the earth*.

2. The esteem God hath of them, they are *dross*.

3. A suitable providence dealt out to them, intimated, *thou puttest them away like dross*.

First, That the wicked are men of the earth. There are common reasons why we are all men of the earth. Our original is earth, made of the dust of the ground, Gen. ii. 7. They are but a little earth or red clay fashioned into the form of a man, a handful of enlivened dust. Our abode and service is here: John xvii. 4, 'I have glorified thee upon earth;' and at our end and dissolution we are turned into earth again: Eccles. xii. 7, 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was;' Ps. cxlvi. 4, 'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth.' Princes as well as others must look to be dissolved

into dust again. But in an especial respect are wicked men said to be of the earth, and that in contradistinction to the people of God, Rev. xiii. 10. God's witnesses 'tormented the dwellers upon earth;' that is, those that are out of the true church, in Antichrist's kingdom. So Rev. xiii. 8, 'And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb.' As, on the contrary, they that dwell in the church, are said to be in heaven: Rev. xiii. 6, 'And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven;' so Rev. xviii. 20, 'Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles.' But why are they thus characterised? Because here they flourish: Jer. xvii. 13, 'Their names shall be written in earth;' grow great, and of good reckoning and account here. Judas had the bag; they 'pros per in the world,' Ps. lxxiii. 12, 'Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world.' Here they are respected: 1 John iv. 5, 'They are of the world, and speak of the world, and the world heareth them.' Here their hearts and minds are, Mat. vi. 19, 20. It is their natural frame to be worldly; they only savour the things of the world; preferment, honour, greatness, it is their *unum magnum*; here is their pleasure, and here is their portion, their hopes and their happiness. A child of God looketh for another inheritance, immortal and undefiled.

221

Use 1. To wean us from present things, which the wicked enjoy more than the righteous, and which certainly are but poor things in comparison of our happiness: 'Set your affections on things above, not on things in the earth,' Col. iii. 2. Affect them not as your happiness and last end: Ps. xvii. 14, 'Their portion is in this life.' Affect them not in competition with heavenly things, but in subordination, Mat. vi. 33; affect them not inordinately, but so as to part with them when God will: Job i. 21. 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Affect them not so as to use unlawful means to get them: Prov. xxviii. 8, 'He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.' Affect them not so as to put yourselves upon the temptation of getting or keeping them by unjust means: 1 Tim. vi. 9, '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;' Prov. xxviii. 20, 'He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.' Affect them not so as to be backward to good works: 'But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' 1 John iii. 17; 1 Sam. xxv. 11, 'Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh, which I have provided for my shearers, and give it to men I know not?' Affect them not so as to neglect heavenly things; affect them not so as to lay out your whole time and care about them: Prov. xxiii. 4, 'Cease from thine own understanding; labour not to be rich;' Isa. lv. 2, 'Why do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?' But only affect them as you may honour God: Prov. iii. 9, 'Honour the Lord with thy substance.' You may provide for your families in the fair lawful way of God's providence, 1 Tim. v. 8; also you may be helpful to others, Eph. iv. 28; for if you so do, you are not the wicked of the earth, but those that use this world, but hope to enjoy better things.

Use 2. Let us be contented though we be kept low and mean in the world. God's people are not the children of this world; better things are reserved for them in the world to come: and therefore, if we have food and raiment, and that but of the coarsest, let us be content: 1 Tim. vi. 8, 'Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.' Jesus Christ gave thanks for five barley loaves and two fishes, Mark vi. 41. The wicked are characterised to be of the earth; God's children are from above as to their original, and thither they tend as to their scope and end; and if we have anything by the way, we have no cause to complain: 1 Peter ii. 11, 'I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims.' What would a man care for in a journey but a bait or a little refreshing? If we seek after more, it is inordinate affection, and must be mortified, not satisfied: Eph. iii. 5, 'Mortify your members which are upon the earth.' Evil inclinations bend us to the earth, and earthly things, those splendid nothings, riches, pleasures, honours, these hinder us from nobler things; yea, they increase our difficulties about the things that are necessary for us by the way: Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversations 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;' implying that whilst we indulge carnal desires, it is hard to trust God with daily supports, for daily protection and daily maintenance; but always distract ourselves with fruitless cares and thoughts about the things of this life. And also we may say, 'The Lord is my helper; I do not fear what man can do unto me.' Therefore let us not desire more than God alloweth: a little with God's blessing is enough to supply our necessities as to wants, and to give us protection against dangers; as the apostle subjoineth God's undertaking, and the saints' confidence thereupon by way of a cure; if we believe God's promises, and have the spirit of his saints, this is enough to us.

222

Use 3. Let us not envy the prosperity of the wicked.

1. They are the wicked of the earth; here they flourish; as nettles will more easily grow than choicer plants, the soil bringeth them forth of its own accord; so do wicked men thrive here: but you need not envy them; not only our hopes are much better than their possessions, but our present condition is much better, Ps. xvii. 14. Their possessions are not to be compared with our hopes. What is a more plentiful table to the everlasting fruition of God? the pomp of the world to the seeing God face to face? vainglory to everlasting glory? honour here to the glory that shall be upon us at Christ's appearing? their momentary pleasures, which pass away suddenly as a dream, to the everlasting pleasure you shall enjoy in the sight of God? Nay, for the present you have communion with God and the sense of his favour, how poor and afflicted soever your outward condition be: Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us: thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time when their corn and wine increased.' Carnal men rejoice in sensual earthly good things, not in the favour of God. And mark, this joy is proposed with a supposition of increase; and at the time of this increase, when the carnalist doth enjoy the greatest affluence of worldly blessings, take them at their best, when they have the most lively sense of these things, yet a Christian hath more cause of rejoicing: 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart;' here is matter and ground of rejoicing. They drink of the cistern, you of the fountain, Jer. xii. 13; they rejoice not in God, but his gifts; and not the best gifts, but the

common sort, riches, pleasures, and honours; and these not as the effects of God's bounty, but as happening to them in the ordinary course of second causes: 'Who will show us any good?' But you rejoice in God, in his best gifts, his love and grace. And then here is the author of this joy: 'Thou hast put gladness.' This joy is allowed by God, and wrought by him: Rom. xiv. 17, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' It is stirred up by his Spirit; their joy is neither God's allowance nor God's work. And then here is the subject and seat of this joy; not tickle the senses, but delight the heart: 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart.' And then here is the measure; it is more joy, it is more pure and sublime, of a stronger efficacy, which not only overcometh the sense of present infelicities, but the fear of death, hell, and judgment to come: Heb. vi. 18, 'That we might have stronger consolation.' But wicked men dance about the brink of hell, have their secret gripes; and will you envy them, as if your condition were not much better? When God hath given you the feast, will you be troubled that they have the scraps and fragments of his bounty?

223

2. In regard of the uncertainty of their condition: Ps. xxxvii. 1, 2, 'Fret not thyself because of the evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.' Though they seem to be in a very prosperous condition for the present, as grass while it is standing is very green, yet they are soon cut down by the scythe of providence, then presently fadeth, and is carried away from the place where it grew. You think providence doth not deal righteously, because the unworthy are exalted and the worthy depressed. Do but tarry a while, and you will have no cause to complain, or to grow weary of godliness, or to cry up a confederacy with evil men. They are never nearer their own ruin than when they come to the height of their exaltation, as the sun declineth presently when he cometh to the highest point of the zenith. Who would envy those that climb up a ladder for execution? or are carried to the top of a rock, that they may be thrown down from thence to be broken in pieces? Ps. lxxiii. 18, 'Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction.'

Secondly, That the wicked of the earth are as dross. They are so in these respects:—

1. As to external show, they seem to be a part of the substance or metal, but indeed they are but the filth of the metal, which is wont to be consumed with fire, that the metal may be purged. This is fitly applied to the degenerate members of the visible church, that have only a show of the purity of religion, but are corrupt in faith and manners, ungodly and unrighteous. There are disciples in show, and disciples indeed, John viii. 31; some that live, and some only that have a name to live, but indeed are dead, Rev. iii. 4. There is a Jew outwardly and inwardly, of the letter and of the spirit, Rom. ii. 28, 29. There are branches in Christ, by an external visible union, that bring forth no fruit, John xv. 2. Some are Christians in name, by external visible communion, others by real implantation into Christ. It concerneth us to see whether we be dross or metal, living members of Christ's mystical body, or only equivocally called Christians, because of some loose profession of Christ's name.

2. Dross is intermingled with purer metal, and maketh one mass with it. The wicked and the godly live together in the visible church; they are never totally severed till the great day of separation or general judgment, when the sheep and the goats are put apart, some on Christ's right hand and some on his left. Here in the world, as in the finest metal, there is some dross, and in the same field there is chaff and corn, Mat. xiii. 29. We should not leave the flour for the chaff, but leave the chaff that we may be pure grain.

3. In God's esteem they are refuse, drossy, worthless things: Ezek. xxii. 19, 'Thus saith the Lord, Because ye are become dross,' poor, unprofitable creatures. The church and people of God, because of their excellency, are compared to gold and silver; so Rev. i. 20, 'The seven golden candlesticks.' As gold is the most precious metal, so is the church, much esteemed by God, called God's jewels, Mal. iii. 17; as a diamond among a heap of pebbles; God's jewels, 'of whom the world is not worthy,' Heb. xi. 38; his 'peculiar people,' Titus ii. 14. God maketh no such reckoning of wicked men. Dross is cast away as good for nothing; and all the wicked of the earth are but as dross to so much good metal. But all his saints are much set by, as the things of silver and gold are precious. What a difference is there between the judgment of God and the judgment of the world! The men of the world esteem the saints to be, 1 Cor. iv. 13, 'the offscouring and filth of all things,' as the sweeping of the city, to be cast forth to the dunghill. Whereas themselves are so indeed in God's account; but 'reprobate silver,' Jer. vi. 30, or rather dross, which is the refuse of gold and silver. Therefore their contempt is not to be regarded, how great soever they be; though potentates, high in honour and place, yet if ungodly and wicked, God reckons them to be vile persons, Dan. xi. 21, dross, worthless souls. Men are not valued by God for their secular interests, but moral qualifications. The potentates of the earth are not valued as his princely, but holy ones: 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' Prov. xii. 26. God puts the highest price upon them, they are coin and medals who bear his own image.

224

4. They are consumed in trials, as dross consumeth in the fining and trying of metals. Solid metal endureth, but the dross is consumed; which holdeth true of wicked men in two respects:—(1.) Their seeming goodness is lost, and the difference is seen between them and those that are sincere. Sound and searching judgments discover hypocrites, as the lightness of a building is seen in a storm: Mat. vii. 27, 'When the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, the house fell, and great was the fall of it.' So God, in the metaphor of the text, is often said to melt and try his people, Jer. ix. 7, to discover the dross from pure gold. Hirelings will soon prove changelings, when God trieth them to purpose. (2.) Their imaginary felicity vanished into smoke, they perish, the meanest as well as the greatest. Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross; they are consumed in the fire of God's wrath, and destroyed: Ezek. xxii. 20, 'As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you.' But of this by and by.

Use. Let us see what we are, real members of Christ's mystical body, yea or no. The wicked of the earth are as dross, and the godly are the finest sort of metals. To move you to consider what you are:—

1. Ordinarily the visible church is so mixed, that the generality thereof is unsound: Zech. xiii. 8, 'Two parts thereof shall be cut off and die; and I will bring the third part through the fire, and refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried.' There is but one part in three sound, and it were well the proportion were sound every where; and therefore we had need to consider who shall be saved and found faithful: Luke xiii. 23, 24, 'And one said unto him, Lord, are there few that shall be saved? and he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter, and shall not be able.' We had need be the more earnest, because the most miscarry.

225

2. The trials will be searching; we must pass through the fire, and then what will become of the dross? Rev. iii. 10, 'An hour of temptation shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon earth.' And, alas! are we able to brook the fiery trial? 1 Peter iv. 10. Few professors will be able to abide it, when we are to part with the sweetest of our earthly comforts, yea, and it may be life itself, which maketh us capable to enjoy them. It is no strange thing that it should happen to us, 1 Peter iv. 12; it is as useful as violent storms at sea or tempestuous weather in winter; when God is upon reckoning with his people, such things may be expected.

3. The best of us will be found but dross if God would deal with us in extremity; so much of corruption cleaveth to us, and so many hidden lusts do we cherish and indulge, that would soon become a root of apostasy, if God did not hold a hand of grace over us. But God will not be extreme: Isa. xlviii. 10, 'Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction;' that is, not so thoroughly. Silver is not refined till all the dross be consumed and wrought out of it; and when should we see good day if God should so refine us?

4. They are not reckoned to dross, but metal, that walk answerable to their profession and obligations to God, as becometh his peculiar people to do; they are not satisfied with common mercies. A man may have the world at will, and yet be a castaway; they must have something peculiar and distinguishing: Ps. cxix. 132, 'Look upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do to them that love thy name;' things that can never be given in anger. They do not rest in common grace: Heb. vi. 9, 'But we hope better things of you, and things that do accompany salvation;' those good moods in hypocrites and temporaries. Nor content themselves with a common conversation: 1 Cor. iii. 3, 'Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?' 1 Peter iv. 4, 'Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them into the same excess of riot;' Mat. v. 46, 'If you love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?' You should do something rare and singular, not in an ordinary loose rate.

Thirdly, That it is God's business in heaven to put away the wicked as dross, to sever them from the purer metal.

1. God hath many ways and means to do it. (1.) Partly by his judgments he doth it more and more: Mat. iii. 12, 'His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' As the chaff from corn, so dross from metal: Isa. iv. 4, 'When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughter of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning;' that is, by the judgment executed upon the evil among them: Ezek. xx. 38, 'And I will purge out from among them the rebels, and them that transgress against me.' This God doth by destroying, wasting judgments. (2.) Partly by the censures of the church: 1 Cor. v. 9, 'Put away from among yourselves that wicked person.' And partly by the stroke of the civil magistrate, and their punishments: Prov. xxv. 4, 5, 'Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.' Thus doth God do it now, but he will fully and finally do it at the last judgment, when there shall be a perfect separation of them, and all the wicked shall be cast away as refuse: Mat. xxv. 32, 33, 'Before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left hand;' there is a congregation and then a segregation, never to meet more, nor be mingled more. Now God doth it in part, but then more fully.

226

2. The reasons. (1.) God doth so, lest the silver itself should be turned into dross. We are apt to corrupt one another, natural corruption within meeting with examples without: Isa. vi. 5, 'Woe is me, I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips;' as a man that hath the matter of a disease prepared, coming into infectious company, is soon infected. God's choicest people have much dross in them, therefore the Lord needeth to purge out their dross. The purest church is apt to contract pollution and to degenerate, and the choice plants of the covenant-stock to run wild, were it not for these dispensations. (2.) That impunity may not harden the wicked and encourage others. God suffereth it as long as he judgeth it expedient: Eccles. viii. 11, 'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil;' Ps. ix. 16, 'The Lord is known by the judgments he executeth; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.' Men sin more freely and securely when a judgment doth not presently overtake them, when sinners go on without any mark of God's vengeance; but God will in every age clear his providence, by bringing of judgments upon wicked men. (3.) The nearer they are to God, the more hateful their provocations are, and more severely punished: Amos iii. 2, 'You have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.' For their sins the valley of vision is brought to barrenness. They sin against the clearest light, the dearest love, the highest engagements to the contrary; and therefore, when they are mingled among his people as dross with the silver, God putteth them away.

Use 1. To inform us that God in his judicial proceedings will distinguish; he will divide the dross from the other metal, that he may destroy the one, and preserve the other. David prayeth, Ps.

xxvi. 9, ‘Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men;’ that God would not lay him common with the wicked. God hath his harvest, for cutting down, for cutting and binding together those that sinned. Now David prayeth that he, that had severed himself in his course of life, might not be gathered with them in their punishment. God will distinguish; his judgments are for the destruction of the worser sort, and the amendment of the better; when he severeth the dross, he hath a care of the silver. Though never so terrible to the wicked, still he will be comfortable to his own: 2 Peter ii. 9, ‘The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished.’ His own jewel, that lieth hidden among them: when all is shaken round about them, God can hide them in the secret of his presence, and preserve them as he did Lot and Noah. His own are wonderfully preserved in common judgments; several scriptures speak to this: Eccles. viii. 12, 13, ‘Surely it shall be well with them that fear God, but it shall not be well with the wicked;’ and Josh. iii. 10, ‘Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites;’ Isa. iii. 10, 11, ‘Say unto the righteous, It shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.’ God will make a difference between good and bad.

227

Use 2. That a few wicked men may bring a great deal of hurt and mischief, as Achan upon Israel; two dry sticks may set a green one on fire, as the whole metal is melted that the dross may be severed.

Use 3. All judgments on the visible church are to sever the dross from the gold. God suffereth them a while to be mingled, and then come trying judgments to separate the one from the other; which is a comfort to us; the church is the purer for these judgments: Isa. i. 25, ‘And I will turn my hand upon thee, and I will surely purge away thy dross, and take away thy tin.’ So Mal. iii. 3, ‘And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.’ He will send such judgments as will destroy the incorrigible wicked ones, and purify the rest. It is a comfort against persecutions. We murmur under them, know not how they shall be turned away; God, who is the purger of his church, will find out some way. And it is a comfort under his judgments; they are not to destroy, but to purge. God intendeth only our purging, how hot soever the furnace be; therefore let God alone with his work.

Use 4. To teach us to wait upon God in the way of his judgments. He is putting away the wicked of the earth like dross; it is not only a work that he hath done, or will hereafter do, but he is always doing of it. We should observe how God hath already done it, and so by faith we should look upon him as still about it. First, he beginneth with his people; he is purging away their wickedness: Isa. xxvii. 9. ‘By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged.’ ‘But many shall cleave to them by flatteries, and some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them and to purge, and make them white,’ Dan. xi. 35. Now, when God hath employed wicked men to fan and purge his people, then their turn

cometh next: Jer. xxv. 29, ‘For lo I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished; for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth;’ 1 Peter iv. 17, ‘If punishment begin at the house of God, where shall the wicked and ungodly appear?’ Prov. xi. 31, ‘Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner.’ When the Lord hath performed his work upon Mount Zion and Jerusalem, then he will reckon with his enemies. He beginneth with his church, and maketh an end with their enemies: his enemies drink the dregs of the cup, and their end must needs be unspeakably terrible.

228

Use 5. Let us see we be not put away like dross, when God’s judgments are abroad in the earth: 1 Cor. xi. 32, ‘We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.’ We shall put that out of question if we do two things:—(1.) If we be faithful to God, and cleave to God’s people, truth, and interest, how great soever our trials be: Ps. xliv. 17, ‘All this is come upon us, yet we have not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in the covenant.’ To consume in the melting is the property of dross; but the pure metal is the more united, and cleaveth together the more closely. (2.) If you are refined by all these trials: Isa. xxvii. 9, ‘Bv this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged.’ A Christian loseth nothing by his afflictions but sin, which is better parted with than kept.

We come now to the second branch of the text, and that is the effect it had upon David’s heart, ‘Therefore I love thy testimonies.’ This use he made of all God’s judgments.

Doct. A gracious heart, that observeth the providence of God, and the course of his judicial dispensations, will find more cause to love the word of God than ever before.

1. Because thereby he hath sensible experience of the truth of it. God’s providence is a comment upon his word; the effect is answerable to the prediction, and the word that God hath said is fulfilled to a tittle. Now, the more confirmation the word receiveth, the more is affection increased. The apostle telleth us that ‘the word spoken by angels was steadfast,’ Heb. ii. 2, because every ‘transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.’ The punishment of the transgressors of the law was a proof of God’s authorising their doctrine; the same law made formerly is valid. We see the word doth not threaten in vain, and they that slight it smart for it. Now I see the word of God is to be valued, for God will make it good, even to a tittle.

2. Because if we love not the word, we may see great danger likely to ensue: even those terrible punishments by which he purgeth out the dross should make us fall in love with God’s law. If we would not perish with the wicked of the earth, we should not sin with the wicked of the earth. If we partake of their sins, we must partake of their plagues: Ps. ii. 12, ‘Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, if his wrath be kindled but a little: blessed are they that trust in him.’ When we see the danger of being enemies to God, or unsound with him, we have need to learn this wisdom of showing all affection and reverence and respect to Christ in his ways, and submit to him

heartily; there is no safety in any other course. If a spark of his wrath light upon us, how soon will it consume us! The stupid world regardeth not this, to love his ways the more God giveth out proofs of his anger against those that despise them. Many are cut off in the midway sooner than they did or could expect, and yet they do not grow one jot the wiser. It is dangerous to stand out against God, his cause, work, or people.

229

3. It doth endear the mercy of God to us; because he hath dealt otherwise with us, who in strict justice have deserved the same. God's judgments on the wicked commend his mercies to his children, Rom. ix. 23. The vessels of wrath fitted to destruction serve to show the greater love of God to the vessels of mercy; the torments of hell inflicted on the wicked do the more set forth his love to the saints, to whom he hath appointed the joys of heaven. So the severity of God in his present judgments doth imply the love of God to his chosen people, who can take comfort in the promises when the threatenings are accomplished upon others; this might have been our condition too, but that grace hath made the difference. Well, then, as it doth endear the mercy of God to us, so it calleth upon us more highly to love and prize him and his word, because of this distinction.

4. It is not only a means to set off the love of God to us, but even his judgments upon others may be a necessary act of love to us. They are purged out as dross, that they may not infect us by their example, or molest us by their persecutions or oppressions. Now the more we are befriended in this kind, the more we are bound to serve God cheer fully: Luke i. 74, 75, 'That being delivered from the hands of our enemies, we may serve God in righteousness and holiness all the days of our lives.' The world is one of those enemies, or the wicked of the earth; therefore we should serve him faithfully.

5. By this means we see the world is governed by God, and we may the more safely commit ourselves to his protection upon the encouragement of his promises. If the affairs of the world were governed by blind chance, and men might do what they listed without check and control, we might think that we had cleansed our hearts in vain, and that a man doth make himself a prey by the simplicity of his innocence. But when God punisheth the wicked in our sight, certainly this should teach us to be more holy in all our ways: Ps. lviii. 11, 'A man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.' They that knew not what to think of providence shall see there is a God in the heavens that doth wisely administer all things below; and so we are encouraged to love him and serve him more heartily. Say, as the Psalmist, 'It is good for me to draw nigh to God,' Ps. lxxiii. 28.

Use. Well, then, let our love to God, and liking and approbation of his law, be accompanied with the hatred of sin, the more we observe his judgments in putting away the wicked like dross, that we may be more holy, and seek after communion with God as our only blessedness. To this end:—

1. Let us bless God for giving a sure rule to walk by, and such promises of protection in the midst of the darkness and uncertainty of the present world. When others perish, you are safe: Isa. viii. 20, 'To the law and to the testimony,' &c. Thou shalt walk in this way safely, and shalt not stumble; yea, please God, and you need not fear.

2. Let us walk exactly by this rule, since our temporal and eternal safety and happiness is concerned thereby. For the world to come it is clear, as well as in this life: Prov. iii. 1, 2, 'My son, forget not my law, but let thine heart keep my commandments; for length of days, and long life, and peace shall they add unto thee,' and Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them.'

3. The more God doth own his law by his judgments, the more let our love be increased. This is to wash our feet in the blood of the wicked: Ps. lviii. 10, 'The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.'

SERMON CXXXI.

My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.—VER. 120.

IN this psalm you find the man of God under divers passions, some times of joy, sometimes of sorrow, sometimes of hope and courage, and sometimes of fear. As there is a time for all things in this world, there are several conditions and duties that we run through, and we have affections planted in us that suit with every condition. Religion doth not nullify, but sanctify our affections. Some have vainly thought affections to be an after-growth of noisome weeds in our nature corrupted; whereas they are wholesome herbs, implanted in us by God at our first creation, of great use to grace when rightly stirred and ordered: *Anima nunquam melius agit*, &c. The passion expressed in the text is fear; for two or three verses his meditations had been taken up in the observation of God's judgments upon evil-doers: 'Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes; for their deceit is falsehood' (ver. 118). They were once high, but God hath brought them down with ignominy and contempt; they had borne themselves out in their sinful courses on account of their prosperity, but at length they are utterly ruined and broken. And why? 'For their deceit is falsehood;' that is, they were unmasked, and all their pretences of piety and justice found to be fraud and imposture. In ver. 119 he still insisteth upon the same argument: 'Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross; therefore I love thy testimonies.' They seemed to cleave to the church and people of God as dross to gold or silver. That God, who is the purger and refiner of his church, failed not to put a difference, and to consume the dross and refine his silver. The use that David made of these judgments was twofold:—(1.) To love God's ways so much the more, and to cleave to them with greater firmness, 'Therefore I love thy testimonies. (2.) To fear before the Lord, and

tremble at the Lord's judgments, as in the text. There are two affections wherein we should always seek to profit—the love of God and the fear of God. Of this last in the text, 'My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.' In which words we have—

1. The degree of his fear, *my flesh trembleth*.

2. The object of his fear, *for fear of thee*.

3. The ground and reason of his fear, *I am afraid of thy judgments*.

1. The degree of his fear, 'My flesh trembleth.' The word *samar* St Hierome rendereth, *horrivilavit caro mea*—my flesh is in horror and affrightment. Symmachus before him, ὀρθοτριχεῖ ἀπὸ τοῦ φόβου ἡ σάρξ μου—my flesh maketh my hair stand on end, as the prickles of a hedgehog, which is an emblem of horror. The poet Persius expresseth such an affrightment thus, *Excussit membris tremor albus aristas*—my fear made my hair stand up like a field of corn, from the contraction of the skin. So it happeneth in cases of fear. You have the like expression, Job iv. 14, 15, 'Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake; the hair of my flesh stood up.' And elsewhere the same word is so used. The Septuagint reads it imperatively, καθήλωσον ἐκ τοῦ φόβου τὰς σαρκάς μου, ἀπὸ γὰρ τῶν κριμάτων σου ἐφοβήθην—pierce through my flesh with fear, as with nails. Surely it noteth some deep sense and high degree of fear; as the prophet Habakkuk expresseth upon like occasion, Hab. iii. 15, 'When I heard this, my belly trembled, my lips quivered, rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in my flesh;' his bowels did beat and shake for fear, and his lips quivered for fear, that he could not speak. The judgments of God ought to beget a deep sense and trembling, not a slight affection in us. The prophet saith, Amos iii. 8, 'The lion roareth; who will not fear?' We have need to stir up our hearts again and again. When the Lord roareth and cometh forth to judgment, we have need be ashamed of our stupidity when we are not affected.

231

2. The object of his fear, 'For fear of thee.' It was not the fear of man that put him into such an agony and consternation. We are always dissuaded from the fear of man, but we are exhorted to the fear of God: Mat. x. 28, 'And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him that is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' The one is a snare—Prov. xxix. 25, 'The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe'—but the other is a duty. The great preservation of the soul from spiritual dangers is the fear of God. We are *tuti si cauti, securi si attoniti*, saith Tertullian—the fear of God maketh us circumspect, and so bringeth safety to us; yea, the one is the cure of the other, Isa. viii. 12, 13. As one nail driveth out another, or as Moses' rod did eat up the rods of the magicians, so doth the fear of God against all contrary fears and terrors, whereby the heart may be turned from God. Man can only kill the body, but God can cast both soul and body into hell-fire; so that we may set God against man, soul and body against the body only, and hell-fire against temporal punishment. As that holy man said, *Da veniam, imperator, tu carcerem comminaris, Deus autem comminatur Gehennam*—thou threatenest

bonds and imprisonment, he threateneth everlasting damnation; therefore it is God is to be feared: Ps. lxxvi. 7, 'Thou, even thou, are to be feared; and who can stand in thy sight when thou art angry?' Not man, in comparison of God. Man against man may stand, and wicked men in the time of his patience may stand; but when God judgeth, who can stand? Now of God there is a double fear—filial, which draweth us to him; and servile, which driveth us from him: Exod. xx. 20, 'And Moses said unto the people, Fear not, for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your face, that ye sin not.' Fear not with a slavish fear, but an awful fear, composed of reverence and love.

232

3. The ground of his fear, 'I am afraid of thy judgments.' The great seventy which God did exercise in punishing the evil-doers, and purging out the dross. When God doth smite the wicked and call them to an account for sin, he warneth his own people to stand in awe. As here, 'Thou puttest away the wicked like dross. When the threatening is made good, and terrible judgments are abroad, every one needeth to look to himself; not only to love God's testimonies, but to stand in awe of his judgments. We need all affections to keep us within our duty, both fear and love.

Doct. That when God is angry, and his judgments are abroad in the world, it becometh his own people to observe them, and have a> deep awe and sense thereof.

Here I shall show you—

1. How far the people of God do and ought to take notice of his judgments.

2. This fear that is wrought thereby, whether it be an infirmity or a duty.

3. The reasons why it becometh them to have a deep awe and sense of these things.

For the first:—

1. His ancient judgments in former times ought to be laid to heart by us, especially when like sins abound. The scripture referreth to the days of Lot and Noah, and biddeth us remember Lot's wife, Luke xvii. 26-32. God biddeth his people, 'But go ye now to my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel,' Jer. vii. 12. And the apostle tells us that all the punishments that befell the stubborn Israelites are for our caution and warning: 1 Cor. x. 1-10, 'And all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come;' so he concludeth in ver. 11. And the apostle tells us that Sodom and Gomorrah were 'an example to those that after should live ungodly,' 2 Peter ii. 6. A people might easily read their own doom and destiny if they would blow off the dust from these ancient providences, and mark the prints of God's justice and truth in them, and how the word of God was verified upon them, for these are but copies and patterns. The desert of sin is still the same, and the exactness of divine justice remaineth still the same. These providences are pledges of the same wrath, of the like for substance to come upon us also, if we walk contrary to God. Others have smarted, why not we? God is impartially and

immutably just: Gal. iii. 20, ‘He is but one;’ always consonant unto himself, like unto himself; his power is the same, so is his justice; and therefore we should take warning: *Exemplo qui peccat, bis peccat.* He that will plunge himself in a bog or quagmire, where others have miscarried before him. is doubly guilty of folly, because he neither feareth nor will take warning by their example. This is one great benefit we have by the historical part of the word, that it doth not only preserve the memory of the saints, that we may imitate their graces and enjoy their blessings, but also records the sins and punishments of the wicked, that we may know God hath owned the historical part of the word, and fear for ourselves: Heb. ii. 1, 2, ‘Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;’ Rom. i. 18, ‘The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.’ So the historical parts are also to justify the prophetical. It is not only a register and chronicle of what is past, but a calendar and prognostication of what is to come. God might have blotted out the memory of sinners, that it should be no more thought or heard of, but he would secure it upon record for our learning; as some malefactors, their bodies are not buried, but quarters set upon places of greatest resort: *Ut qui vivi noluerunt prodesse, morte eorum respublica utatur*; or as Lot’s wife turned into a pillar of salt, to season after ages. So that our flesh may tremble at the old judgments, that Adam for one sin was turned out of paradise, the old world swept away with a flood, Dathan and Abiram swallowed up of the earth, Achitophel and Judas brought to the halter, Herod eaten up with worms for his pride; and all these have their use.

233

2. Judgments that light upon other countries ought to be made use of by us, because usually they go in, a circuit; the cup of trembling goeth round, Jer. xxv. 32; and because by this means we may learn to be wise, and have all our schooling at other men’s costs. As God expresseth it, Zeph. iii. 6, 7, ‘I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate: I made their streets waste, that none passed by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, none inhabitant. I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, however I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.’ God would have us take warning at a distance, and, while he is yet a great way off, to send for conditions of peace; otherwise it is a new provocation, and the judgment is hastened, Jer. iii. 7-10. A fire in one house alarmeth all the street: and they make provision for their safety.

3. When the judgments of God break in among us, and are executed before our eyes, that must be the more considered: Isa. xxvi. 9, ‘When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.’ God looketh to be more reverenced and obeyed for this, because then what was before matter of faith is made matter of sense; and we need not doubt any more whether God will punish the disobedient when his threatening is made good. Smoke is a sign of fire, much more when the fire is breaking out; and we see what we only heard before, and we feel what we would not believe before.

4. Though we should be well at ease in our own persons, yet the judgments upon others should be considered by us. Nehemiah, chap. i., preferred at court, yet hath a sad resentment of the state of Jerusalem. So Daniel, chap. ix. 5, a great man in Babylon, yet layeth to heart the judgments upon the people of God.

5. Though the judgment pursue but a few, yet all should fear. When Ananias and Sapphira fell down dead, it is said, Acts v. 5, 'That great fear fell upon all that heard these things.' God, in one or a few, giveth an instance of his severity that others may tremble; as it is said of David, when the breach was made upon Uzzah, 1 Chron. xiii. 12, 'And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?' The sin was Uzzah's, the breach only upon him, but the stroke was God's, and that maketh David tremble. Yea, the pagan mariners, when divine vengeance had pursued Jonah, chap. i. 18, 'Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord, and made vows.' The danger was for Jonah's sake; when he was thrown overboard, there was a calm; but the men feared greatly.

6. Though it should light upon enemies to us and God, yet their fall is not to be insulted over, but God's hand observed with great reverence: 'Thou puttest away the wicked of the earth like dross;' then 'my flesh trembleth,' saith David. So in Ps. lxxvi. 6, 7, 'At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and the horse are cast into a deep sleep. Thou, even thou, art to be feared; and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?' We ought to express a sense of our Father's displeasure, as a child quaketh when he heareth his father is angry with or doth correct a servant. Naturalists say a lion will tremble to see a dog beaten before him: Ps. Hi. 6, 'The righteous also shall see and fear.' The godly will be wise observers of God's work and dispensations of justice, and the spiritual advantage they may gain thereby: Prov. xxi. 12, 'The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked, and that God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness.' Holy men do exceedingly profit by these judgments.

7. Much more should we tremble at God's judgments upon his own people, when he cometh to visit their iniquities with rods and their transgressions with scourges. If this be done in the green tree, what in the dry? 'If judgment begin at the house of God, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?' 1 Peter iv. 18. Many times they are broken with a great breach and heavy corrections: Jer. xxv. 17, 'Then I took the cup at the Lord's hand, and made all the nations to drink.' His own people sip of the bitter cup that others drank the dregs of. The world shall know that he is a God hating sin, and therefore will punish them for it, lest he should seem to approve their sin. Though God doth not condemn his people to hell for their sin, yet by his sharp corrections of them in this life the world shall know how much he hateth sin; especially when they have made the name of God to be evil spoken of. God will vindicate himself. Now these should make us tremble; they are ordered for this purpose.

Secondly, I shall inquire what this fear is, an infirmity or a duty. To many, to fear judgments seemeth slavish, and thereupon build a false conceit, that God only is to be feared for his mercies

and not for his judgments. Indeed ‘God is feared for his goodness,’ Hosea iii. 5, but not only. Judgments are the object of fear; and the fear conversant about them may be so far from being a sin that it is a grace. Briefly, then, it is not such a fear as driveth us from God, Gen. iii. 5, but bringeth us to him, keepeth us with him: ‘I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall never depart from me,’ Jer. xxxii. 40. They are afraid both to sin and to suffer for sin. Afraid to sin, and so it is the fear of caution and circumspection. Certainly it can be no fault to be afraid of that which deserveth punishment or judgment; and afraid to suffer for sin in this world, where all things come alike to all; and in the world to come, where God will stir up ail his wrath. But to fear punishment, is not this servile? No, it is not. First, if it keep its proportion, and doth not exceed its limits, driving us into a despairing anguish, such as the devil’s is, James ii. 19. Secondly, if it have its spiritual use and end, which is the main and principal thing, which is to make us cleave the closer to God: Jer. xxxii. 40, ‘But I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.’ Or, thirdly, if it be subordinate, which is to make us cautelous and watchful against sin, or such things as may occasion these judgments, fleeing from wrath to come, Mat. iii. 7, and to use the means for our preservation with the more diligence, Heb. xi. 7.

235

Thirdly, The reasons.

1. Because a tender heart is easily affected with all God’s dispensations; one of the great and first privileges of grace is a heart of flesh, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Wicked men have a heart of stone, a stout, obstinate, stupid spirit; but when God’s hand is upon their persons they have no sense: Jer. ix. 3, ‘Thou hast smitten them, but they have not grieved.’ But God’s children have a heart of flesh, that trembleth at his word, and at judgments at a distance: they are soon affected with a providence. This tenderness, as it is wrought in them by grace at the first, so it is increased by their acquaintance with God and experiences of his love. Familiarity with men breedeth contempt; familiarity with God not so. None are moved with reverence to the Lord more than they that know him best, and are most familiar with him. None rejoice more than they when they find God is pleased and giveth out demonstrations of grace to the world. None fear more than they when God is angry: Ps. xc. 11, ‘Who knoweth the power of thine anger? According to thy fear, so is thy wrath.’ The world think not of God’s anger till they feel the terrible effects of it; but God’s children, that have a deep awe of God, and observe him in all his motions, have the greatest apprehensions of his displeasure.

2. It is the property of God’s children, when they look to anything without them, still to draw home the providence, and consider their own case, and to edify themselves by that they see in others, whether it be good or evil. *Electorum corda semper ad se sollicite videant*, saith Gregory. When Uzzah was stricken, ‘How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?’ saith David, 1 Chron. xiii. 12. Will not God be as severe to me, if I behave myself unreverently? He ob served how failing about holy things did much incense God’s wrath: Gal. vi. 13, ‘Ye which are spiritual, restore such a one with meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.’ They that rigidly and uncharitably censure others, are usually greatest strangers to their own hearts; but a man that draweth

all things home, knoweth that if God should let loose temptations upon him, he may be as bad as others. A man that usually reflects upon himself will be afraid, and will not reflect on the judgments executed on others, but tremble. *Nunquid ego tali?* &c., was a good question in a heathen. If God should visit my transgressions, I have broken his laws, and deserve as great a punishment. A spirit of application is a great advantage. Our Lord telleth others, Luke xiii. 5, ye shall likewise perish, without repentance. David was afraid lest he should be cast away with the dross, because they love not God's testimonies; therefore he would not only love his testimonies, hut also fear his judgments. Carnal men forget themselves when they are so bitter against others.

3. The usefulness of this fear showeth it is their duty. It is very necessary—

[1.] To stir up watchfulness and care for our own safety, that we may not fall into like offences, or do anything that is displeasing to God, lest we fall into his vengeance. We are bidden to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, Phil. ii. 12. We have to do with a just and holy God, who is tender of his laws. Now, this fear should be more active and lively when we see his judgments executed, for then God is ready at hand with a whip to awaken us, and to show us he will not be dallied with, and that danger attendeth us, when we begin to straggle out of our duty. He that breaketh through a hedge, a serpent shall bite him. Fear is the great restraint of sin, as the fear of man keepeth the beasts from hurting him, Gen. ix. 2; it is their bridle: 'The fear of you shall be upon the beasts of the field.' So fear of God helps to keep from offending him, or breaking his laws.

[2.] To humble us, when we see that sin shall not escape unpunished. Alas! if God should enter into judgment with us, who could stand? Ps. cxliii. 2. *Non dicit cum hostibus tuis, sed cum servo tuo.* He doth not say, If them shouldest enter into judgment with thine enemy, but with thy servant. God is a just judge, and therefore, when we see judgments executed upon others, we may be afraid of his righteousness. Every humble heart is conscious to himself of grievous offences; and if God, when he cometh to purge out dross, should be severe with us, what miserable wretched creatures should we be! This striketh a holy fear into our hearts, and so helps us to humble ourselves in his presence.

[3.] To make us thankful for our mercies and gracious escape. It is fear that maketh us taste the sweetness of the promise of free par don, when we see from what miseries we are delivered by the mercy of God. When the Israelites had seen the Egyptians drowned in the water, they saw they had cause to triumph in the God of their salvation, Exod. xv. 1, 2. The consideration of our defects is in part represented to us in the bitter experience of others; there we may see what dangers we are liable unto, were it not for his preventing grace, that we are riot condemned with the world, and left to perish in our sins.

[4.] To quicken and sharpen our prayers. God knoweth how to take vengeance on all iniquity, even in his dearest servants: Joel ii. 17, 'Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to

reproach.' Sparing is an act of God's mercy, withdrawing and mode rating deserved judgments. Now the more our fear is increased, the more earnest and importunate will we be to keep off or get the judgment removed.

Use. Reproof of the greatest part of the world, that pass by God's judgments, and take no notice of them, so as to fear and return to him; not his judgments upon others. When the arrows of God fly round about us, we should fear for ourselves, and when wrath is making inquisition for sinners, be the more earnest to be found in Christ. But a senseless stupidity possesseth most men; they mind none of these things. The Gibeonites were more wise and cautious, Josh. ix. 3, 4. When they saw the cities of Jericho and Ai destroyed, and their inhabitants cut off by the sword, they did not expect the coming of Joshua, but sent messengers to him, and by a wile struck up a covenant with him, before he came any further. Or as that captain, when two before him with their fifties were destroyed by fire, he fell upon his knees before the prophet, 2 Kings i. 13, 14, saying, 'O man of God, let my life and the life of these fifty thy servants be precious in thy sight. Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties, with their fifties; therefore let my life be precious in thy sight.' But oh! our blindness and stupidness! though others fall under the judgment of God, we are as immovable as rocks, and do not fall down before the Lord to deprecate his anger. Certainly if we had a due sense of our condition, we are as worthy as they; it is by the mercy of God that yet we stand. Therefore we should fear with a holy fear, that we may bridle the flesh, humble ourselves before the Lord, be thankful for our safety, and be earnest in prayer: this we should do when we see any others in afflictions. Again, when judgments are on ourselves, when God cometh nearer to us, and beginneth to touch us with his hand, we should relent presently. To be sinning and suffering is the condition of the damned in hell. The Holy Ghost sets a brand upon Ahaz: 2 Chron. xxviii. 22, 'That in the time of his distress he did yet trespass more and more against the Lord; this is that king Ahaz.' If we keep our pride, luxury, vanity, wantonness still, our avarice, coldness in religion, Sabbath profanation, if we be not brought by all our afflictions to fear God the more, such a brand will he put upon us, yea, our judgments will be increased, and the furnace heated seven times hotter; as when the child is stubborn and obstinate, the father redoubleth his strokes. Therefore we are to beg his Spirit with his rod, that we may be the better by all his corrections: Numb. xii. 14, 'If her father had spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days?' So if our heavenly Father be displeased and casts contempt upon us, &c.

237

Use 2. It reproveth those that triumph over the fallen, and declaim and inveigh against their sins, but do not consider their own. We should rather tremble and learn to fear from every judgment executed, though upon the worst of men, and say, Well, God is a righteous God, and whosoever provoketh him to wrath shall not escape unpunished. But this ἐπιχαιρεκακία, this insulting over and upbraiding others with their evil and afflicted condition, is a sin which God cannot endure, and will certainly punish: Prov. xvii. 5, 'And he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.' If God hath stricken them, and the hand of justice found them out, we should be tender to them: Prov. xxiv. 17, 18, 'Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he

stumbleth; lest the Lord see it and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.' Some read it, *Et convertat iram suam in te*—he turn his wrath upon thee. Thine enemy is not he that thou hatest, for a Christian should hate nobody, but he that hateth thee. If we rejoice in their evil, certainly it is a sign we hate them, however we please ourselves with the thoughts of forgiving them. As not when he falleth, so not when he stumbleth, not at lesser evils that befall them. Many will say they do not wish their destruction, but a little evil they could be glad of; which showeth how rare true piety is. God will give him like advantage against thee; as the leprosy of Naaman doth cleave to Gehazi. David, when he heard of the death of Saul, rent his clothes and wept and fasted, 2 Sam. i. 11, 12. Therefore, to feed our eyes with the misery and torment of others, is no holy affection. Job disclaimed it: Job xxxi. 29, 'If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him, neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul.' Revenge is sweet to carnal nature, but such a disposition as that cannot or should not find room in a gracious heart. To evidence his integrity, Job produceth this vindication. Though they that hate us be our worst enemies, and should have spirits steeped in bitterness and wormwood against us, yet ought we not to rejoice at the misery of an enemy. Yea, to mourn at their fall becometh us more, if we would act as Christians; and to fear because of it is an act of piety. Therefore this old leaven of malice and revenge must be purged out, this being inwardly delighted, when we hear of the fall of those that hate us. When thine enemy falleth, consider, Either I myself am like him, or worse, or better than he. If better, who made thee to differ? If worse, thou hast cause to wonder thou art spared, and to fear before the Lord. Let us therefore observe the judgments of God executed according to his word. Lactantius telleth us, *Quod non metuitur, contemnitur, quod contemnitur utique non colitur.* If the wrath of God be not feared, it is contemned; and if God be contemned, he cannot be worshipped.

238

SERMON CXXXII.

I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.—VER. 121.

HERE is—

1. David's plea.

2. His prayer.

First, His plea, 'I have done judgment and justice.' *Defensio est, non arrogantia*, saith Ambrose; he doth not speak this boasting or trusting in his own righteousness, but by way of apology and just defence: it is no pleading of merit, as if God were his debtor; but an asserting of his innocency against slanderers. There is *justitia personae*, the righteousness of the person; and *justitia causae*,

the righteousness of the cause wherein any one is engaged. We may propound the justice of our cause to God as the judge of the earth, and appeal to him how innocently we suffer, when we are not able to plead the righteousness of our persons as to a strict and legal qualification: Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' Well, then, David pleadeth the equity and justice of his cause, and his right behaviour therein. They cannot condemn him of any unrighteousness and injustice, and yet endeavour to oppress him; therefore he pleads, Lord, thou knowest where the right lieth, so far as concerneth their slanders, I appeal to thee for my integrity and sincerity; thou knowest that I have given up myself to do just and right things; though they are thus forward to mischief, I have done them no wrong; 'hear me, O God of my righteousness,' Ps. iv. 1. They that look to be protected by God must look that they have a good cause, and handle that cause well, other wise we make him the patron of sin. When we suffer as evil-doers, it is the devil's cross, not Christ's, that we take up.

239

But let us see how David expresseth his innocency, 'I have done judgment and justice.' These two words are often joined together in scripture. When God is spoken of, it is said of him, Ps. xxxiii. 5, 'He loveth righteousness and judgment;' and in the 2 Sam. viii. 15, it is said that 'David executed judgment and justice over all Israel.' Muis distinguished them thus, *Judicium adversus sceleratos, justitia erga bonos*—judgment in punishing the wicked, justice in rewarding the good. Besides that David speaketh not here as a king, but as a poor oppressed man, the words will hardly admit of that notion. Some think they are only put to increase the sense: I have done judgment justly, exactly. I suppose the one referreth to the law or rule itself, according to which every one is to do right—that is, judgment, a clear knowledge of what ought to be done; the other referreth to the action that followeth thereupon. So that judgment is a doing of what we know, and acting according to received light: Ezek. xviii. 5, 'Do that which is lawful and right;' it is in the margin, Do judgment and justice. Now when this is attributed to public persons, judgment signifieth due order in trying and finding out the state of a cause; and justice the giving out sentence on that trial and judgment, or causing justice to be executed for righting the wronged and punishing the wrong-doer. When to private men, the one implies the direction of conscience, the other the rectitude of our actions. By judgment we discern between right and wrong, and by justice doing things justly according to the rule. Thus it is said, Ps. cvi. 3, 'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doth righteousness at all times.' There is another notion of these two words, which I had almost for gotten:—(1.) Judgment seemeth to be opposite to rigour and extremity, and seemeth to import equitable carriage, mixed with mercy and moderation in exacting our own from others. Certainly, so judgment is sometimes taken, Jer. x. 24, 'O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.' (2.) Justice is just and faithful, dealing in and about those things which we owe to others, or are employed about, or are intrusted with by. others.

Doct. It is a comely property in God's children, and very comfortable to them, to do judgment and justice.

1. It is an excellent property—

[1.] Because by it we are made like God. Righteousness is part of God's image, and herein we do most resemble his perfection: Ps. cxlv. 5, 'The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.' There is a perfect holiness in his nature, and a condecency in all his actions. Therefore it is God-like in us when our natures are sanctified, and all our actions are righteous and holy. It is said, Eph. iv. 24, 'That the new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness,' according to the pattern of God, much like to him: they that are most so, are most like him. Natural conscience doth homage to the image of God: Mark vi. 20, 'And Herod feared John, knowing he was a just man.'

240

[2.] It is acceptable and pleasing to God. The just man is an object of God's complacency: Prov. xv. 9, 'The Lord loveth him that followeth after righteousness.' God loveth all his creatures with a general love, but with a special love those that bear his image. He doth not love men because they are rich and mighty, fair and beautiful, valiant and strong, but as holy and just. It is said, Prov. xxi. 3, 'To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.' God hath required both, and we should make conscience of both; but yet the one is better than the other, though the one be a duty of the first table, the other of the second, because moral and substantial duties are better than ceremonial, internal before external, and duties evident by natural light before things of positive institution. It appeareth in this, that God doth accept of moral duties without ceremonial observances, 'For in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him,' Acts x. 35. But ceremonial observances without moral duties are of no account in God's sight: he still rejecteth their offerings when they neglect justice; not thousands of rams and rivers of oil, but to show mercy, and to do justly, Micah vi. 7, 8, this is good. Again, he dispenseth with the ceremonials and the externals of religion when they come in competition with moral duties, even of the second table; as David's eating the shew-bread when he was hungry, Mat. xii. 5. Well, then, how right and punctual soever we be in other things, unless we show mercy and do justice, we are not accepted with God, though zealous for and against ceremonies of the stricter party in religion. It is true we cannot say they are better than faith and love, and the fear of God, and hope in his grace, for these are the substantial duties of the first table. And compare substantials with substantials, *de ordine modus*, first-table duties are more weighty. But compare internals of the second with externals of the first, moral duties of the second with the ceremonies of the first, natural and evident with the merely positive and instituted; these latter[11] are more weighty. Give to God what is God's, and to men what is men's.

[3.] Because it fitteth for communion with God. When you are just and righteous, you may call for and look for such blessings as you stand in need of; for the righteous have an easy access to him, and are sure of audience: Ps. xvii. 15, 'But as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness.'

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11 Qu. 'the former'?—ED.

I cannot behold the face of Saul, he will not see my face; but this comforts me, that I can behold thy face. Lord, thou wilt look upon me, and be gracious to me, and hear my prayers. Otherwise God will not hear the unjust, as he saith he would not accept of their peace-offerings, till 'judgment ran down as a river, and righteousness as a mighty stream,' Amos v. 23, 24, and rejects the Jewish fasts, Isa. lviii., because they did not loose the oppressed, &c. On the other side, he hath assured the protection of his providence to him that is just: Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16, 'He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppression, and shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil, he shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks; bread shall be given him, and his water shall be sure.' God will minister to him sure comforts and sure supplies. They that walk in a continual course of righteousness and just dealing of all sorts shall be as safe as if in a fort impregnable, not to be taken by any force, and sufficiently furnished with store of provisions to hold out any siege; a high craggy place is such. Bread and water are tokens of God's full and final deliverance: Isa. li. 1, 'Hearken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness.' None must look to be thus qualified but the righteous.

241

[4.] It is so suitable to the new nature as fruits to such a tree. What is works meet for repentance? Acts xxvi. 20, 'That they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance;' and 'bring forth fruits meet for repentance,' Mat. iii. 8. They are the kindly products of faith in Christ and repentance towards God. It is as unsuitable to those that are gracious to be unjust, as that the egg of a crow should drop from a hen, or venomous berries should grow upon a choice vine. That grace that is put into our hearts, which maketh us submissive and dutiful to God, doth also make us kind and harmless to men. These things are required of us as the fruits of true faith and repentance: Isa. i. 16, 17, 'Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.' This is particularly insisted upon as the proper fruit of their change. So Dan. iv. 27, 'Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor.' Repentance is a breaking off the former course of sin. The king, an open oppressor, Daniel preacheth righteousness and mercy to him. They that continue their former unjust courses never yet truly repented: Zech. viii. 16, 17, 'These are the things that ye shall do, Speak ye every man truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates, and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour, and love no false oath; for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord.' He would have their repentance thus expressed.

[5.] Because it is so lovely and venerable in the eyes of the world. A Christian, if he had no other engagement upon him, yet, for the honour of God and the credit of religion, he should do those things that are lovely and comely in themselves, and so esteemed by the world, for he is to glorify God, 1 Peter ii. 12, and adorn religion, Titus ii. 10, to represent his profession with advantage to the consciences of men. God is dishonoured by nothing so much as injustice, which is so odious and hateful to men; and wicked men are hardened, the hopeful discouraged, atheism prevaileth:

Neh. v. 9, ‘Also I said, It is not good that ye do; ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?’ On the contrary, when wo give every one their due, we bring honour to God and credit to religion; you can the better hold up the profession of it against contra diction, hold up head before God and man. Now justice is so lovely, partly as it is a stricture of the image of God, as before, in which respect it is said, Prov. xii. 26, ‘The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.’ Men are convinced that he is a more perfect man, fitter to be trusted, as being one that will deal faithfully. And partly because the welfare of human society is promoted by such things: Titus iii. 8, ‘These things are good and profitable for men.’

242

[6.] And indeed that is my last reason; it conduceth so much to the good of human society. A Christian is a member of a double community—of the church and of the world; the one in order to eternal life, the other in order to the present life; as a man, and as a Christian. Without justice what would the world be but a den of thieves? *Remove justitiam*, &c., saith St Augustine. The world cannot subsist without justice: ‘The king’s throne is established by righteousness,’ Prov. xvi. 10. The nation gets honour and reputation by it abroad: Prov. xiii. 34, ‘Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.’ Never did the people of the Jews, nor any other nation whose history is come to our ears, flourish so much as when they were careful and exact in maintaining righteousness. And as to persons, all commerce between man and man is kept up by justice. And if this be a truth, that God, and not the devil, doth govern the world, and distribute rewards and the blessings of this life, surely then justice, which is a compliance with God’s will, is the way to be exalted, and to live well in the world, and not lying, cozening, and dissembling.

2. It is very comfortable to us to be just. The comfort of righteousness is often spoken of in scripture: Prov. xxix. 6, ‘In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare; but the righteous doth sing and rejoice;’ whatever befalleth him, good or evil, much or little, in life or death. Good or evil; if good, he hath comfort in his portion, because what he hath he hath by the fair leave and allowance of God’s providence: Prov. xiii. 25, ‘The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul;’ he hath enough, because he hath what God seeth fit for him; he hath enough to supply his wants, enough to satisfy his desires; sometimes it is much, sometimes it is little. It is much some times, for they are under the blessing of the promise: Deut. xvi. 20, ‘That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.’ Justice shalt thou follow; if you will take care for that, God will take care to bless you. If it be little, that little is better than more gotten by fraud and injustice: Prov. xvi. 8, ‘Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right;’ Prov. xv. 16, 17, ‘Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure, and trouble therewith;’ though it be but a dinner of herbs: Ps. xxxvii. 16, ‘A little that a righteous man hath is better than the treasures of many wicked.’ The comfort, if they will stand to the scriptures, lieth not in abundance, but in God’s blessing. There is more satisfaction in their small provisions than in the greatest plenty. Suppose their condition be evil, whatsoever evil a just man suffers, he shall get some good by it, living or dying, and so still hath ground of comfort: if

scorned or neglected, he hath the comfort of his innocent dealing to bear him out. As Samuel, when he and his house was laid aside, 1 Sam. xii. 2, 3, he appeals to them, 'Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or from whose hands have I received a bribe to blind mine eyes therewith, and I will restore it?' If you are opposed and maligned, you may plead against your enemies as Moses did, Num. xvi. 15, 'Respect riot their offerings; I have not taken an ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.' You may plead thus when you are sure you have not wronged them. If you are oppressed, as David in the text, you may appeal to the God of your righteousness. In life, in death, they have the comfort of their righteousness; in life, Deut. xvi. 20, as before. In death; Prov. xiv. 32, 'The righteous man hath hope in his death;' Isa. xxxviii. 3, 'Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, that I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.' When he is going the way of all the earth, this will be a comfort to him, that he hath done no wrong, but served God faithfully, and lived with men without guile and deceit. Oh, for comforts for a dying hour! Now this comfort ariseth partly from a good conscience, and partly from the many promises of God that are made to righteousness.

[1.] From peace of conscience. We are told, Prov. xv. 15, 'That a good conscience is a continual feast.' Ahasuerus made a magnificent feast, that lasted a hundred and eighty days; but this is a continual feast, a dish we are never weary of. Now, who have this feast? The crooked, the subtle, the deceitful? No; but those that walk with a simple and plain-hearted honesty: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.' They have comfort in all conditions: Acts xxiv. 16, 'Herein do I exercise myself always, to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.' Others are like trees of the forest, every wind shaketh them; but they are the garden of God: Cant. iv. 16, 'Awake, O north wind; blow, south wind, upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.' Out of what corner soever the wind bloweth, it bloweth good to them.

[2.] Partly from the many promises of God, both as to the world to come and this present life. For the world to come, the question is put, Ps. xv. 1, and it were well we would often put it to our hearts, 'Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?' It is answered, 'He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth with his heart, that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour;' a man that maketh conscience of all his words and actions. So the apostle telleth us, in the new heavens and new earth there dwelleth righteousness, 2 Peter iii. 13. Then, for this world there are many promises: take a taste; this bringeth profit, and is only profitable: Prov. x. 2, 'Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness delivereth from death.' Men think to do anything with wealth, and that, naked honesty may be a-cold; they have food and physic, friends and honour; alas! how soon can God blow upon an estate and make it useless to us—make a man

vomit up again his ill-gotten morsels! Job xx. 15, ‘He hath swallowed down riches, and shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly.’ As a man that hath eaten too much, though God permit him to get, he doth not permit him to hold what he hath gotten unjustly. There is a flaw in the title will one time or other cast them out of possession. Well, then, riches profit not. But what is profit able? 1 Tim. iv. 8, ‘Godliness is profitable to all things.’ And this part of godliness, righteousness, that will prolong life, and bring a blessing upon the soul of the righteous: Prov. x. 3, ‘The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish; but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.’ Another promise; it bringeth preservation in times of difficulty and danger; he that hath carried it righteously, they know not how to lay hold upon him, and work him any mischief: Prov. xi. 3, ‘The integrity of the upright shall guide him, but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.’ So again, Prov. xiii. 6, ‘Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way, but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.’ It is God keepeth us, but the qualification of the person kept is to be observed, it is he that is just and honest. We think it is the way to danger, because the eye of the flesh is more perspicuous than the eye of the spirit or mind; and we are more apt to see what is, and who is against us, than what and who is for us: Ps. xxv. 21, ‘Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on thee.’ That which, in the judgment of the flesh, is the means of our ruin, is indeed the means of our preservation. So Isa. xxxiii. 15, ‘He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly,’ &c. Again, for recovery out of trouble: Prov. xxiv. 15, 16, ‘Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting-place; for the just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again; but the wicked shall fall into mischief.’ They may be ‘persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.’ There are strange changes of providence; we are up and down, but shall rise again; with the wicked it is not so. Again, for stability: Prov. x. 4, 5, ‘As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more; but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.’ Wicked men, being great in power, rend and tear all things, and bring down all things before them; but they have no foundation: the one is fleeting as the wind, the other is settled as the earth. So Prov. xii. 3, ‘A man shall not be established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.’ Wicked men get up, seem high for the time, but they have no root, therefore soon wither: they have no root, as that ambassador, when he saw the treasure of St Mark, said, This hath no root. All their policies, secret friendships, shall never be able to keep them up. Ahab was told that God would root out him and all his family; he thought to avoid this threatening; gets many wives and concubines, by whom he hath seventy children, hoping that one of them would remain to succeed him; he committed their tutelage and education to the choicest of his nobility, men of Samaria, a strong town; but you see all this came to nought, 2 Kings x. So Prov. x. 36, ‘The righteous shall never be moved, but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.’ Every man that is in good estate would fain make it as firm and lasting as he can; these settle polities, contract friendships, use all means to make their acquisitions firm and secure, but pass by the main care, which is to settle things upon a righteous foundation, and therefore they shall not flourish. So for posterity: Prov. xi. 21, ‘The seed of the righteous shall be delivered.’ So Prov. xii. 7, ‘The wicked are overthrown and are not, but the house of the righteous shall stand;’ Prov. xx. 7, ‘The just man walketh in his integrity; his

children are blessed after him.' All our care is for posterity, man multiplied, continued; in short, all manner of blessings: Prov. xxi. 21, 'He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour.' He findeth life: Prov. xi. 19, 'As righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death;' Prov. xii. 28, 'In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death.' Righteousness; he shall have righteous dealing from others. Honour; he shall have a good name in the world, and be preferred when God thinks fit.

Use. To press us to do judgment and justice—

1. As to our private dealing with others; carry yourselves faithfully, and make conscience of justice and equity.

[1.] Propound to do nothing but what is agreeable to righteousness and honesty: Prov. xii. 5, 'The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.' Our evil purpose spoils all. A good man erreth sometimes through ignorance, incogitancy, or violence of temptation, overtaken or overborne; but he doth not propose to do evil, that is the property of the wicked.

J2.] Be always exercising righteousness, as God giveth opportunity occasion: 1 John iii. 7, 'He that doth righteousness is righteous;' Ps. cvi. 3, 'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doth righteousness at all times.' Justice must be observed in lesser things as well as in great, for where heaven and hell are concerned nothing is little, Luke xvi. 10. He that is faithful in that which is least, *in minimo*, ὁ πιστὸς ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ—he that is faithful in a little thing will not be unfaithful in anything. Many will be righteous in some thing, but in some others dispense with themselves.

[3.] Do not depart from your rule and resolution of just dealing upon any temptation whatsoever. Men resolve to be just, but when the temptation cometh, their resolution is shaken. Oh! remember the greatest gain will not countervail your loss: Mat. xvi. 26, 'What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' It will prove a poor bargain in the end; and there is no profit in what is gained unjustly; it is a certain loss, and so it will prove in the issue: Hab. ii. 9, 10, 'Woe unto him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil: thou hast consulted shame to thy house, and hast sinned against thine own soul.' You think to avoid all emergent evils; there needs no more to pull down the power and greatness of the oppressor than his studying to make it great; nothing destroyeth it so much.

[4.] Take special heed to thyself that thou be not unrighteous when opportunity is offered, when put in places of power and trust. Many are innocent because they have no opportunity to be otherwise. It is said, John xii. 6, 'He was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.' When corrupt affections and suitable temptations and objects meet, then it is dangerous to the soul.

246

[5.] Take heed of covetousness: 1 Tim. vi. 10, ‘The love of money is the root of all evil.’ It will make a breach on thy duty when it is indulged; therefore take away the lusts, and temptations will have less power over thee.

For motives—

(1.) Righteousness is a christian’s breastplate: Eph. vi. 14, ‘And having on the breastplate of righteousness,’ to defend the heart and vital parts. It keepeth the heart whole; if the breast be covered with a firm resolution to shun whatsoever is evil and unjust, temptations will not pierce us. Unless you arm yourself with this resolution, you will lose comfort, and lose grace.

(2.) Consider how soon God breaketh in with a judgment when once men transgress righteousness: 1 Thes. iv. 6, ‘Let no man go be yond his brother, nor defraud his brother; for God is the avenger of all such.’ God, that is the patron of human society, will not suffer unrighteousness and injustice to go unpunished.

2. In your public engagements, see that you have a good cause and a good conscience, and in due time God will plead your cause. (1.) See that you have a good cause; you must not intitle God to your petty quarrels and revenges: 1 Peter ii. 19, 20, ‘For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully; for what glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God:’ 1 Peter iii. 16, 17, ‘Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ: for it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.’ That epistle was penned in a suffering time. When you are exposed to hardships, be sure you are in God’s way. (2.) As the cause is good, so must your carriage be. Do not step out of God’s way for the greatest good. So many, if they may drive on their designs, they care not what they do, as if a good end would warrant them. Christ need not get up on the devil’s shoulders. God is now bound to avenge this, for ‘the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.’ In this evil day the righteous shall be saved. God saved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and delivered just Lot, 2 Peter ii.

Secondly, We have David’s prayer, ‘Leave me not to mine oppressors.’ He beggeth help against the oppression of the enemy. I might observe—

1. That it is no new thing to see innocent men troubled, oppressed, persecuted. He that could say, I have done judgment and justice, yet had his oppressors. As long as Satan wants not instruments, the people of God shall not want troubles; and the two seeds will never be reconciled. Therefore we should not censure the oppressed, and those that are fallen under the displeasure of men; and the oppressed themselves should not wonder at it—wicked men do but after their kind.

247

2. That to be left of God under the oppression of wicked men is a grievous calamity, and earnestly to be deprecated.

[1.] When are we said outwardly and visibly to be left by God under the oppression of wicked men?

(1.) When he taketh off the restraints of his providence, and the hedge of his protection is broken down, and lets loose the enemy upon us, and we are left in the power of their hands: Dan. i. 2, 'The Lord gave the king of Judah into his hands.'

(2.) When he doth not comfort us in such a condition, particularly when God's assistance is not vouchsafed. Sometimes he doth so: 2 Cor. i. 4, 'Who comforts us in all our tribulations.' At other times all is dark: Ps. lxxiv. 9, 'We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.'

(3.) When he doth not direct us, and show us our duty: Ps. cxliii. 10, 'Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God, thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness.' It was a time when his enemies prevailed over him. Now, if God hide counsel from us, we grope at noonday.

(4.) When he doth not support us. Sometimes this, Ps. cxxxviii. 3, 'In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul;' and Ps. xciv. 18, 'When I said my foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up;' Ps. lxxiii. 23, 'Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me up by my right hand.' David prayeth, Put me not into their power, do not let loose 'the reins; thou hast hindered them hitherto. It is thy mercy that all this while I have not been given up as a prey to their teeth; they want not malice and a will to take vengeance to the uttermost.

[2.] It is a grievous calamity.

(1.) It is a hard thing to be left to the will and lusts of men. David was in a strait; he chose rather to fall into the Lord's hands than into the hands of men: 2 Sam. xxiv. 14, 'I am in a great strait; let me now fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great, and not into the hand of man.' Men are revengeful, proud, insolent: wicked men will soon exceed their commission: Zech. i. 15, 'And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction;' Deut. xxxii. 27, 'Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this.' God speaketh after the manner of men.

(2.) It is a great mark of our Father's displeasure when he withdraweth, hideth counsel from us, leaveth us without support and comfort: Mat. ix. 15, 'And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.'

[3.] It is earnestly to be deprecated, not only as a grievous calamity, but as hoping for relief: 'I will riot leave you ὀρφανοὺς,' John xiv. 18, 'comfortless;' and Mat. xxviii. 20, 'Lo, I am with you to the end of the world.'

Use. Go, then, and represent your condition to God with humiliation, owning his anger, but with faith waiting for his help. Tell him what a prey you have been to Satan; desire him, if he withdraw his presence one way, he will manifest it in another, in comforting, counselling his own people; tell him your weakness, the enemies' malice, and implore his aid and assistance.

SERMON CXXXIII.

Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.—VER. 122.

IN this verse we may observe a petition—(1.) Metaphorically expressed; (2.) Literally explained.

In the former branch we have—(1.) The notion by which the help he expecteth from God is expressed: it is that of a surety, *be surety for thy servant*. (2.) The end and fruit of that help, or the terms on 'which he expecteth it, *for good*.

In the literal explanation we have—(1.) The matter of the petition, *let them not oppress me*. (2.) An argument insinuated from the quality and disposition of his enemies, *the proud*.

First, From the metaphorical notion, 'Be surety for thy servant,' we may observe this doctrine—

Doct. In deep distress we have leave and encouragement to desire God to interpose for his people's relief.

1. I shall open the notion of a surety.

2. Show why we have leave and encouragement to desire God to interpose.

First, For the notion of a surety. Symmachus, ἀναδέξαι μὲ εἰς ἀγαθὸν, receive me into thy protection for good. Septuagint, ἐκδέξαι τε δοῦλόν σου, *suscipe servum tuum*. It is a phrase taken from men when they are sureties for a debtor, to take him out of the hands of a cruel creditor who is ready to cast him into prison. And thus the prophet speaketh to God when he was in extreme danger, and could think of no help but God's.

1. It implieth the danger imminent; when a sergeant hath attached a man, and he is ready to go to prison, and there is no means for him to escape, unless somebody be his surety to answer all the challenges and demands of the law. In this sense Hezekiah used it: Isa. xxxviii. 14, 'I am oppressed; undertake for me.' He spake it when he was summoned to the grave, to pay the debt we all owe to

nature: I am like a poor debtor called to pay my debt speedily; therefore, Lord, be my pledge, deliver me out of this danger. So doth David here, when the proud were cruelly set upon his destruction. We are driven to God alone, and beat to the throne of grace by our miseries; yea, God lets the affairs of his people run on to loss and ruin, till we be in the condition of a debtor going to prison; he reserveth himself for such occasions till brought nigh to utter ruin, and all other inferior reliefs fail. And we must be content it should be so; for there is no use of a surety till we are attached. Imminent danger giveth notice that the Lord is coming.

2. That this distress and misery cometh as a debt respecting God's laws and the higher court, where all things are decreed and sentenced before they are executed in the world, so it is a debt that must be paid, and distress is God's arrest. God is compared to a creditor, Luke vii. 41; therefore the miseries of God's people are expressed by chains, stocks, prisons, fetters, words that relate to a judicial proceeding. To chains: Lam. iii. 7, 'He hath made my chain heavy.' To stocks: Job xiii. 27, 'Thou puttest my feet into the stocks.' To a prison: Ps. cxlii. 7, 'Bring my soul out of prison.' To fetters: Job xxxvi. 8, 'And if they be bound in fetters, and holden in cords of afflictions.' To a debt that must be paid, so is sin considered with respect to its punishment, Mat. vi. 12; Luke xi. 4, 'Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.' God puts the bond in suit, the instruments are but as sergeants and officers to demand of us satisfaction for breach of covenant with God. They think not so, neither doth their evil heart mean so; but so it is in God's purpose. When you are in trouble God hath committed you to prison, and there is no coming out without submission and humiliation, urging the satisfaction of Christ. You are sent thither by God's authority, and there is no getting out without his leave.

3. That the party is insolvent and undone unless some course be taken to satisfy the creditor; he cannot help himself by his own wisdom and strength out of the danger. The debtor in the Gospel had nought to pay, Mat. xviii. 25. Why else should we look after a surety: Job xvii. 3, 'Put me in a surety with thee: who is he that will strike hands with me?' Man is not able to stand alone under the weight of his afflictions; it is a burden too heavy for us to bear. We have no might, 2 Chron. xx. 12. God's people are often brought into such a case. When the principal is not *solvendo*, the surety answereth. We are weak, but he is strong; we are not able to subsist. They exceed us in carnal advantages; if force be to be resisted by force, they will easily overcome us, unless another that is stronger than we undertake for us.

4. That the surety taketh upon him the debt of the principal person, and is to be responsible for it. God hath taken our obligation upon himself, to pay our debts, to oppose himself against all our wrongs. He will take our cause as his own: Ps. ix. 4, 'For thou hast maintained my right and my cause;' and in his own time and manner will show it to the world, and justify us against our enemies. Oh! how should our hearts rejoice in this, that he will be the party responsible, make our cause his own, and be liable to the suit as a debtor is to the creditor!; He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye, Zech. ii. 8; 'He that despiseth you, despiseth me;' 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou

me?' Acts ix. 4; and Isa. lxiii. 8, 'And he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so he was their saviour.'

5. God is a sufficient surety. Here we may consider two things—the satisfaction of Christ, and the power of God's providence; in respect of both, which he is a pledge and surety every way sufficient for our comfort, safety, and deliverance.

[1.] I would not leave out Christ's satisfaction, though it lie not so full in this text; for as God hath a hand in all our sufferings, and all our affairs are determined in a higher court, this satisfaction is necessary to answer the controversy and quarrel of God's justice against us. Thus Christ the second person is ἐμφατικῶς, our surety: Heb. vii. 22, 'Christ is the surety of a better testament.' There is a double sort of surety—by way of caution and satisfaction, as sureties in case of debt and sureties for good behaviour; the one for what is past, the other for what is to come. The example of the one we have in Paul for Onesimus, Philem. 18, 'If he hath wronged or owed thee ought, put it upon my account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, and I will repay it.' An example of the other we have in Judah for Benjamin: Gen. xliii. 9, 'I will be surety for him; at mine hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever.' In both these respects Christ is a surety; he is our surety as a surety undertaketh for another to pay his debt; and he is our surety as he hath undertaken that his redeemed ones shall keep God's laws, be carried safe to heaven. Of his suretyship by way of caution we. speak now. Though Theodoret understand that in the text, Undertake for me that I shall keep thy laws; but it is more proper to consider the speech as it referreth to the payment of our debt by virtue of this suretyship. Solomon hath assured us, Prov. xi. 15, that he that is surety for another shall smart for it, or be broken and bruised. The same word is used concerning Christ, Isa. liii. 10. He was our surety, and was bruised and broken, suffered what we should have suffered. We have a right to appear to God's justice, but[12] our surety having made a full satisfaction for us, God will not exact the debt twice—of the surety and the principal. When the ram was taken Isaac was let go: Job xxxiii. 24, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom.' Well, then, as our punishment is a due debt to God's justice, the Lord Christ undertaketh or is become a surety for us; not only our advocate to plead our cause, but our surety to pay our debt; from a judge become a party, and bound to pay what we owe: Isa. liii. 4, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs.'

[2.] The power of God's providence. If God undertake for us, his bail is sufficient; none of our enemies can resist his almighty power, surely he is able to deal with our enemies: Isa. xxiii. 4, 'Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle?' They are matter to feed the fire, not to quench it. He rescueth us just as going to prison. If he, put himself a pledge between us and our enemies, he will defeat all their oppositions and machinations against us, and stand between us and danger, as an able bail or surety doth between the creditor and poor debtor. Well, then, suretyship, as it

12 Qu. 'to appeal to God's justice, that'?—ED.

noteth our necessity, so God's engagement, and his ability and faithfulness to do what he undertaketh. We must set God against the enemies: Isa. li. 13, 'And forgettest the Lord thy maker, who hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth; and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy; and where is the fury of the oppressor?' Dan. iii. 17, 'Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.' We have the Almighty to be oar saviour and protector, why are you afraid of a man? God against man is great odds, if we had faith to see it: man is mortal, God is immortal; man is a poor weak creature, but God is almighty; what is he not able to do for us? Surely he will not leave his friends in the lurch; his power is such that he is able to keep us safe and sound.

251

Secondly, The reasons why we have leave and encouragement to desire God to interpose.

1. From God's covenant, where in the general there is a mutual engaging to be each other's. In our several capacities we engage to stand by God and own his cause, and God is engaged to stand by us. We make over ourselves, bodies, souls, interests, all to God. God, *quantus quantus est*, as great as he is, is all ours; therefore, if he be ours, we may pray him to appear for us, and own us in our distress and trouble. Our friend is a friend in distress. A gracious heart, by virtue of this mutual and interchangeable indenture, appears for God, and taketh his cause, though never so hated, as its own: 'The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me,' Ps. vi. 9. We are his witnesses, Isa. xliii. 10. Surely it is too high a word for the creature; but God taketh our cause as his, is surety for us; by virtue of the general tenor of the covenant he is our God, *jure venit in auxilium nostrum*, his covenant engageth him to undertake for us. More particularly God undertaketh to defend and maintain his people; as to be a rewarder, so to be a defender: Gen. xv. 1, 'I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' And Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'For the Lord is a sun and a shield.' This defence is sometimes expressed, with respect to the violence of assaults in the world, by the notion of a shield. So, with respect to the process of the law, by the notion of a surety; Isa. lii. 3, we have the term of a redeemer. So that we have leave to pray him to fulfil his covenant engagement.

2. God's affection is such that he will refuse no office that may be for his people's comfort. We are often dissuaded from suretyship, especially for strangers, by the wise man, with great vehemency and in stance: Prov. vi. 1, 2, 'My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, thou art snared with the words of thy mouth;' Prov. xi. 15, 'He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it;' Prov. xvii. 18, 'A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend;' Prov. xx. 16, 'Take his garment that is surety for a stranger;' Prov. xxii. 26, 27, 'Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts: if thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take the bed from under thee?' and in other places. Our pity is stirred towards a man that is like to be undone and ruined; therefore there is such dissuading from suretyship. And hath not God a greater pity over the afflictions of his people? He pities the afflictions of them that suffer most justly, yea, far below their desert: Judges x. 16, 'His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel;' 2 Kings xiv. 26, 'For the Lord saw

the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter; for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel.' How much more will he pity them that are unjustly oppressed of men! Acts vii. 34, 'I have seen the afflictions of my people which is in Egypt, and have heard their groanings, and am come down to deliver them.' His bowels worketh; God loveth his people better than they love themselves. *fide-jube, Domme, pro servo*.

252

3. Our relation to him: I am thy servant, and I know thou art a good master; and he is our sovereign Lord, and therefore hath under taken to provide for us: the master was to be the servant's *patronus*. God hath found us work, and he will find us defence. This the argument of the text, 'Be surety for thy servant.' We are employed in his work, engaged in his cause. If a rich man set a poor man at work, as to dig such a ditch, if he be afterwards troubled for it, the rich man is concerned to bear him out: Ps. cxvi. 16, 'O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid.' Whilst we are engaged about our master's business, and in his work, he is engaged to protect us, and bear us out in it.

4. Our very running to him, and committing ourselves into his hands, is an engaging God: Ps. lxxxvi. 2, 'Preserve my soul, for I am holy, O thou my God; save thy servant that trusteth in thee;' Ps. x. 14, 'The poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.' Employ God, and find him work; he will not fail to do what he is intrusted with: Ps. lvii. 1, 'Be merciful unto me, God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wing will I make my refuge, until these calamities be over-past.' God taketh it well that we should make bold with him in this kind, and tell him how we trust him, and expect relief from him. Nothing is so dishonourable to God, nor vexatious to us, as the disappointment of trust. An ingenuous man will not fail his friend that doth trust and rely upon him, much less will a faithful God fail those that look to him, and depend upon him for help.

Use. Advice to us what we should do in our deep distresses and troubles; when able to do nothing for ourselves, God will be surety, that is, make our cause his own.

1. As your matters depend in a higher court, and with respect to your own guilt and sin, which hath cast you into these troubles, acknowledge your debt, but look upon Christ as your surety, who gave himself a ransom for us. The controversy between God and us must be taken up by submission on our parts, for God is an enemy that cannot be overcome, but must be reconciled. The way is not to persist in the contest, and stand it out, but beg terms of peace for Christ's sake: 2 Chron. vi. 38, 39, 'If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul, then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling-place, their prayers and supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee;' Job v. 8, 'I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause.'

2. As your danger lieth with men, acknowledge your impotency. but consider who is your surety, and will take your part against the instruments that have had a hand in your trouble.

[1.] God, who hath such a pity over his suffering servants, is ready ever to do them good: Ps. xxxv. 1, 'Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me; fight against them that fight against me.' He is in such full relation, and so fast bound to them, that they may not be weary and impatient and swallowed up of despair, he will interpose. God seeth our sufferings, heareth our groans, suffereth together with us, and is afflicted in all our afflictions. Believe it assuredly that he will take the matter into his own hand, and be the party responsible: Ps. cxl. 12, 'I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.' Woe be to them that would not have God for their party, joined in the cause of the afflicted. God hath given assurance of his protection not by words only, but by deeds: Prov. xxii. 23, 'The Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.' He hath passed his word, and he will do it: Prov. xxiii. 11, 'For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.' It is his title, Isa. li. 22, 'Thus saith thy Lord, the Lord and thy God, that pleadeth the cause of his people;' not by a verbal or local, but a real and active plea: Ezek. xxxviii. 22, 'And I will plead against him with pestilence, and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and the people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hail stones, fire and brimstone.' And Isa. l. 8, 'He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together; who is mine adversary? let him come near to me;' that is, let him join issue with me, commence his suit in law. We should be confident upon God's undertaking: Jer. l. 34, 'Their redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his name; he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land.' It is a great ease in affliction to commit our cause unto God, and put our affairs into his hand.

[2.] God, who hath such power; we need not fear any opposite if God be our surety: Ps. xxvii. 1, 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?' Ps. xlvi. 1, 2, 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;' a resolution to adhere to God and his truth whatever cometh. If they be mighty, God is mightier; if they be crafty, God is wiser. It is a great crime to fear men so as not to trust in God; it is a great sin to fear men so as not to fear God. When we comply with them in things displeasing to God, this is to set men above God.

Secondly, We come to the limitation, end, or fruit of this suretyship, 'For good.' There are three expositions of this clause, as noting the end, the cause, the event. (1.) Undertake for me, *ut sim bonus et justus*; so Rabbi Arama on the place, Be surety for me that I may be good. Theodoret expounds it, Undertake that I shall make good my resolution of keeping thy law. He that enjoineth, under taketh. Though we have precepts and promises, without God's undertaking we shall never be able to perform our duty. (2.) 'In good,' so some read it. God would not take his part in an evil cause. To commend a wrong cause to God's protection is to provoke him to hasten our punishment, to make us serve under our oppressors. But when we have a good cause and a good conscience, he

will own us. We cannot expect he should maintain us and bear us out in the devil's service, wherein we have entangled ourselves by our own sin. (3.) 'For good;' so it is often rendered: Ps. lxxxvi. 17, 'Show me a token for good;' Jer. xiv. 11, 'Pray not for this people for good.' So Neh. xiii. 31, 'Remember me, O my God, for good.' So here, 'Be surety for thy servant for good.'

Doct. We should only desire the interposing of God's providence so as may be for good to us.

I shall first give you the reasons, and then give you some rules concerning this good here mentioned.

Reason 1. Because then we pray according to God's undertaking: Ps. xxxiv. 10, 'But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing;' they may want food, want raiment, want many things, but they shall want no good thing: Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'No good thing will he withhold.' He may keep us low and bare, withhold many temporal mercies from us, feed us from hand to mouth, and short commons may be sweet and wholesome, and deny to give us larger revenues and in comes. If they were good for us, we should have them. God with holds these things so as our need and good doth require: Jer. xxiv. 5, 'Whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.' Their captivity was for good.

Reason 2. Because then we pray according to the new nature; old nature would have ease, the new nature would have grace; the flesh would be pleased, but the spirit would be profited; and God hears not the voice of the flesh, but the spirit in prayer: Rom. viii. 27, 'He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.'

Let me give you some rules.

1. This good is not always the good of the flesh, not always the good of prosperity. Sometimes the good of prosperity may be good: Prov. xxiv. 25, 'But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.' A good blessing shall come upon them that plead God's cause against the wicked. There is the blessing of prosperity-good and adversity-good. All good is more or less, so as it cometh near or less near the chiefest good; therefore that is good that tendeth to make us spiritually better, more like to God, and capable of communion with him. Lam. iii. 27, 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.' That is good which conduceth to our everlasting good.

2. God knoweth what is better for us[13] than we do ourselves. Wo ask a knife wherewith to cut ourselves. It would be the greatest misery if God should always carve out our condition according to our own fancy; we would soon pray ourselves into a snare if our will were the rule of our prayers,

13 Qu. 'what is good for us better'?—ED.

and ask that which would be cruelty in God to grant. I will give you an instance in Lot, Gen. xix. 17, 18, ‘Make haste, escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed: I cannot, saith he, escape to the mountain, behold now this city is near, it is but a little one, and my soul shall live.’ Lot presenteth his own fancy to God’s counsel and choice for him: this little place was in the plain; he was persuaded the shower of brimstone would overtake him before he got thither. Often it is thus with us; though God should command and we obey, we lift up our will above his, and doat upon our own fancies, and will prescribe to God, think it is better to live by sense than by faith. This mountain was the weaker border of the plain.[14] Now this was weakness in Lot surely. God, that had taken him out of Sodom by the hand of his angels, stricken the Sodomites with blindness, which was an instance of God’s great power and goodness to him. Now compare the 17th and 18th verses with the 30th verse, ‘And Lot went out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, he and his two daughters with him, for he feared to dwell in Zoar; and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.’ Mark here, when God biddeth him go to the mountain, then he goeth to Zoar; when God gave him leave to tarry in Zoar, then he goes and dwells in the mountain: he was afraid in Zoar, when he saw the horrible desolation of all the country about it. Now see the ill success of his own choice, and how badly we provide for ourselves: a little time will show us our sin and folly: his abode in the mountain drew him to incest. Another instance: Hosea xiii. 11, ‘I gave them a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.’ God may let things succeed with us to our hurt: ‘If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us;’ 1 John v. 14. God is a God of wisdom, he knoweth certainly what will be good for us. He is a God of bowels, and loveth us dearly, and will certainly cast all things for the best; therefore God is to be judge both for time and kind of our deliverance, otherwise we may meet with wrath in every condition, whether we want or have our will; but if we refer it to him, we shall never want what is best for us. The shepherd must choose our pastures, whether lean or fat, bare or full grounds. The child is not to be governed by his fancy, but the father’s discretion; nor the sick man by his own fancy, but the physician’s skill: our will is not the chief reason of all things.

255

3. That which is not good may be good, and though for the present we see it not, yet we shall see it; though not good in its nature, it may be good in its fruit: Rom. viii. 28, ‘We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God;’ a little faith and a little patience will discover it. As poisonous ingredients in a medicine, take them singly, and they are destructive; but as tempered with other things by the hands of a skilful physician, so they are whole some and useful: Heb. xii. 11, ‘No affliction for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous.’ The rod is a sour thing for the present, but wait a little, this bitter root may yield sweet fruit: God can so over rule it in his providence. So Ps. cxix. 71, ‘It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.’ Ask a man under the cross, Is it good to feel the lashes of God’s correcting hand? No; but

14 There seems to be a misprint in this sentence.—ED.

when he hath been exercised, and found lust mortified, the world crucified, and gotten evidences of God's favour, then it is good that I have been afflicted.

4. This good is not to be determined by feeling, but by faith: Ps. lxxiii. 1, 'Yet God is good to Israel, and to such as are of a clean heart.' God is good to his people, however he seem to deal hardly with them: sense judgeth it ill, but faith saith it is good; it seeth a great deal of love in pain and smart. There is such a difference between faith and sense as there was between Elisha and his servant, 2 Kings vi. 15, 16; the servant saw the host of the enemies, but he did not see the fiery chariots and horsemen that were for his help; Elisha saw both. So believers see not only the bitterness

that is in God's chastenings, but the sweet fruits in the issue. Faith can look at the pride and power of wicked men as a vain thing, when they are in the height of their power and greatness: Job v. 3, 'I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his habitation;' that is, prophetically, not passionately; foretelling evil, not wishing it. When they were taking root, as themselves and other worldly men thought, I judged him unhappy, foretold his end and destruction. There is much of the spirit of prophecy in faith. When others applaud, make little gods of them, he looketh through all their beauty, riches and honour: Ps. xcii. 7, 'When the wicked spring as the grass, and all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.' Grass will wither and dry up of its own accord, especially when there is a worm at the root. Their very prosperity, as it ferments their lusts, and hardeneth their hearts, is a means to draw on their destruction: Ps. xxxix. 5, 'Man in his best estate is vanity.' Then, when they seem to have all things under their feet, who could harm them? so that none dare open the mouth, move the wing, or peep; yet God can easily blast and whip them with an unseen scourge.

5. Good is of several sorts, temporal, spiritual, eternal.

[1.] Temporal good. Cross accidents conduce to that: Gen. l. 20, 'Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good; to bring to pass as it is this day, and to save much people alive.' The Egyptians and themselves had wanted a preserver if Joseph had not been sold and sent into Egypt. If a man were to go to sea in a voyage upon which his heart was much set, but the ship is gone before he cometh, but after he heareth that all that were in the ship are drowned, then he would say, This disappointment was for good. As Crassus' rival in the Parthian war was intercepted and cut off by the craft of the barbarians, had no reason to stomach his being refused. Many of us have cause to say, *Periissem nisi periissem*—we had suffered more if we had suffered less. In the story of Joseph there is a not able scheme and draught of providence. He is cast into a pit, thence drawn forth and sold to the Ishmaelites, by them sold into Egypt, and sold again. What doth God mean to do with poor Joseph? He is tempted to adultery; refusing the temptation, he is falsely accused, kept for a long time in ward and duress. Ail this is against him; who would have thought that in the issue this should be turned to his good? that the prison had been the way to preferment, and that by the pit he should come to the palace of the king of Egypt, and exchange his parti-coloured coat for a royal robe? Thus in temporal things we get by our losses, and God chooseth better for us than we

could have chosen for ourselves. Let God alone to his undertaking, and he will manage our affairs better than we looked for.

[2.] Good spiritual: Heb. xii. 10, 'For 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.' What do we call profit? The good things of this world, and the great mammon which so many worship? No; some better thing, some spiritual and divine benefit, a participation of God's holiness. Then we profit when we grow in grace and are more god-like, when we are more concerned as a soul than a body. It is a good exchange to part with outward comforts for inward holiness. If God take away our peace, and give us peace of conscience, we have no cause to complain. If our outward wants be recompensed with the abundance of inward grace, 1 Cor. iv. 10, and we have less of the world that we may have the more of God, and be kept poor that we may be rich in faith, James ii. 5, 6; if we have a healthy soul in a sickly body, as Gains had, 3 John 2; if an aching head maketh way for a better heart,—doth not God deal graciously and lovingly with us?

257

[3.] Our eternal good. Heaven will make amends for all that we endure here. This mainly is intended in Rom. viii. 28, 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' And then in the 29th and 30th verses, he presently bringeth in the golden chain, 4 Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, he justified; and those whom he justified, them he also glorified.' So 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;' it shall either hasten or secure our glorious estate. A man may lose ground by a temptation, his external good may be weakened, his soul suffereth loss; but this warneth him of his weakness, and quickeneth him to stand upon his watch, and to look up more to Christ for strength against it. Or he may be cut off, and perish in the affliction; but then his glorious estate cometh in possession.

6. That may be good for the glory of God which doth not conduce to our personal benefit; and the glory of God is our great interest, John xi. 27, 28, 'Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour, Father, glorify thy name. Then there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.' There was the innocent inclination of his human nature, 'Father, save me from this hour;' and the overruling sense of his duty, or the obligation of his office, 'But for this cause came I to this hour.' We are often tossed and tumbled between inclinations of nature and conscience of duty; but in a gracious heart it prevaileth above the desire of our own comfort and satisfaction: the soul is cast for any course that God shall see fittest for his glory. Nature would be rid of trouble, but grace submitteth all interests to God's honour; that should be dearer to us than anything else; were it not selfishness and want of zeal, that would be our greatest interest.

SERMON CXXXIV.

Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.—VER. 122.

USE. It informeth us what reason there is to pray and wait with submission to the will of God. God will answer us according to our trouble, not always according to our will. He is wiser than we, for he knoweth that our own will would undo us. If things were in our own hands, we would never see an ill day, and in this mixed estate that would not be good for us. But all weathers are necessary to make the earth fruitful, rain as well as sunshine. We must not mistake the use and efficacy of prayer. We are not as sovereigns to govern the world at our pleasure, but as supplicants humbly to submit our desires to the supreme Being. Not to command as dictators, and obtrude any model upon God, but to solicit as servants: 'Do good in thy good pleasure to Zion,' Ps. li. 18. If we would have things done at our pleasure, we should be the judges, and God only would have the place of the executioner. Our wills would be the supreme and chief reason of all things. But this God cannot endure; therefore beg him to do good, but according to his own good pleasure.

258

1. Let us submit to God for the mercy itself, in what kind we shall have it, whether temporal, spiritual, or eternal. If God see ease good for us, we shall have it; if deliverance good for us, we shall have it, Ps. cxxviii. 2; or give us strength in our souls, or hasten our glory. We should be as a die in the hand of providence, to be cast high or low, as God pleaseth: 1 Sam. iii. 18, 'It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.'

2. Let us submit for the time. Though Jesus loved Lazarus, yet he abode still two days in the same place when he heard he was sick, John xi. 6. It is not for want of love if he doth not help us presently, nor want of power. Christ may dearly love us, yet delay to help us, even in extremity, till a fit time come, wherein his glory may shine forth, and the mercy be more conspicuous. He doth not slight us, though he doth delay us; he will choose that time which maketh most for his own glory. Submit to God's dispensations, and in due time you shall see a reason of them.

3. Let us submit for the way and means. We know not what God is a-doing: John xiii. 6, 7, 'Then cometh he to Simon Peter, and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not, but thou shalt know hereafter.' No wonder we are much in the dark, if we consider, first, that the worker of these works is 'Wonderful in counsel and excellent in working,' Isa. xxviii. 29; infinitely beyond politicians, whose projects and purposes are often hidden from us; therefore much more his. Secondly, That the ways of his working are very strange and imperceptible, for he maketh things out of nothing: Rom. iv. 17, 'And calleth those things that be not as though they were;' one contrary out of another, as light out of darkness, 2 Cor. iv. 6, meat out of the eater, enemies catched in their own snare. Thirdly, That his end in working is not to satisfy our sense and curiosity: Isa. xlviii. 7, 'They are created now, and not from the beginning, even before the day when thou heardest them not, lest thou shouldest say, Behold,

I knew them;' Isa. xlii. 16, 'I will bring the blind by a way they knew not; I will lead them' in paths that they have not known.' He chooseth such a way as may leave enemies to harden their hearts; Micah iv. 12, 'But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel; for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.'

Secondly, I now come to the literal explanation; and there we have—

1. The evil deprecated, *oppress me*.

2. The persons likely to inflict it, *the proud*.

First, The evil deprecated, 'Let not the proud oppress me.' The Septuagint, μὴ συκοφαντησάτωσάν με ὑπερήφανοι, let them not calumniate me. The Septuagint takes this word for oppression or violent injustice, and therein are followed by St Luke iii. 14, xix. 8.

Doct. Oppression is a very grievous evil, and often deprecated by the people of God.

1. I shall show you what oppression is. It is an abuse of power to unjust and uncharitable actions. That it is an abuse of power appeareth by the object of it, who are those that are usually oppressed; that is, either the poor and needy: Deut. xxiv. 14, 'Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of the strangers within thy gates.' The fatherless and the widow are mentioned: Jer. vii. 6, 'Ye shall not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.' The stranger: Zech. vii. 10, 'And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor;' and Exod. xxii. 21-23, 'Thou shalt neither vex a stranger nor oppress him, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child; if thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all to me, I will surely hear their cry.'

2. The subject or agent by whom it is practised—(1.) 'The proud;' the mighty, rich, great man; at least comparatively, in regard to the wronged party: Eccles. iv. 1, 'And on the side of their oppressors there was power, but the oppressed had no comforter;' Job xxxv. 9, 'By reason of the multitude of oppressors they make the oppressed cry, and by reason of the arm of the mighty.' (2.) The base and mean, when they get power into their hands, to oppress the rich, noble, and honourable: Isa. iii. 5, 'And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour; the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honour able.' It is commonly more insolent and cruel and contemptuous and despiteful: Prov. xxviii. 3, 'A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain that leaveth no food.' When men do unjust and uncharitable actions, as when men bear it proudly or insolently towards them, throwing them out of their riches, denying them the liberty of their service because it is in the power of their hands, or taking advantage of their low condition to run over them, or making an advantage of their necessity and want of skill: Hosea xii. 7, 'He is a merchant, the balance of deceit is in his hand; he loveth to oppress;' or prejudice their testimony to the truth by our credit and esteem in the church, rendering them so weak or wicked, factious or foolish, as not to be regarded.

3. This is a grievous evil; it is so in itself, and may be specially aggravated as to cases.

[1] It is grievous in itself, as it is so odious to God, as being a perversion of the end of his providence. Those that excel in any quality are appointed for the protection and support of the weak and indigent. God gave them their wealth and parts and power and credit and greatness, to the end they might comfort, counsel, defend, and do good to those that want these things. Now when they make no oilier use of their power than lions and bears do, to mischief others by it, they do evil because it is in the power of their hands, Micah ii. 1. Power, if men have not a great tenderness of conscience and fear of God. is an unwieldy wilful thing, degenerates into oppression: Isa. x. 14, 15, ‘There, was none that moved the wing, or opened the month, or peeped. Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against, them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself as if it were no wood.’ Therefore he went on to oppress and tyrannise in the world, because none durst to oppose him. Power needs much balance to temper and allay it.

[2.] It is so offensive to his people, and burthensome to them: Eccles. vii. 7, ‘Oppression maketh a wise man mad;’ it shaketh and discomposeth those of the best temper, makes them pray and weep. and cry before the Lord: Eccles. iv. 1, ‘So I returned and considered all the oppressions under the sun, and beheld the tears of such as are oppressed.’ When you lay such heavy loads upon them that they are not able to bear it, but cry to God to right them.

[3.] The evil itself, oppression. It is not only theft, but murder. These expressions we have: Isa. iii. 13, 14, ‘Ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye. that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? l hat is, cause them by your hard usage to pine away? So Micah iii. 1-3, ‘And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel, is it not for you to know judgment, who hate the good, and love the evil, who pluck off their skin and their flesh from off their bones? who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the cauldron?’ It is in God’s account human butchery and murder, beyond simple slaughter, as they make them die a lingering death.

[4.] It is especially aggravated if they be God’s servants oppressed for religion: Ps. xii. 5, ‘For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy; now will I arise, saith the Lord, I will set, them in safety, from him that puffeth at him.’ The proud persecutor doth little think of the godly, that any power he hath can do anything to help him; therefore mocketh at all his hopes: therefore, when God hath exercised the godly for a while, he will arise, Ac. I say the sin is aggravated by the innocency, the holiness, the usefulness of the party oppressed, when titled to glorify God, and do service to the public, and disabled to the prejudice of both.

[5.] It is the highest impiety to fetch power and advantage from any ordinance of God to commit it: John xix. 10, 11, ‘Then said Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that

I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above 1; therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.' Courts of justice, that should be sanctuaries and places of refuge to oppressed innocency, they make slaughter houses and shops of cruelty. When pretexts of laws and justice are used to colour the oppression and persecution of innocent useful per sons, this makes it more odious in the sight of God.

261

Use 1. Oh, pity the oppressed! Job vi. 14, 'To him that is afflicted, pity should he showed from his friend; hut he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.' The men of Keilah thought of delivering up David, because they feared not God, 1 Sam. xxiii. 11, 12. But men have no fear of God, but too much fear of men. When God is angry, God will suffer none to help: Ps. lxxxviii. 18, 'Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness;' Job xii. 5, 'He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.' Sensuality will make us forget the afflictions of others: Amos vi. 4-6, 'They lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and calves out of the midst of the stall; that chaunt to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments, but they are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph.' Scruples of conscience through difference in religion: John iv. 9, 'How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest water of me?' Therefore we should pity others; we have God's example: 2 Cor. vii. 6, 'God that comforteth those that are cast down.'

Use 2. Keep from oppression; let us be far from this sin. Samuel professeth his innocency: 1 Sam. xii. 3, 4, 'Behold here I am, witness against me before the Lord and his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received a bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? And they said, Thou hast not defrauded nor oppressed us.'

Motives.

1. God will right the wrongs of the oppressed: Prov. xxii. 22, 23, 'Rob not the poor, because he is poor, neither oppress the afflicted in the gate; for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them;' Prov. xxiii. 11, 'For their redeemer is mighty, he shall plead their cause with thee.' It belongeth to him as supreme judge and mighty potentate: Eccles. v. 8, 'If thou seest the oppression of the poof, and violent perverting 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.' Who can break the power of the greatest? The poor and indigent have none to own them, to resent the things done unto them, but God, who is the supreme Lord, will not fail to own them.

2. Consider the injustice of such dealing, as being contrary to that rule of reason, *Quod tibi non vis fieri, alteri ne feceris*. Every man should do as he would have others do to him. Put yourself in their case. Take this rule quite away, and there is nothing so false, bad, cruel, that you would not

be drawn to think or say or do against your brother. Uncharitableness, and want of sympathy with us in our troubles, much more insulting over us in our miseries, we look on it with detestation; and shall we oppress and afflict others when we have power so to do? Those that profess themselves Christians should be far from this sin. Means.

1. The fear of God should bear rule in our hearts: Job xxxi. 23, 'For destruction from God was a terror to me; and by reason of his highness I could not endure;' Lev. xxv. 17, 'Ye shall not, therefore, oppress one another, but thou shalt fear thy God; for I am the Lord your God.' We should be afraid to do them injury, as if a strong party, able to repay injuries, were ready to be avenged upon us for it.

2. Take heed of envy, covetousness, pride, revenge; these are ill-counsellors. Ahab envies Naboth's vineyard, and covets it, and that put him upon oppressing him. So Hosea xii. 7, 'He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand; he loveth to oppress.' So take heed of pride: Ps. x. 2, 'The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor.' So when persons are of a revengeful temper, it will put them upon oppression and persecution for every fancied or supposed affront offered to them: the enemy and avenger go together, Ps. viii. 2.

3. Think of changes, that pride may not be without a curb, nor affliction without a comfort. It is the proud oppress, who are drunk with their wealth and outward prosperity. The Lord's people are not troubled by humble souls, that are sensible of their mutableness and frailty, but by those who little think of these things, and how hard it fareth with them that fear God.

Secondly, Here are the persons to inflict it, 'The proud.'

Doct. The proud are they that especially persecute the godly.

Who are the proud?

1. Generally those that obstinately stand it out against God and the methods of his grace: Neh. ix. 16, 'But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not unto thy commandments;' and ver. 29, 'Yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not to thy commandments;' Jer. xiii. 17, 'My soul shall weep in secret for your pride.'

2. More especially those that are too well conceited of themselves, seen by their affecting to meddle with things too high for them: Ps. cxxxi. 1, 'Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty, neither do I exercise myself in great matters, nor in things too high for me.' Murmur under crosses, quarrel with providences, finding fault with all God's sayings and doings, trust in themselves that they are righteous, Luke xviii. 14; scoff at others for their godliness: Ps. cxix. 51, the proud 'had me greatly in derision;' Ps. x. 2, 'The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor,' ready to brawl on all occasions; Prov. xxiii. 10, 'Only by pride cometh contention;' would have all to stoop to them, are stiff in their opinions, boasters, lessening the gifts of others, impatient of admonition.

3. The particular pride here mentioned, when men are high-minded, and trust in uncertain riches, drunk with their prosperity. So oppressing in their honour and greatness, as if they would trample all others under foot, and crush them at pleasure. These are merciless and pitiless, disdain the poor, whatsoever presence of God they have with them; we are filled with the scorning of them that are at ease.

SERMON CXXXV.

Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.—VER. 123.

IN the former verse, David spake as one under oppression, here he setteth forth his longing and waiting for deliverance. In the words we have—

1. The act of faith, together with the object of it; his eyes were to the salvation of God.

2. The defect and weakness of his faith, and God's delay, implied in the occasion of it, 'Mine eyes fail.'

3. The ground and support of his soul in this exercise, 'The word of thy righteousness.'

By salvation is meant temporal deliverance: his eyes were to his salvation; that is, he did with faith and patience wait for it. Bat in waiting, his eyes failed; that noteth some deficiency and weakness, but his support during all this was the word of God's righteousness; that word wherein God promised salvation and deliverance to them that are oppressed. And he calleth it the word of his righteousness, because he is one that kept it justly and faithfully; as if he had said, Surely God is righteous, and is no more liberal in promises than faithful in performing, therefore, though mine eyes even fail, yet I will keep looking and longing still for his salvation.

I begin with the ground of his faith, and the support of his soul, which is the word of promise.

Doct. That God's word, wherein he hath promised deliverance to his suffering servants, is a word of, righteousness.

There are three things in the promise—*Veritas, fidelitas, justitia*, fidelity, faithfulness, and righteousness.

1. *Veritas*, sincerity or truth in making the promise, according to which God doth really intend and mean to bestow what he promiseth; 'For God is not as man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' To lie is to speak a falsehood with an intention to deceive; this cannot be imagined of God. What need hath he to court a worm, or to mock and flatter us into a vain hope? What interest

can accrue to him thereby? Yea, the purity of his nature will not permit it: Titus i. 2, 'According to the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.' He will as soon cease to be God as cease to be true, for his truth is his nature, he is truth itself. Man, that is mutable, and hath an interest to promote by dissembling, may put on a false appearance, and speak what he never meaneth; but God cannot do so, for he is truth itself, essentially so in the abstract, can admit of no mixture, though creatures may. Light itself admitteth not of any darkness, but as it is in subjects, so it doth. But God is truth, and in him is no falsehood at all. Now, of all lies, a promissory lie is the worst; it is greater than an assertory lie. An assertory lie is when we speak of a thing past or present otherwise than it is. A promissory lie is when we promise a thing for time to come, which we never intend to perform. And this is the worse, because it doth not only pervert the end of speech, but defeateth another of that right which we seem to give him, in the thing promised; which is a further degree of injustice. Therefore we must take heed how, either directly or interpretatively, we ascribe such a lie to God. The apostle telleth us, 1 John v. 10, 'He that believeth not, maketh God a liar;' which is the highest dishonour you can cast upon him, which in manners and civility we would not offer to our equal, and which even a mean man would scorn to put up with at our hands. God hath made many promises, as that he will be with thee in six troubles, and in seven he will not forsake thee, Job. v. 19; that he will dispose of all things for the best to them that love him, Rom. viii. 28; that no good thing shall be wanting to them that fear him, Ps. xxxiv. 10. Doth not God mean as he saith? and dare we trust him no more? Your diffidence and drooping discouragements give him the lie, and you carry it so as if these were but words of course, without any intent to make them good.

264

2. *Fidelitas*. The next thing in the promise is faithfulness, and that referreth to the keeping of the promise. A man may be real in promising, he did not intend to deceive: but afterwards lie changeth his mind: there may be verity in making the promise, but there is not fidelity in keeping the promise. But God is faithful; hath he said, and shall he not do it? All the promises are 'Yea and Amen;' in Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. i. 20. God's word is not; 'Yea and Nay,' but 'Yea and Amen;' it doth riot say Yea to-day, and Nay to-morrow, but always Yea. So it is Amen, so it shall be; and this in Jesus Christ, on whose merit they are all founded, and who was the great instance of God's truth: for the great promise wherein God stood bound to the church was to send a Saviour to redeem the world; and if God hath made good this promise, surely this is a pledge that he will make good all the rest; for if he spared not his Son, he will not stick at other things.

3. There is *justitia*, righteousness; for this is righteousness, *jus suum cuique tribuere*, to give every one his right and his due. Now by promise, another man cometh to have a right in the thing promised; therefore justice requireth that you should give him the right that accrueth to him by virtue of your promise. So God, *promittendo se fecit debitorem*, maketh himself a debtor by promise. It was his mercy and goodness to make the promise, but his justice bindeth him to make it good. This is often spoken of in scripture: 1 John i. 9, 'Faithful and just to forgive us our sins;' 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous

judge, shall give me at that day.' By his promise he is be come a debtor to us; he cannot go against his own word; his justice will not suffer him to change. It is a debt of grace indeed, but a debt it is which it is justice for God to pay. Thus you see how it is a word of righteousness.

Reason 1. Because God hath in his promises pawned his truth with the creature, and so given us an holdfast upon him. *Chirographa tua injiciebat tibi Domine.* Promises, as in a contract, are more than simple declarations, and bare assertions of what good he will do to us. With man it is one thing to say, This I purpose to do; another, This I promise to do. A promise addeth a new bond and obligation upon a man for fulfilling his word. An intimation or signification of God's will and purpose showeth the event will follow; but a promise doth riot only do that, but giveth us a right and claim to the things promised. Scripture prophecies will be fulfilled because of God's veracity; but scripture promises will be fulfilled, not because of his veracity, but his fidelity and justice. And the 'heirs of promise may have strong consolation by God's word and oath'—'two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie,' Heb. vi. 18. There is a greater obligation upon God to make it good.

265

Reason 2. Because none that ever depended upon God's word were disappointed; not one instance to the contrary: Ps. xviii. 30, 'The word of the Lord is tried; he is a buckler to all that trust in him.' Search the annals and records of time, and all experience hath found the word of God exactly true. If any build not upon it, it is because they are not acquainted with God, and the course of his proceedings: Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will trust in thee.' There is so little believing and trusting God upon his word, because they are men of no experience; otherwise they would find God punctual to his promise: 'Not one thing hath failed of all the good things the Lord your God spake concerning you,' Josh. xxiii. 14. He speaketh not only as his own observation, and the result of all his experiences, and that in a time when there was no room for dissembling: 'I go the way of all the earth,' but also 'you know in all your hearts, and all your souls;' and he repeateth it, 'Not one thing hath failed.' Unless you be impudent, you cannot deny it; try him, you have found support and relief hitherto.

Reason 3. Because God standeth much on the credit of his word. Heathens have acknowledged it to be the property of the gods, ἀληθεύειν καὶ εὐεργετεῖν; certainly the true God hath showed himself to the world in nothing so much as doing good and keeping promise: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name,' above all that is famed or spoken or believed of God, this is most conspicuous, as being punctual in keeping covenant and fulfilling promises. God hath ever stood upon that, of being tender of the honour of his truth in the eye of the world: therefore we should build securely upon the word of his righteousness.

Use 1. To bless God that we are upon such sure terms. All people that know there is a God, wait for some good things from him; but they are left to uncertain guesses, it may be they may have them, it may be not: but we have it under hand and seal, and have God's warrant for our hope, and

so deal with God upon sure terms. Well may we take up David's song, 'In God I will praise his word, in the Lord I will praise his word,' Ps. lvi. 10. It is twice repeated in that psalm: that is ground of rejoicing, that God will assure us aforehand what he will do for us. God might have dealt with man by way of dominion and command alone, without any signification of his goodness, and left us to blind guesses. Promises are the eruptions and overflows of God's love, he cannot stay till accomplishment, but will tell us aforehand what he is about to do for us, that we may know how to look for it.

266

Use 2. To exhort us to rest contented with God's word, and to take his promises as sure ground of hope. I shall show you how you should count it a word of righteousness; what is your duty; and that first you are to delight in the promise, though the performance be not yet, nor like to he for a good while: Heb. xi. 13, πεισθέντες καὶ ἀσπασάμενοι, being persuaded of them, they embraced them. Oh! how they hugged the promises at a distance, and said in their hearts, Oh, blessed promise! this will in time yield a Messiah: John viii. 56, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and saw it, and was glad.' You hold the blessing by the root, this will in time yield deliverance, Heb. vi. 18; not only yield comfort, but prove comfortable: Ps. cxix. 111, 'Thy testimonies I have taken for an heritage; for they are the rejoicing of my heart.' For your duty—

2. You are to rest confident of the truth of what God hath promised, and be assured that the performance will in time be: πεισθέντες, Heb. xi. 13. Faith is not a fallible conjecture, but a sure and certain grace: Rom. viii. 28, 'We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God.' So Ps. cxl 12, 'I know that God will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.' There is a firm persuasion; I know I shall find this to be a truth. Men who are conscionable and faithful in keeping their word are believed; yet, being men, they may lie: Rom. iii. 4, 'Let God be true, and every man a liar.' Every man is, or may be a liar, because of the mutableness of his nature; from interest he will not lie, but he can lie. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. Surely God cannot deceive, or be deceived. He never yet was worse than his word.

3. You are to take the naked promise for the ground of your hope, however it seem to be contradicted in the course of God's providence; when it is neither performed, nor likely to be performed, it is his word you go by, whatsoever his dispensations be. Many times there are no apparent evidences of God's doing what he hath said, yea, strong probabilities to the contrary. It is said, Rom. iv. 18, 'That Abraham against hope believed in hope,' παρ᾽ ἐλπίδα ἐπ᾽ ἐλπίδα. Abraham had the promise of a son, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; but there was no appearance of this in nature, or natural hope of a child, both he and Sarah being old: yet he believed. It is an antanaclasis, an elegant figure, having the form of a contradiction he goeth upon God's naked word. Then faith standeth upon its own basis and legs, which is not probabilities, but his word of promise, Everything is strongest upon its own basis, which God and nature have appointed.

For as the earth hangeth on nothing in the midst of the air, but there is its place, faith is seated most firmly on the word of God, who is able to perform what he saith.

4. This faith must conquer our fears and cares and troubles: Ps. cxii. 7, ‘He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.’ He must fix the heart without wavering: Ps. lvi. 4, ‘In God I will praise his word, in God have I put my trust: I will not fear what man can do unto rue.’ The force of faith is seen in calming our passions and sinful fears, which otherwise would weaken our reverence and respect to God.

5. Above all this, you are to glorify God publicly; not only in the quiet of your hearts, but by your carriage before others: John iii. 33, ‘Put to his seal that God is true.’ It is not said, Believed or professed, but, Put to his seal. We seal the truth of God as his witnesses when we confirm others in the faith and belief of the promises by our joyfulness in all conditions, patience under crosses, diligence in holiness, hope and comfort in great straits. Num. xx. 12, God was angry with Moses and Aaron, because ye ‘believe not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel.’ We are not only to believe God our selves, but to sanctify him in the eyes of others; as when the Thessalonians had received the word in much assurance, in much affliction, and much joy in the Holy Ghost, the apostle telleth them they were examples to all that believed in Achaia and Macedonia, 1 Thes. i. 5. The worthiness and generousness of our faith should be a confutation of our base fears, but a confirmation of the gospel. But we are so far from confirming the weak, that we offend the strong; and instead of being a confirmation to the gospel, we are a confutation of it.

Use 3. Reproof to us that we do no more build upon this word of righteousness.

1. Some count these vain words, and the comforts thence deduced fanatical illusions; and hopes and joys, fantastical impressions: Ps. xxii. 7, 8, ‘All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.’ Nothing so ridiculous in the world’s eye as trust or dependence or unseen comforts. Ungodly wits make the life of faith a sport and matter of laughter.

2. Some, though not so bad as the former, they may have more modesty, yet as little faith, since they are all for the present world, present delights, present temptations. With many, one thing in hand is more than the greatest promises of better things to come, 2 Tim. iv. 10; they have no patience. Afflictions are smart for the present: Heb. xii. 11, ‘No affliction for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous.’ Yea, they do not deal equally with God and man. If a man promise, they reckon much of that, *Qui petat, accipiet*, &c. They can tarry upon man’s security, but count God’s nothing worth. They can trade with a factor beyond seas, and trust all their estates in a man’s hand whom they have never seen; and yet the- word of the infallible God is of little regard and respect with them.

3. The best build too weakly on the promises, as appeareth by the prevalency of our cares and fears. If we did take God at his word, we would not be so soon mated with every difficulty: Heb. xiii 5, 6, ‘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 forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man can do unto me.’ There would be more resolution in trials, more hardness against troubles. Besides maintenance, there is protection in the promise. If we had faith to believe this, it would effectually quiet our minds in all our necessities and straits and perplexities. Man can do much, bring them low, even to a morsel of bread. We need not much desire the best things of the world, nor fear the worst; need not be covetous, nor fearful. Where faith is in any life and strength, it moderateth our desires and fears. It is an ill part of a believer to hang the head.

268

Secondly, From that clause, David’s eyes were to God’s salvation, that God’s word being passed his people do and must wait for the accomplishment of it. The lifting up of the eyes implies three things—faith, hope, and patience; all which do make up the duty of waiting for help and relief from God.

1. The lifting up the eyes implies faith and confident persuasion that God is ready and willing to help us: 2 Chron. xx. 12, ‘But our eyes are unto thee;’ Ps. cxxiii. 1, 2, ‘Unto thee I lift mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.’ The very lifting up of the bodily eye towards heaven is an expression of this inward trust: so David in effect saith, From thee, Lord, I expect relief, and the fulfilling of thy promises. So that there is faith in it, that faith which is the evidence of things not seen. How great soever the darkness of our calamities be, though the clouds of present troubles thicken about us, and hide the Lord’s care and loving-kindness from us, yet faith must look through all to his power and constancy of truth and love. The eye of faith is a clear, piercing, eagle eye: Heb. xi. 27, ‘Moses endured, as seeing him that was invisible.’ A man is very short-sighted before: 2 Peter i. 9, ‘He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off;’ can only skill in the things of sense and reason, see a danger near him, as beasts or a bait while it is before him; a brute thinketh of no other; or else goeth by probabilities, as it seeth things by the light of reason in their causes. But faith seeth things afar off in the promises, Heb. xi. 13, at a greater distance than the eye of nature can reach to. Take it either for the eye of the body, or the mind, faith will draw comfort not only from what is invisible at present, but not to come for a long time; it is future as well as invisible; its supports lie iii the other world, and are yet to come.

2. There is hope in it; for what a man hopeth for he will look for it, if he. can see it a-coming: ‘the earnest expectation of the creature,’ ἀποκαραδοκία τῆς κτίσεως, Rom. viii. 19; the stretching forth of the head: Judges v. 28, ‘They looked out at the window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long a-coming?’ So by spiritual hope there is a lifting up of the eyes, or a looking out for what God hath promised, or an intent observing all together: ‘Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour,’ Phil. iii. 20. Faith keepeth the eye of the mind fixed upon the

promise, and is ever looking out for deliverance: Ps. cxxi. 1, 2, ‘I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help: my help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.’ Thence they look and wait for succour; it must come out of heaven to them. They see it, they can spy a cloud a-coming; that which a man careth not for he doth not look for. David saith, ‘I will pray and look up,’ Ps. v. 3. Hope hath expectation of the thing or object hoped for.

3. There is patience in it, in persevering and keeping on our looking till mercy come, with faith and ardency in expecting God’s help. Looking and waiting is to be conjoined, notwithstanding difficulties, till it procure deliverance: Ps. cxxiii. 2. ‘Our eyes wait on the Lord, who will have mercy on us.’ This lifting up of the eyes doth not imply a glance, or once looking to heaven; but that we keep looking till God cloth help: Isa. viii. 17, ‘I will wait on the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.’ There is a constant depending, and patient attending upon God, notwithstanding the present tokens of his wrath and displeasure. As a man withdraweth himself from a party, and will not be seen of him, nor spoken to by him, but the resolute suitor tarrieth to meet and speak with him. So Micah vii. 7, ‘Therefore I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.’ Not give over upon every discouragement, as a merchant doth not discontinue trading for every loss at sea. Certainly it is not faith and hope, unless we can endure and bear out. Natural courage will bear out for a while, but not long. A little touch breaketh a bubble, and a slight natural expectation is soon discouraged; but to hope against hope, to pray when God forbids praying, to keep waiting when we have not only difficulties in the world, but seeming disappointments from heaven itself, when the promise and Christ seem to be parting from you, and refuse you; yet then to say, I will not let thee go until thou bless me, as Jacob said to the angel, Gen. xxxii. 25, 26, when God saith, Let me alone.

269

Use. Let us turn ourselves towards God for help, and have our eyes on him, and keep them there: Ps. cxli. 8, ‘But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord; in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.’ Let us not give way to discouragements, though God delay us so long till all our carnal provisions are spent, no meal in the barrel, nor oil in the cruse, and we are brought to the last morsel of bread; though brought to complain for pity to them that will show none, but pour vinegar into our wounds; yea, till our spiritual provisions be spent. Faith will hold out no longer, hope can do us no service, patience lost and clear gone; we fall a-questioning God’s love and care. I say, though we grow weary, let us strive against it, acquaint God with it, renew faith in the word of promise. There is a holy obstinacy in believing.

To get this eye of faith—

1. There is need of the Spirit’s enlightening. Nature is short-sighted, 2 Peter i. 9. A man cannot look into the other world till his eyes be opened by the Spirit of God: Eph. i. 17, 18, ‘The Father of glory give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what

the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' There needs spiritual eye-salve to get this piercing eye to look through the curtain of the clouds.

2. When your eye is opened, you must keep your eye clear from the suffusions of lust and worldly affections. A mortified heart is only a fit soil for faith to grow in. The world is a blinding thing, 2 Cor. iv. 4. While present things bear bulk in our eye, invisible things are little regarded by us. Dust cast into the eyes hindereth the sight, carnal affections send up the fumes and steams of lust to blind us.

3. The eye being clear, you must ever be looking up out of the world of temptations into the world of comforts and supports, from earth to heaven: Heb. xi. 27, 'As seeing him that is invisible;' and the nothing things of the world, by omnifying and magnifying God. There are the great objects which darken the glory of the world, and all created things. And there we see more for us than can be against us, 2 Kings vi. 15. Pharaoh, a king of mighty power, was contemptible in Moses' eyes, because he saw a higher and a more glorious king; so glorious, that all the power and princes of the world are nothing to him.

270

4. The less sensible evidence there is of the object of faith, the greater and stronger is the faith, if we believe it upon God's word: John xx. 29, 'Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' It extenuateth our faith, when the object must be visible to sense, or it worketh not on us. Faith hath more of the nature of faith when it is satisfied with God's word, whatever sense and reason say to the contrary: 1 Peter i. 8, 'Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now you see him not, you rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Whatever faith closeth with upon sure grounds, it is spiritually present to the soul, though few sensible helps. The less we see in the world, the more must we believe. To see things to come as present, and to see things that otherwise cannot be seen, cometh near to God's vision of all things. God saw all things before they were, all things that may be, shall be, *visione simplicis intelligentiae*: Prov. viii. 31, 'Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth.' So doth faith eye all things in the all-sufficiency and promise of God, long before they come to pass, and affects the believer with them, John viii. 52.

Thirdly, From the weakness and imbecillity confessed, 'Mine eyes fail.' The doctrine is—

Doct. That sometimes God's people wait so long, that their eyes even fail in waiting; that is, their faith, hope, and patience is almost spent, and they are ready to give over looking.

For the phrase intimateth two things—a trial on God's part, and a weakness on ours. First, a trial by reason of God's dispensations. Two things make our waiting tedious—the sharpness of afflictions, and the length of them, long delays of help and great trouble, in the mean time. First, the depth of the calamity, or the sharpness of the trial may occasion this failing: Ps. xxxviii. 10, 'My heart panteth, my strength faileth me, for the light of mine eyes is also gone.' Secondly, the

length of troubles, or the protraction of deliverance. As the. bodily eye is- tired with long looking, so doth the soul begin to be weary, when this expectation is drawn out at length: Ps. cxix. 82, ‘Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?’ The delay is tedious.

As to the matter of this failing, there are three things:—

[1.] That the sufferings of God’s children may be sometimes long. God ordereth it so, that faith, hope, and patience may have its perfect work, Heb. vi. 12. There is an intervening time between the promise and the accomplishment. Intervening difficulties, James i. 3, 4; Rom. viii. 24, ‘Hope that is seen is not hope;’ it is but natural- probability, natural courage. Those that have received a great measure of faith have a great measure of trials; their troubles are greater that their graces may be the more exercised, that many stubborn humours may be broken, Jer. iv. 3. God useth to suffer his enemies to break up the fallow ground of his people: Ps. cxxix. 2, ‘The plowers plough upon my back, they make long their furrows.’ We have proud and stiff hearts, therefore the plough of persecution goeth deep, that the seed of the word may thrive the more; till they have done their work, God doth not cut asunder the cords. The Lord of the soil experts a richer crop. The power of the Spirit is more seen: Col. i. 10, 11, ‘Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.’ Not only patience, but long-suffering, which is patience extended under continued troubles. Men may fret; it is not unwilling, extorted by force; but they are cheerful under the cross. The length of sufferings; some can endure a sharp brunt, but tire under a long affliction. Some go drooping and heavily under it; therefore joyfulness. For these and many other reasons doth God permit our sufferings to be long.

[2.] Why faith, hope, and patience are apt to fail.

(1.) Because these graces are weak in the best, and may fail under long and sharp trials: Ps. cxxv. 3, ‘For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands to iniquity.’ The strongest believer may faint in trouble, therefore God will not try them above their strength; but as he sometimes giveth more grace, so sometimes he abateth the temptations. Grace is not so perfect in any as to be above all weakening by assaults. Who would have thought that a meek Moses could be angry? Ps. cvi. 33. There are relics of sin unmortified, such as may be awakened in the best. Who would have thought that David should fall into uncleanness, an old experienced man, who had many wives of his own, when Joseph, a young man, a captive, resisted an offered occasion? But especially do these graces fail in their operation when the temptation is more spiritual; for these are mystical graces, to which nature giveth no help, when’ things dear to us in the flesh and in the Lord are made the matter of the temptation, and set an edge upon it, &c. Sins that disturb the order of the present world are not so rife with the saints as sins that concern our commerce with God.

(2.) Because temptations raise strange clouds and mists in the soul, that though they grant principles, yet they cannot reconcile providences with them. As Jer. xii. 1, ‘Righteous art thou, O

Lord, yet let me plead with thee.' It is not to be questioned, much less doubted of, that God is upright and just in his dealings; yet what mean those passages of his providence? Their thoughts are fearfully imbrangled, the minds of the godly are molested: 'Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?' So Hab. i. 13. 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity; wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously? and boldest thy tongue, when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?' God is pure and holy, they know; yet how can he bear with the enemy, in their treachery and violence against the church? So brutified are they, that they know not how to reconcile his dispensations with his nature and attributes; though they have faith enough to justify God, yet atheism enough to question his providence. When the heart is over-charged with fears: Ps. lxxiii. 1, 'Yet God is good to Israel: my feet were almost gone, my steps well-nigh slipped.' They hold fast the conclusion, 'Yet God is good to Israel;' yet cannot maintain it against all objections.

272

(3.) Carnal affections are hasty and impetuous, and if God give not a present satisfaction, they question all his love and care of them: Ps. xxxi. 22: 'I said in my heart, I am cut off;' Isa. xlix. 14, 'Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forgotten me;' Jonah ii. 4, 'And he said, I am cast out of thy sight.' So that, did not God confute his unbelief by some sudden experience, as in the first instance, or the word contain a suitable supply, as in the second, or the principle of grace in some measure withstand ('but I will look towards thy holy temple'), the soul would be swallowed up in the whirlpool of despair. Thus hasty and precipitant are we while we hearken to the voice of the flesh. We are apt to count all our troubles God's total desertion of us. Such a hasty principle have. we within us, that will hurry us to desperate conclusions, as if it were in vain to wait upon God any longer.

(4.) Mutability in man. What a flush of faith and zeal have we at first, as stuffs have a great gloss at first wearing. We lose, as our first love, so our first faith: Gal. v. 7, 'Ye did run well; who did hinder you?' There is a great forwardness at first, which abateth afterwards; and men grow remiss, 'faint in your minds,' Heb. xii. 3, from one degree to another.

[3.] That this failing is but an infirmity of the saints; though their hope be weak and ready to faint, it is not quite dead.

(1.) It is an infirmity of the better sort, not like the atheism and malignity of the wicked. Some diseases show a good constitution, and seize on none but such. This distemper is not incident to carnal men: Isa. xxxviii. 14, 'Mine eyes fail with looking up.' It argueth a vehemency in our hope; they that do not mind things are never troubled with such a spiritual disease; for this failing cannot be but where there is vehemency of desire and expectation. Those that desire little of the salvation of God's people, feel none of this.

(2.) There is a difference between them and others; though they have their weaknesses, yet their faith doth not quite expire; there is a twig of righteousness still to trust to; they are weary of watching,

but they do not give over waiting; and say, as he, 2 Kings vi. 33, 'What should I wait for the Lord any longer?' Fainting is one thing, and quite dead is another: they strive against the temptation: though no end of their difficulties appeareth, they attend still, keep looking, though the vigour of the eye be abated by long exercise. There is life in the saints, though not that liveliness they could-wish; for they do not fall, and rise no more, and are quite thrown down with every blast of a temptation.

(3.) They confess their weakness to God, as David doth here, acquainteth God with it, and so shame themselves out of the temptation, and beg new strength. It is an excellent way of curing such distempers to lay them forth before God in prayer, for he helpeth the weak in their conflicts. When we debate dark cases with our own 'hearts, we entangle ourselves the more.

273

Use 1. It reproveth our tenderness when we cannot bear a little while: 'What! not watch with me one hour?' Mat. xxvi. 40. David kept waiting till his eyes failed. Some their whole voyage is storms;—Christ indents with us to take up our cross daily, Luke ix. 22;—who are their lifetime kept under this discipline; and can we bear no check from providence? We would have all done in an hour or in a year, can bear nothing when God calleth us to bear much and long; cannot endure to abate a little of our wonted contentment, when God will strip us of all.

Use 2. Let us provide for long sufferings. All colours will not hold as long as the cloth lasts. We need a great deal of grace, because we know not how long our great troubles may last. Sometimes sufferings are like to be long. First, When the cross maketh little improvement, carrieth little conviction with it. While the stubbornness of the child continueth, the blows are continued. God will withdraw till they acknowledge their offence, Hosea v. 15. When we eye instruments, and pour our rage upon them; or instruments are minded, and wo hope to be delivered some other way, when we repent not. Secondly, When provocations are long: Deut. xxviii. 58, 59, 'If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law, that is written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance; and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.'

SERMON CXXXVI.

Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.—VER. 124.

IN this verse we have two requests—the one general, the other particular; wherein he would have the Lord exercise his mercy to him. Show thy mercy to me in teaching me thy law. The one respects the privilege part of religion, the other the duty part; the one concerns time past, or the

pardon of sin already committed, ‘Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy;’ the other prevention of sin for the time to come, that I may perform my duty for the future, ‘Teach me thy statutes.’ Mercy is the ground of his request; teaching God’s law the matter of it. He would have this gift bestowed on him freely.

First branch, ‘Deal with thy servant,’ &c. Where we have—

3. His relation to God, *thy servant*.

2. The terms upon which lie would have God deal with him: Not according to my works, but *according to thy mercy*.

First, His relation is mentioned either—(1.) As a part of his plea, as if he had said, Lord, thou art merciful to all, for ‘thy tender mercy is over all thy works,’ Ps. cxlv. 9; much more to thy servants: now I am thy servant. God’s servants have a special claim and interest in God; besides his general bounty, they expect his special mercy and favour: Ps. cxvi. 16, ‘O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid.’ Clear that, that you are some of God’s servants once, and then you may the better expect your master’s bounty. Or, (2.) To show his need of mercy though God’s servant. Such an emphasis it seemeth to have: Ps. cxliii. 2, ‘Enter not into judgment with thy servant;’ *non dicit cum hostibus tuis*. He doth not say, Enter not into judgment with thine enemy, but with thy servant So here David, that was God’s servant, a man of singular holiness, desireth that God would deal with him in mercy. From first to last, the saints have no other plea. Theodoret, on the text, observeth. ὁ τοσαύτης ἀρετῆς ἐργάτης ἐλέους τυχεῖν, &c.—so great a worker of righteousness beggeth to receive mercy, and looketh for all his salvation by mercy. And again, οὐκ ἀπαιτεῖ μίσθον ἀλλὰ φιλανθρωπίαν αἰτεῖ—he doth not challenge a reward, but asketh favour and kindness.

274

Doct. That God’s best servants have no other and no better plea than that God would deal with them in mercy.

1. Because there is and can be no merit on the creature’s part towards God, according to the rule of justice. Adam in innocency could *impetrare*, not *mereri*; it was his grace to covenant with the creature, when innocency and purity did adorn our nature; how much more since the fall, and the distance between God and us hath been so widened by sin! What merits must be *indebitum* and *utile*. It must be *indebitum*: when our righteousness was perfect, yet still due by virtue of our relation to God as creatures; and paying of debts deserveth no reward. The lawyers tell us, *Nemo consequitur praemium, quod facit ex officio debitum.* We are bound, and do but our duty; but God is not bound to us. All that the creature hath and is, and can do, it oweth to God, and hath received it from him; and God is in such a degree of excellency above us that he cannot be obliged. Where there is so great a disparity of nature and being, there is no common right to make him obnoxious, to make it justice to any action of ours to reward us. Aristotle denied children could requite their parents, and

merit from them, and that the obligation of merit is only between equals; certainly not between God and men. There was nothing which bound him necessarily to reward his creature but his free covenant. Again, that which merits must be *utile*, profitable to him from whom we challenge reward. If we be never so righteous, the benefit is ours, not God's. He is not beholden to us, useth us not out of indigence, but indulgence; not as if he needed anything, but we need his blessing: Luke xix. 10, 'When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants;' and Ps. xvi. 2, 'Our goodness extendeth not to thee.' God giveth all, receiveth nothing from us. The beam oweth all to the sun, the sun nothing to the beam.

2. Because since the fall there is no claiming but by the covenant of grace and mere mercy. A sinner cannot expect anything but upon terms of mercy. The covenant of works supposed us innocent and holy, and bound us so to continue, Gal. iii. 20; so that the law knoweth not how to do good to a sinner. Once a sinner, and for ever miserable; it leaveth no room for repentance. So that now there is no hope for the best, according to the rule of strict justice, but only according to the law of mercy.

275

In the new covenant there are these special differences from the law of works. That there is not only grace, but mercy and grace too. In the first covenant there was grace, but no mercy. Grace doth all things gratis, freely; but mercy pitieth the miserable: therefore, till sin and misery entered there could be no room for mercy. There was grace in that covenant, for it was of grace that God did enter into covenant with man at all, and of grace that he did accept man's perfect obedience, so as upon performance of it to make him sure of eternal life. But now in the new covenant God doth show mercy and grace too, and grace in the most rich and glorious manner. Mercy and grace too in this way of salvation, in that there is hope for a sinner, a plank cast out after shipwreck; and grace in the richest and most glorious manner; partly for the design, and end that was driven at; it was the glory of grace: Eph. i. 6, 'To the praise of the glory of his grace;' and partly the ground of it was founded upon the infinite mercy of God and the infinite merit of Christ. The infinite mercy of God: Mercy is the infinite goodness of God, flowing out freely to the creature, without any moving cause or worth on the creature's part to expect it: Rom. ix. 16, 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that showeth mercy.' And the infinite merit of Christ: Isa. lv. 3, 'I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David;' Isa. xlii. 6, 'And give thee for a covenant to the people;' and Isa. xlix. 8, 'I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant to the people.' David, that is Christ, the seed of David; all the mercies of the covenant are exhibited in and by him, in whom the covenant is made with us, and made good to us, 2 Cor. i. 20. And he is given for a foundation; that is, the foundation of a new and better covenant. And partly because of the terms wherein it is dispensed, which is not unsinning obedience, but a sincere owning of Christ, unto the ends for which God hath appointed him. So that in effect a thankful acceptance of a free discharge is all that we do for paying the debt, or to make way for our acceptance with God: Rom. iv. 16, 'Therefore it is of faith, that it might be of grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed;' and Eph. ii. 8, 'Ye are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.' By the grace of faith we lay hold upon or apply to ourselves Christ

and all his benefits; and that faith God giveth us by his mere grace, not exhibited by any work of others. The whole work of salvation, from its first step in regeneration to its last step in glorification, doth entirely flow from God's free grace, and not from any worth in us. So that this being the end, grounds, terms of the new covenant from first to last, mercy doth all on which our hope dependeth. We must claim by mercy.

3. As there is no merit in the best saints, so there is much demerit; and as there is nothing to induce God to be good to us, so there is much to hinder him, much that standeth in his way; yet God will do us good: Isa. lvii. 17, 18, 'I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also and restore comforts to him.' He taketh motives from himself to pity when he might take occasion to punish. There are many sins to be forgiven both before and after conversion. Wo are not only undeserving, but ill-deserving. It was much that God would take us with all our faults, when he first drew us into acquaintance with himself, and intrust us with a stock of grace; but after he hath done that, we still are faulting and sinning: Rom. viii. 1, 'Yet now there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ;' notwithstanding the relics of corruption, and its breaking out.

276

4. From the temper of the saints, their humility. None have such a sight and sense of sin as they have, because their eyes are anointed with spiritual eyesalve. They have a clearer insight into the law: Jer. xxxi. 19, 'After I was instructed I smote upon my thigh.' They are enlightened by God's Spirit; the least mote is espied in a glass of clear water. None are so acquainted with their own hearts and ways as they who often commune with their own hearts, and use self-reflection. Others, that live carelessly, do not mind their offences; but they that set themselves do more consider their ways; none have a more tender sense of the heinousness of sin. She loved much, wept much, because much was forgiven her, Luke vii. Some are of a more delicate constitution; the back of a slave is not so sensible of stripes as they that have been more tenderly brought up. The beams of the sun shining into a house, we see the dust and motes in the sunbeams, which we saw not before. They profess as Jacob, I am net worthy of all the mercy and truth thou hast showed me. They groan as St Paul, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

Use 1. Information. We learn hence that we should not be discouraged, when our hearts are touched with a deep remorse and sense of our failings, and are desirous to break off our sins by repentance; that mercy which is freely vouchsafed in the covenant, which all God's servants have so often experienced, which the best make their only plea and ground of hope, will find out a remedy for us. If you have a heart to give up yourselves to God's service, and so to get an interest in the promises and blessings of the covenant, you may come and sue out this mercy, for God desireth to exalt his grace. God saith, 'Return to the Lord your God, and I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely,' Hosea xiv. It is the delight of grace to do good, not withstanding unworthiness. The worst of sins do not hinder God's help, are not above his cure. There is hope for such as are convinced, and see no worth in themselves why God should do them any good. God needs not, will not be hired by the creatures to do it.

Use 2. How inexcusable those are that reject the offers of grace. If they have any liking to the blessings of the covenant, they have no ground to quarrel and differ with God about the price: Isa. lv. i, 'Ho every one that thirsteth, let him come to the waters and drink freely, without money and without price.' You have no cloak for your sin if you will not deal with God upon these terms. Nothing keepeth you from him but your own perverse will.

Use 3. What reason there is the best of God's servants should carry it thankfully all their days. From first to last the mercy of God is your only plea and claim. No flesh hath cause to glory in his presence, there being no meritorious cause in the covenant of grace, no moving and inducing cause, no co-ordinate working cause: 'Not for your sakes do I this,' Ezek. xxxvi. 32; and in 1 Cor. vii. 4, it is said, 'Who maketh thee to differ?' We paid nothing for God's love, nothing for Christ, the Son of his love, nothing for his Spirit, the fruit of his love, nothing for sanctifying grace and faith, the effects of his Spirit dwelling and working in our hearts, nothing for pardon; we have all freely; nothing for daily bread, protection, maintenance; and shall pay nothing for glory, when we come to receive it: Jude 21, 'Looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life.' It is all without our merit, and against merit. We should regard this especially when we are apt to say in our hearts, This is for our righteousness; as Haman thought none so fit for honour and preferment as himself, Esther vi. 6; Haman thought so in his heart. So proud-hearted, self-conceited sinners say in their hearts, God seeth more in them than in others. Alas! you are not only unworthy of Christ, the Spirit, grace, and glory, but the air you breathe in, and the ground you tread upon. What did the Lord see in you to judge you meet for such an estate? Gen. xxxii. 10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and all thy truth.' Did not you slight grace, neglect Christ, as well as others? and doth not sin break out, and make a forfeiture every day?

277

Use 4. That we should carry it humbly as well as thankfully. The best of God's children should most admire grace and glorify mercy, set the crown on mercy's head. Consider—

1. What was the first rise of all God's love, what set all a-stirring in God's bosom, John iii. 16. There was no cause beyond this. In other things we may rise higher, from his power and wisdom to his love. But why did he love us? There is no other cause to be given—he loved us because he loved us. It was love first moved the business in the ancient counsel of God's will. God's love is the measure of itself.

2. When he came to apply it, he found us in our blood. It was a great mercy that God would take us into his service with all our faults. We were his creatures, but quite marred, not as he made us. We are not what we were when first his; as we came out of his hands we were pure and holy, but since the fall quite spoiled: Jer. ii. 21, 'I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?' Strangely changed and altered! If a servant run from his master, and is become altogether blind, deformed, and diseased, will his master look after him, or care for him, or take him again? This was our case.

3. What is spoken already is common to others; you yourselves knew what you were, Titus iii. 3. Every man is soundly affected, more sensible of his own case, seeth particular reasons why God should refuse him; yet you are as brands plucked out of the burning, who did resist such powerful means, such fair advantages; you dallied with God. You know the case of others by guess, your own by feeling. You lay not only in the common polluted mass, but had your particular offences.

4. When taken in a fault, that God will pity our weakness and infirmities in his service: Mal. iii. 17, 'I will spare them as a man spareth his son that serveth him;' that is, he will continue his favour and good-will to them that serve him. So surely they that have a conscience, and are privy to their manifold infirmities and failings, will admire this.

5. Though for the main we give up ourselves to live according to the will of God, yet consider, notwithstanding our sins, what constant humbling considerations there are to keep us sensible of our defects. (1.) All that you do is not worthy of God. Who can serve so great a majesty as the Lord is, according as he should be served? Josh, xiv. 29, 'You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy and a jealous God.' Alas! such is the poverty of human condition, that they can never perform service becoming his majesty. Have you a due sense of his purity and holiness? Nay, how jealous he is of the respects of his people! (2.) Not worthy of such a pure law, which requireth such perfect service at our hands: Ps. xix. 6-8, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul,' &c. What doth that speculation produce, that a short exposition of the law begetteth a large opinion of our own righteousness? (3.) Not worthy such great hopes: 1 Thes. ii. 12, 'That ye walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory.' Since we have such great wages we should do more work. Is this for heaven? Is this for eternity? (4.) Not such as will answer our obligations. We are indebted to all the persons of the Trinity; God himself for our portion, Christ our Redeemer, the Spirit for our guide and comforter. The Gentiles were greatly obliged to God for fruitful seasons. The Jews, though acquainted only with God's patience and forbearance, the ceremonial law was a testification of guilt, or a bond that showed the creature's debt; this bond was not cancelled. (5.) Not answerable to the new nature in God's children; they would be in a state of perfect conformity and subjection to God. A seed worketh through the clods; so they groan under the relics of corruption and sin, Rom. vii. 24, longing for the time when they shall be more like God, when they shall serve him without spot or blemish; therefore are unsatisfied with their present imperfections. These things considered, we should ever keep humble and thankful, praising God's grace: Isa. lxiii. 7, 'I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon us; and the great goodness towards the house of Israel which he hath bestowed on them, according to his mercies, and the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.'

Use 5. Directeth us how to pray. Cast yourselves at God's feet, pleading his mercy. We have heard the kings of Israel are merciful lungs, 1 Kings xx. 31. You have heard so of the God of Israel; try what mercy will do for you. Say, as David here, 'Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy.' My prayers have no other foundation of hope but thy mercy; I am nothing, and would be nothing,

but what I have from thee; I have no merits, but thou hast mercy; all that I have, and expect to have, floweth and must flow from this fountain. Take heed of challenging duty as a debt. No, Lord; thy mercy is all my plea; as all thy servants before have done: Lord, remember me in thy mercy; if any have other things to plead, let them plead; I am resolved to use no other plea: Ps. xiii. 5, 'But I have trusted in thy mercy.'

Second branch, *teach me thy statutes*. This may be considered apart by itself, or with respect to the context.

First, Apart, as an entire prayer in itself. So the doctrine is,—

Doct. It is God must teach us his statutes.

This will appear if we consider—

1. What it is to be taught of God. There is a difference between grammatical knowledge and spiritual illumination, or a literal instruction and a spiritual instruction; a greater difference than there is between teaching a child to spell and read the words, and a man to understand the sense. Literal instruction is when we learn the truths contained in the word by rote, and talk one after another of divine things. But spiritual illumination is when these things are revealed to us by the Spirit of' God; as we read of the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 4. Others have a form of knowledge, Rom. ii. 20. Some have only the report of Christ, have but a human credulity, or the recommendation of others, that reveal the doctrine of God to them. Others receive a revelation made to their souls; their eyes are opened by the Spirit, Isa. liii. 1. Once more, there is a difference between the Spirit's enlightening in a way of gifts and common grace, and his enlightening in a way of special and saving grace. Some that are enlightened by the Spirit fall away, Heb. vi. 4. Others are taught of God, so as to come to him by Christ, John vi. 45. This latter sort, that are savingly enlightened, have not only their minds opened, but their hearts inclined. So to be taught as to be drawn to faith and practice, this is proper to God, who is the sovereign dispenser of grace.

2. This will appear if we consider the heart of man, which is naturally full of darkness, and oppressed by the prejudices of customs and evil habits: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of God;' 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'The god of this world hath blinded their eyes.' This veil can only be removed by the Spirit of God. After grace received we know but in part, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, and much of the matter which beclouded the mind still remaineth with us; and when our lusts are awakened by temptations, our old blindness returneth upon us, and we strangely forget ourselves and our duty for the present. Therefore we have need to go to God to be taught: 2 Peter i. 9, 'He that wanteth these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.'

3. If we consider the matter to be taught, it is the mysterious doc trine that came out of the bosom of God. Every art hath its mystery, which strangers cannot judge of: 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'All scripture is given by inspiration.' This was a secret which had not been known without a revelation.

God hath his mysteries which no man knoweth, but by the Spirit of God: Mat. xiii. 11, 'To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but to them it is not given.' Those that have scriptures, yet have scales on their eyes, 1 Cor. ii. 14, they have not saving knowledge. How sharp-sighted soever graceless souls may be in things that concern the present world, yet they are blind in spiritual things, so as to be affected and engaged thereby seriously to turn to God. Yea, how accurately soever they can discourse in the theory, and preach of Christ and his ways, yet they have no transforming light. God's mysteries must be seen in his own light, or they make no impression upon us: Ps. xxxvi. 9, 'In thy light we shall see light.' The scriptures containing the sum of the Lord's mind, none can of themselves attain to the meaning of them; it was not the device of man's brain. So none understand by their proper skill and invention. There are such knots as cannot be untied and loosed, but by imploring the help of the Spirit.

280

Use 1. To press us to be often with God for this teaching, and make it our great request to him. A gracious heart would fain learn the right way to heaven: Ps. xliii. 3, 'O send out thy light and thy truth.' Direction how to carry ourselves is a great blessing.

2. The blindness of our understandings should make us more earnest with God. We are apt to mistake our way, through the natural weakness of our understandings, especially when lusts and interests interpose: Jer. x. 23, 'Lord, the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' As man understandeth not events, so easily mistaketh present duties.

3. Our present estate. The world is a dark place, 2 Peter i. 19; compared with the light of glory, it is but like a light that shineth out of a room where a candle is, and a room where a candle is not seen, the glimmerings of the antichamber of eternity. Our own reason, the counsel and example of others, will easily misguide us. So the more we depend upon God, the more he will undertake to teach us, Prov. v. 6. Those that make their own bosoms their oracle, God is disengaged from being their guide: they need him not; but the snares they run into will soon show them how much they need him.

4. How unapt we are to see conclusions in the promises, and to apply general rules to particular cases and times; which most Christians cannot do, ἐν διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν, in their inferences: Rom. i. 21, 'Are vain in their imaginations, have their foolish hearts darkened.'

5. To bind all upon the heart, and to lie under the conscience of our duty, maketh the difficulty the greater; many imprison the truth in unrighteousness. Well, then, beg the constant direction and illumination of God's Holy Spirit; cast yourselves upon him in the sense of your weakness, and see if he will refuse you; say, I am blind and ignorant; Lord, guide me. It is dangerous to be left in any part of our duty to ourselves.

Secondly, If we consider the words with respect to the context. And first the remoter context, where David speaketh like a man under trouble and oppression, ver. 121. 122, ‘Let not the proud oppress me,’ &c. Lord, show me what to do in this time of my oppression.

Doct. Direction how to carry ourselves in trouble, till the deliverance cometh, is a great mercy, and should be earnestly sought of God.

Reason 1. From the parties oppressing. They that oppress watch for our halting, as Jeremiah complained, Jer. xx. 10. They accused the prophet unto the ruler, and so to work his ruin, if they could find him tripping in anything. Now when we are watched we need special direction, that God would teach us to walk warily and safely: Ps. xxvii. 11, ‘Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies; or, those which observe me, they watch to get some advantage: therefore that they may have no advantage against us, we should not trust to our own single wisdom.

281

Reason 2. Because the danger of sin is a greater inconvenience than the danger of trouble. In times of trials and troubles we are in danger of soul-losing and sinning, as well as bodily danger; therefore we have need to beg wisdom of God to carry it well under trouble, because we are so apt to miscarry, unless God guide us continually in our dark condition, and take us by the hand, and help us over our stumbling-blocks. There are many sins incident to our condition.

1. Uncomely passion and unadvised speeches; therefore David prayeth in his trouble, Ps. cxli. 3, ‘Set a watch before my mouth, keep the door of my lips.’ In our oppression, we are under a temptation to hurt our own cause by unadvised and passionate speeches. When we have too great a sense of the temptation, something or other breaketh out to God’s dishonour.

2. Some indirect course to come out of trouble, Ps. cxxv. 3. Men that make haste out of trouble carve for themselves, break prison before they are brought out. Necessity is an ill counsellor, and will soon tempt us to some evil way for our own ease, some sinful compliance or confederacy. The devil tempted Christ when he was an hungry. Mat. iv. 3, hoping to work upon his necessity.

3. Private revenge, or meeting injury with injuries. We are apt to retaliate: 2 Sam. xvi. 9, ‘Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.’ Revenge is soon up. No man is troubled if a shower of rain falleth upon us; but if any cast a bucket or bason of water upon us, we are in a rage presently. We can better bear any trouble from God than injuries from men: ‘Oppression maketh a wise man mad.’ A revengeful spirit is contrary to our heavenly calling.

4. Waxing weary of our duty, and quite tired and discouraged in God’s service: Heb. xii. 3, ‘Consider him that endured such contra diction of sinners, lest you be weary and faint in your minds.’ Weariness and fainting belong properly to the body, and they differ gradually. Weariness is a lesser, and tainting a higher degree of deficiency; as when a man laboureth, hungers, or travelleth,

it abateth his strength, and abateth the active powers, or toileth the spirits, the principle of motion. And from the body it is translated to the mind, to a less or higher degree of defection; and it is thus, when troubles are many and long continued, we begin to grow faint, and wax weary of the faith and service of Christ, and sink under the burden. It is the Devil's design to make us weary, and tire us out in the service of God.

5. Another evil is despairing and distrustful thoughts of God. David, after all his experiences of God, though he had conducted him up and down: 1 Sam. xxvii. 1, 'I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.' He had a particular promise and assurance of the kingdom, and had seen much of God's care over him; yet, after all this, David doubteth of the word of God: Ps. xxxi. 22, 'I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless thou heardest me.' As if he should say, God hath no care of me, nor thoughts of me; and at that instant deliverance was coming.

6. Questioning our interest in God by reason of the cross. Our Lord hath taught us to say, 'My God, my God,' in the bitterest agonies when he was upon the cross; but few learn this lesson: Judges vi. 23, 'If God be with us, why hath all this evil befallen us?' Some times we question the love of God because we have no affliction, and anon because we have nothing but affliction; as if God were not the God of the valleys as well as of the mountains. Well, then, seeing all these distempers are incident to an afflicted estate, we should the more carefully watch against them.

Reason 3. Because our enemies make a great advantage of our failings, and harden themselves in their prejudices if we carry not a holy good cause in a holy religious way, and will take the least occasion given from a questionable practice to slander the truth: Neh. v. 9, 'Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?' If you should trip in anything, you shall soon hear of it, to the reproach of religion A holy and wise carriage in afflictions is very honourable to the gospel, otherwise your testimony is rejected and blasted.

Use. Well, then, desire the Lord to guide thee in all thy troubles; yea, if God doth guide you. let this satisfy you before the deliverance cometh about. It is a mercy if you have direction, though you have not deliverance; for a godly man should not so much regard the ease of the flesh as the performance of his duty to God. If you carry your cross regularly with faith and patience, God may have more honour and you more profit by your affliction than your deliverance. Yea, to be instructed in the word, and be taught your duty, is in itself a greater mercy than a deliverance: Ps. xciv. 12, 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest him out of thy law.' It is a blessed thing, yea, it is a deliverance itself; for it delivereth you from, the spiritual evil of the rod, which is the curse. Suffering doth not come as a curse when instruction goeth along with it; yea, it is the means of our great deliverance from the present evil world, 1 Cor. xi. 32, as it is a pledge of our future deliverance in due time; for God is not unmindful of us, and will not leave us without the conduct of his Spirit,

Secondly, To handle the words with respect to the nearer context in ver. 123, ‘Mine eyes fail for thy salvation.’ This teaching is begged after he had complained of the delay of the promises, and so implicitly he complaineth not of the falsity of the word, or the non-performance of the promise, but of the weakness of his own faith.

Doct. When the Lord suspends the promised deliverance, the godly suspect not the truth of his word, but the darkness of their own unbelieving hearts.

They think this failing is because they are no more enlightened; they are dull in conceiving, and misty and cloudy in their apprehensions, and therefore would have a clearer understanding of the promise and a more quick-sighted faith; or have failed in the performance of the condition required, therefore desire that God would teach them and show them their errors, and cause them to profit in sanctification. Thus should we do in like cases when there is a seeming contradiction between the word and the works of God, betwixt his promises and his providence about us. His voice is sweet, like Jacob’s, but his hands rough, like Esau’s. Do not suspect the promise, but your understanding; go into the sanctuary, Ps. lxxiii. 16, 17. God will help you to reconcile things; otherwise the difficulty will be too hard for you. The saints that have suspected or distrusted God have found themselves in an error, Isa. xlix. 14, 15 and Ps. lxxvii. 8-10. (1.) You must not interpret God’s promise by his providence, but his providence by his promise; and the promise is the light side, and providence the dark side of the cloud: Isa. xlv. 15, ‘Thou hidest thyself, God of Israel, the Saviour;’ Ps. lxxvii. 19, ‘Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.’ We cannot trace him; a man cannot find out the reason of everything that God doth. (2.) You must distinguish between a part of God’s work and the end of it. We cannot understand God’s providence till he hath done his work. In the last act of the comedy all the errors are reconciled. Tarry till then: Zech. xiv. 7, ‘At evening it shall be light.’ We view providence by pieces, and we know not what God is a-doing, rending and tearing all in pieces. But view God’s work in its whole frame and contexture, and it will appear beautiful. (3.) We must distinguish between what is best for us and what we judge is best for us: Deut. viii. 15, 16, ‘Who led thee through the great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock; who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not; that he might humble thee, and prove thee, to do thee good at the latter end.’ Other diet is more wholesome for our souls than our sick appetite craveth. It is best with us many times when we are weakest: 2 Cor. xii. 10, ‘When I am weak, then am I strong;’ worst, when strongest: 2 Chron. xxvi. 16, ‘When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his own destruction.’ Many times the buffetings of Satan are better for us than a condition free from temptations; so is poverty and emptiness better than fulness. (4.) We must distinguish between what things are in themselves, and what in their reduction, use, and tendency. All things are for a believer in their use, though they may be against him in their nature, 1 Cor. iii. 18-20, and Rom. viii. 28. ‘All things shall work together for good to them that love God.’ All their crosses, yea, sometimes their sins and snares, God will overrule them for good, and the work of grace sometimes goeth back that it

may go forward. Many such cases there are which look like a contradiction, which we shall not know what to make of them, unless we bring it to Christ, an interpreter, one of a thousand. But take heed in these confusions and tossings of thy soul how thou reflectest on God; a little experience will confute thy prejudices.

Thirdly, With respect to the nearest context, the former clause of this verse. After an appeal to the covenant of grace, or a petition for mercy, he asketh direction to keep the law.

Doct. They that would have mercy by the covenant must be earnest to be taught God's statutes.

Mercy and teaching are David's two great requests throughout this and other psalms.

Reason 1. The moral obligation of the law still lieth on God's servants, that are taken into the covenant of grace. There is an eternal obligation upon the creature to love and serve the creator, which cannot be dissolved. We are not redeemed from the service of the law by Christ, hut the curse of the law: Luke i. 74, 75, 'Being; delivered from the hands of our enemies, that we might serve God in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.' The end of our redemption was not to destroy our service according to the law, but to fit and enable us to perform it according to the image of God restored in us, Eph. iv. 24. The new man is created to restore in some measure those abilities we lost in Adam. God never yet gave man a, liberty to be free from the obligation of the moral law. He would not pardon any sin against it without satisfaction made by Christ, and believed and pleaded by sinful man. Christ merited, and God restored the spirit of sanctification, that men might keep it. He will not spare his own children, when they transgress against it by heinous and scandalous sins, as to temporal punishments: Prov. xi. 31, 'The righteous man shall be recompensed upon earth; much more the wicked and the sinner;' Ps. xxx. 31, David and Eli both smarted for their sins. No man hath interest in Christ unless he return to the obedience of this law: 1 Cor. ix. 21, 'To them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law;' Rom. viii. 1, 2, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit: for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.' No interest in mercy else: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them.' We cannot have full communion with God till we perfectly obey it: Eph. v. 27, 'That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but it should be holy and without blemish.'

284

Reason 2. The great privilege of the covenant of grace is to be taught God's statutes, or to have a real impress of them upon the heart and mind, which is the way of divine teaching: Heb. viii. 10, 'For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel in those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.' He will cure us of our wickedness, weakness, and carelessness, and enable us to keep his law; it is God's undertaking to do so, and that out of free grace and favour,

for he is not indebted to us; it is to give us knowledge of them, and power to keep them. Much of the law natural cannot be severed from it, and that is the reason why the heathens have the law written upon their hearts, Rom. ii. 15; but the writing is very imperfect, both as to knowledge and power to keep it. God will imprint them more perfectly; this is the true notion of the law. By the mind is meant understanding, by the heart the rational appetite. In the mind is the directive counsel; in the will the imperial and commanding power. There is the prime mover of all human actions; he giveth an apprehensive and perceptive power, whereby we apprehend things more clearly, and effectually desire and affect spiritual delights.

Use 1. To refute the claim of them that would plead mercy, but would still go on in their own ways, blessing themselves in their sins. Till our hearts and minds are suited to God's law by a permanent tincture of holiness, we are not fit subjects to ask mercy and the promises of the covenant.

Use 2. If we would have this effect, we must go to God, who alone can work upon the immortal soul, to reform, mould, or alter it. A new man or angel cannot do it; they may by sense and fancy teach him many things; but to make these lively impressions must be the work of the Spirit.

SERMON CXXXVII.

I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.—VER. 125.

IN this verse he repeateth his plea and request also. In the former verse he mentioneth the relation of a servant, and prayeth, 'Teach me thy statutes.' And here again—(1.) Asserteth his relation to God, 'I am thy servant.' (2.) Reneweth his request, 'Give me understanding.' (3.) The fruit and effect of the grant, 'That I may know thy testimonies;' or, Then I shall know.

First, This repetition hath its use. This repeating his relation to God showeth that where the conscience of our dedication to God, and our endeavours to serve him, is clear and sincere, we should not easily quit our claim. Deal with thy servant in mercy; yea, Lord, I am thy servant: I have my failings; but, Lord, it is in my. heart to serve thee; I can and will avow it as long as I live. Our defects and disallowed failings do not deprive us of the title of being God's servants; we may take comfort in it, and assert our interest in the promises as long as we delight to do his will. And though unbelief opposeth our claim, we must remove it in the face of all objections. Christ puts Peter to a threefold assertion of his love to him, John xxi. It is supposed we do not lie, in these redoubled professions of our respect and service to God.

Secondly, This renewing his request showeth his earnestness to increase in spiritual understanding. Savoury and powerful knowledge of divine things is in itself so excellent a benefit, and our necessity of it is so great, that we cannot enough pray for it. Only observe, that in the former

verse, the notion was *statutes*, here *testimonies*. Statutes are that part of God's word which we should obey; testimonies that part which we should believe, viz., the promises. But this may be too critical, the words being taken in this psalm in a greater latitude.

Doct. That it is a good plea, when we want any mercy, spiritual or temporal, to be able to plead that we are God's servants.

1. That there are a sort of people, that in a peculiar manner are God's servants.

2. These may plead it when they want any mercy, spiritual or temporal.

First, That some are in a peculiar manner God's servants. The saints of God are so called; it was Moses' honour: 'They sung the song of Moses, the servant of the Lord.' So Josh. i. 1, 'Now after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord.' So Paul asserts it of him self: Acts xxvii. 23, 'The God, whose I am, and whom I serve.' Here is a true description of a Christian man; he is God's, and serveth God; he is God's by special appropriation and communion with God. He serveth God, that is, walketh answerable to his relation, and is ever about God's work. Elsewhere he describeth himself by his service: Rom. i. 9, 'My God, whom I serve in my spirit;' 1 Tim. i. 3, 'God, whom I serve with a pure conscience.' But to know who in a peculiar manner are God's servants, we must distinguish—

286

1. God is served actively and passively—by necessity of nature, or voluntary choice. Passively, by necessity of nature, all creatures, even the inanimate, are his servants: Ps. cxix. 91, 'They continue this day according to thine ordinances, for all are thy servants.' But actively, to serve him out of duty and choice; so do only men and angels, who were made immediately for his service; the brute and inanimate creatures only ultimately and terminatively. They have a principle in their nature to incline them to it, are not only overruled so to do by the conduct of general providence. The water that driveth a mill serveth my purpose, but otherwise than the miller or overseer of the work. Fire and water is my servant, much more he.

2. We must distinguish between those who are God's servants de jure, of right, and those who are so *de facto*, in deed—servants of right, and actually his servants. *De jure* all men are God's servants; God made them for himself, Prov. xvi. 4, and Christ bought them for himself: Rom. xiv. 9, 'For to this end Christ both died and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.' He is δεσπότης, a Lord and master, where he is not κύριος, a covenant redeemer and Saviour: 2 Peter ii. 1, 'They deny the Lord that bought them,' ἀγοράσαντα, a master that bought them for service, and may challenge a right and interest in them, having shed his blood for mankind. But *de facto* those are God's servants who yield themselves up to God's dominion, to serve and please him in all things with cheerfulness and consent. The covenant is represented under divers notions; as a covenant of friendship: James ii. 23, 'Abraham was called the friend of God;' as a conjugal covenant: Hosea ii. 19, 20, 'I will betroth thee to me;' as a covenant between king and

subjects: Isa. xxxiii. 22; as a covenant between master and servants, Isa. lvi. 6, that take hold of his covenant, and join themselves to the Lord to be his servants. The two former notions imply the sociableness and intimacy we have with God in the covenant; the two latter our inferiority and subjection. Both must be minded, that as on the one side we be not slavish and under bond age, so, on the other, we may not behave ourselves too fellow-like with God. We are such servants as are also friends, yea, as sons; yea, his spouse. The end of joining ourselves to the Lord is not to be partners with him, but servants to him.

3. Some are servants by visible profession and baptismal engagement; others really and indeed, by conversion to God, or an actual ‘giving up of themselves to his use and service. By baptism we are professed servants and subjects to the God of heaven, bound to be so; for it is the seal of that covenant of service I spake of before, and so bindeth our service in it. We renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and dedicate ourselves to the Lord. Justin Martyr saith, They did ἀναθεματίζειν ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θεῷ; and Ezek. xvi. 8, ‘And entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine;’ 1 Peter iii. 21, ‘The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.’ By profession, all baptized persons are God’s servants; but in reality all converted persons are so, that are turned from idols to serve the living God, 1 Thes. i. 9. Without this, Christ will riot be contented with an outside acquaintance and the flattery of empty titles, but will the more challenge us by virtue of our profession: Mal. i. 6, ‘If I be a father, where is mine honour? if I be a master, where is my fear?’ *Cui res subjecta nomini negatur, is nomine illuditur*. It was no honour to Christ, but a mere mockery, to be called King of the Jews, whilst they buffeted Christ and spat upon him. If God be a master, he will have the honour, fear, and obedience that belongeth to a master, that we should be afraid to offend him.

287

4. There are some that are servants by general relation, to distinguish persons, and some by way of special attendance. A servant in general relation is every Christian; servants by special attendance are either angels, and they are called his ministers, Ps. ciii. 21, as being in near and special attendance about their master’s person, courtiers of heaven, most in grace and favour with God. A man may have one to do his business, that yet hath not one to attend his person. Among men, the magistrate is the minister of God for good, Rom. xiii. 4. Ministers are servants in special attendance, therefore Paul so often calleth himself the servant of Jesus Christ: Rom. i. 9, ‘Whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son;’ ministers of God, not of the people, but for the people, because of their near service about and under God. David was both a holy man. and a king, and a prophet. David as a king might use this petition: it highly concerneth one in public rank and office to say to God, I am thy servant; yea, as private believers. I observe it not only to distinguish persons, but to distinguish the work of the same person. Christians have, besides their general calling, a particular calling wherein to serve God. God hath given us all talents to trade withal: Mat. xxv. 14, ‘Who called his servants, and delivered unto them his goods;! Luke xxiii. 13, ‘Occupy till I come.’ *Dona talenta.* Every one of us, as instruments of providence, are to serve God in our generations,

Acts xiii. 36, and so not only to mind the work of our general calling, but that particular work which he hath given us to do in our way and place. The general and particular calling do not cross, but help one another. In your particular calling, as instruments of God's providence, you provide for jour support during your service, and the relief of others: so that, as God's servants, you are not to be idle, but to have a lawful employment and calling, that you may not cast yourselves upon temptations of using sinful shifts for your support and living. It is also a remedy against the evils that flow from idleness and too much ease, and that he may promote the good of church, family, and kingdom. And then the general calling helpeth the particular, by limiting it, and our endeavours therein, that so we may have time to save our souls; and directing us, that we do all things holily and justly, as become the servants of the Lord.

288

Secondly, These may plead it when they want any mercy spiritual or temporal.

1. It is not a plea contrary to grace. Indeed, no such plea can be allowed in the new covenant; partly because it is the mere mercy of God to advance us to this honour, to make us his servants, and the fruit of his goodness, rather than our choice: Rom. ix. 16, 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that showeth mercy.' Willing and running and working and serving are necessary afterwards, 1 Cor. ix. 24, as our way and qualification. Again, our service is mixed with many weaknesses. Mercy there needeth to interpret our best actions, Gal. vi. 16. Peace and mercy, when we have done most exactly; yea, the very plea of servant excludeth all thought of merit; for a servant *ipso jure ministerium domino debet*: Luke xvii. 9, 'Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded? I trow not.'

2. It is not contrary to humility. It is not, We are thy children, wo are thy saints; but, We are thy servants. It is the meanest of relations; it speaketh duty rather than perfection, and pleads not property of the house, but propriety and interest in God. The best of us are but servants to the high God, and therefore should not carry it proudly either to our master or to our fellow-servants. It is a humble claim.

3. It speaketh comfort; for God will provide for his family, and will give maintenance, protection, direction, help, and finally wages, where he requireth and expecteth service: for the present, necessaries by the way; for the future, a blessed reward. For the present, we may depend on him as servants on their lord: Ps. cxxiii. 2, 'Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hands of their masters, and the eyes of maidens to the hand of their mistress,' &c. Servants had their dole and portion from their masters—the males from the master, the females from the mistress; therefore is the expression of looking here used. (1.) God will give direction. In the text, David, upon the account of being God's servant, beggeth to know his will, as all good servants study what will please their masters; and will God appoint us work, and not tell us what it is? Ps. cxliii. 10. 'Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God: thy spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness.' God doth not only show us what is good in his word, but teacheth us also by his Spirit, and directs us in every turn and motion of our lives; and we ask it of him as he is our God and Lord. (2.) Help and assistance.

God is no Pharaoh, to require brick and give no straw; his grace is ready to help the endeavouring soul: Gal. ii. 12, 13, 'Work out your salvation; for God worketh in you both to will and to do.' He exciteth the first motions, and still carrieth them on to perfection. (3.) Protection while he hath a mind to use us; ver. 122. of this psalm, 'Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.' Under the law, if a servant was hurt, the master was to take an account, and satisfaction to be made to him for his servant. Deut. xxi. 32; so God taketh an account of the wrongs of his servants, and will demand satisfaction. (4.) Maintenance, 1 Tim. v. 8. Every man hath a care devolved upon him, to take care of his family, and provide for them, as instruments of God's providence; and will not God provide for his own? And then for time to come; God's servants have good wages: Heb. xi. 6. 'He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' We need not seek another paymaster; there is a sure reward. Prov. xi. 18, 'But to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward;' and a great reward, Ps. xix. 11, 'And in the keeping of them is a great reward;' and a full reward, 2 John 8, 'But that we receive a full reward.' No desire remaineth unsatisfied.

289

Use. To persuade us to become the servants of the Lord.

1. I will plead with you upon the account of right.

[1.] You ought to be so *jure creationis*; you were created by him. As a man expecteth fruit from the vine which he hath planted, so may God expect from the creature which he hath made; yea, you were made for this end. If God had made us for another purpose, our living to that end and purpose had been regular. But this was his end, that he might be served by us. Let us lay these things together; consider what an absolute power God hath by creation; no lord hath such a right over his slave or servant as God over us. The slave or servant is either taken in battle, or bought and hired with our money; but God made us out of nothing: he that made a thing at his own pleasure hath a greater right than another can have by purchase, yea, greater right than a master over his beast. A master hath a greater right over his beast than over his servant: the dominion over the beast is more natural to us than over a servant; the servant and master have the same common nature. When he gave us dominion over the beasts of the field, the one is founded in God's original grant, the other is but a civil right founded in temporal accidents. Something is due even to a slave, as our own flesh. Yet a man cannot absolutely do with his beast as he will; the law of God interposeth: a good man is merciful to his beast. God will not allow a cruel disposition, nor give us the absolute disposal over the creatures which we made not; nay, more than a potter over the vessels which he hath framed, or a work man over his work; he only giveth external shape or figure by art, out of matter already prepared. But God giveth the whole being out of nothing; nothing but what is his. A potter hath power over his work to dispose of it as he pleaseth; here the law interposeth not. Surely, if a potter hath power to dispose of his vessels, God hath an absolute power to smite or heal, lift up or cast down, save or condemn; none can say, 'What doest thou?' He doth not fashion us out of matter prepared, but out of mere nothing. But this was his end, that we should love and fear and serve and glorify him. Our business was not to eat and drink, and please ourselves and

others, and live a merry life. All things act to the end for which they were created, the sun to shine by day and enlighten the world, the moon and stars by night; and they answer their end. Their ultimate end is to serve God, their next end is to serve man. All things in the world are either subjected to our dominion or created for our use. The heavens, though not under our dominion, as beasts, yet are for our use; the lower heaven to give us breath, the middle heaven to give us light and heat, the highest heaven for our dwelling-place. The sun runneth and hasteneth to give us light. The sun shineth for us, the wind bloweth, and the water floweth for our use. The earth and air are for our use, the earth to tread on, the air to breathe in. And shall not we serve him that made the whole course to serve us? All the creatures are at work for us day and night, for a poor worm of six foot long! Yea, the creator is at work for us: 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' We complain if the creatures do not serve us, and shall not we serve God who gave us those servants?

290

[2.] A right of preservation. He is Lord alone, because he preserveth all things: Neh. ix. 6, 'Thou, even thou, O Lord, alone; thou hast made heaven, and the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the sea and all that is therein; and thou preservest them all.' At whose table are we fed? at whose cost and expense are we maintained? upon whom do we depend every moment for being and operation? Acts xvii. 28, 'In him we live and move, and have our being;' Heb. i. 3, 'He upholdeth all things by the word of his power;' he doth every moment continue what he gave at first. Things were not made that they should act and subsist of themselves, as the house abideth when the inhabitant is dead and gone. A daily influence is necessary. As the beams depend on the sun, so do we every moment upon God; every day we are bound to serve him. If God should turn us off for preservation to ourselves, how soon should we return to our original nothing! God is disengaged if we serve him not. If, out of indulgence, he continues our beings, what vile ingratitude is it not to serve him! Isa. i. 3, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his masters crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.' Would you maintain a servant to do his own work? Since we live upon God, we should live to him.

[3.] A right by redemption: 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, 'And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which is God's.' If a man had bought another out of slavery, all his time and strength and service belonged to the buyer. Christ hath bought us from the worst slavery with the greatest price, and shall we rob him of his purchase? This was his end; he did not redeem us to ourselves, but to God; not to live as we list, to exempt us from his dominion; that is impossible. Saul promised to make him free in Israel that would destroy Goliath, 1 Sam. xvi. 25. But to be free from God's dominion cannot be; that was not Christ's end in redeeming us, but that we might be put into a capacity to serve God. Well, then, when God hath such a right in us, we ought to obey him.

2. Consider what an honour it is to be God's servants. *Servire Deo regnare est.* The meanest offices about a prince are honourable. No such honourable employment as God's service, both in respect of the person whom we serve, the great God, and the service itself; it is a service of

righteousness and holiness, Luke i. 74. This is no drudgery; our natures are ennobled; the liberty and perfection of human nature is preserved by this service. And then for the quality of our reward, there is no such wages, no such reward in any service: John xii. 26, ‘And where I am, there shall my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.’ Here is true honour, fitted for great spirits that will not stoop to trifles; and indeed God’s servant is the only great spirit. The most eminent servants in the court of kings have but a splendid and more gaudy slavery in comparison of God.

3. What a happiness, as well as honour, both in respect of our present communion with him, and future fruition of him! The Queen of Sheba said of Solomon’s servants, 1 Kings x. 8, ‘Happy are the men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.’ Happy those indeed that serve God; they are friend-servants: John xv. 15, ‘Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth; but I call you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.’ In regard of intimate communion, they are treated as sons, though they be servants. Now it is very comfortable to be taken into God’s bosom, and to have access to him upon all occasions. Besides the reward and wages in the life to come, God’s servants have great vails. Our earnest is better than the world’s wages.

4. Consider what a hard master we were under before: Rom. vi. 17, ‘But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin.’ You have obeyed many masters: Titus iii. 3, ‘Ye were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures.’ You that were at the beck of every brutish lust, and were carried to and fro with so many contrary passions and affections, that have left so many wounds in your consciences, alarmed by terrors every day, when you denied yourselves nothing, thought nothing too much or too dear to spend or part with in a sinful course.

5. If once we come to choose his service, we shall find a difference between the Lord and other masters: 2 Chron. xii. 8, ‘Nevertheless they shall be his servants, that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.’ The sorrow of the one, the sweetness of the other; the misery of the one, the blessedness of the other; the bondage of the one, the liberty of the other: they that forsake or refuse God’s service shall soon find worse masters. God hath ways enough to punish our straggling from duty and slighting his service; either by putting us under hard taskmasters, some that shall turn the edge of authority against us, push with the horns of a lamb, a barbarous enemy, making us to be mutual oppressors of each other; or by giving us over to Satan’s power, or our own hearts’ lusts.

6. Christ’s service is not hard nor heavy: Mat. xi. 30, ‘My yoke is easy and my burthen light,’ notwithstanding all your prejudices against it. These men live as they list; they think this a sweet liberty to be guided by their own wisdom, and live according to their own wills, according to their own ends, and that it is better than to be curbed, Ps. ii. 3. But after a little while they have other thoughts, they will find the bitterness of such a course. On the contrary, the more we try the service

of God, the sweeter we shall find it to be: 1 John v. 3, ‘And his commandments are not grievous:’ and Prov. iii. 17, ‘Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.’ Our work is wages, and our very work carrieth a reward in the bosom of it. So sweet and comfortable it is. Now for directions.

[1.] If we would be God’s servants, we must sincerely, wholly, and absolutely give up ourselves to do his will; and never more to look upon ourselves as our own masters, to do what we please, but wholly to study what will please God. Isa. lvi. 6, they ‘joined themselves to the Lord to serve him, to love the name of the Lord, and be his servants;’ Rom. vi. 16, ‘Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?’ There is a solemn dedication made, we take up his service seriously, not upon example barely, or tradition, or fear, or constraint, or some base respects or sinister ends, or some sudden pang or motion; but after serious and due deliberation, out of judgment rightly informed, and affection thereon grounded, do engage themselves to perform humble service to God, without limiting or power of revocation, give up themselves wholly to follow his directions.

[2.] God’s servants have work to do; none of them must be idle: Mat. xx. 6, ‘Why stand ye here all the day idle?’ Luke i. 74, 75, ‘That we may serve him in holiness and righteousness all our days;’ Phil. ii. 12, ‘Work out your salvation with fear and trembling;’ Acts xxiv. 16, ‘Herein do I exercise myself, to keep a good conscience, void of offence.’ We must not put hands in bosom, having so much work to do. Many presume of being God’s servants; but it is only in the notion; they do nothing for him.

[3.] This service must not be done grudgingly, but heartily: Isa. lvi. 6, ‘And the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, to love the name of the Lord, and be his servants;’ Deut. x. 12, ‘To love the Lord thy God, and serve him.’ God will not be served but out of love, not by necessity and constraint. We must yield *obedientiam servi*, but not *servilem*: we are delivered from a slavish spirit: Rom. viii. 15, ‘We have not received the spirit of bond age again to fear.’ God’s service must be gone about with ready affection and good-will. The respect which we show to God is called service in regard of our strict obligation to it, but obedience in regard of our readiness of mind to perform it. Secondly, Not slightly, but with reverence and zeal: Mal. i. 6, ‘If I be a master, where is my fear?’ Ps. ii. 11, ‘Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling;’ Phil. ii. 12, ‘Work out your salvation with fear and trembling;’ and Rom. xii. 1, ‘I beseech you by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.’ God will not be put off with anything by the by, it is a lessening of his majesty: ‘I am a great king.’ Thirdly, It must be done constantly, not by fits. He that is God’s servant never ceaseth from his work; their feasting, walking, sitting, sleeping, waking, hungry, thirsty, hearing, or praying, it is all for God. He that doth any of these things merely for himself, to gratify the flesh, doth not act as God’s servant: Acts xxvi. 16, ‘Serve God instantly day and night.’ Fourthly, Orderly. All things in God’s service must be regarded according to their weight:

Rom. xiv. 18, ‘For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men;’ that is the main things, not in contests about ceremonies: if others carry these matters beyond their weight, let not us; it is not a pin to choose what party a man is of, if he doth not mind righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost: as if a servant should provide sauce for his master, and neglect to provide meat.

293

[4.] Our great end and scope must be to please God. They arc true servants that make it their business to please their master: Isa. lvi. 6, ‘They choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant;’ John viii. 29, ‘The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always the things that please him;’ 1 Thes. iv. 1, ‘I exhort you all by the Lord Jesus Christ, that as you have received of us how to walk and please God, so ye would abound more and more;’ and 1 John iii. 22. ‘And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things which please him.’ So Heb. xi. 5, ‘Enoch had this testimony, that he pleased God.’ The property of a servant is not to please himself. They that set themselves to please God observe his will in all things. There is a great pleasing in the world, but few make it their business to please God. All inferiors please their superiors on whom they depend; and shall not we please God, who is infinitely greater than man, and on whom we depend every moment for all that we enjoy?

Use. Are we God’s servants? We all say so; but we speak out of conviction of conscience rather than out of inclination of heart; not what *de facto* is, but what de jure should be; and it is well that we come so far as to own God’s right. *Professio ipsa*, saith Hilary, *habet conscientiae necessitatem, non habet confessionis veritatem*.

1. If it be so, then God is our chiefest good and highest lord, whom we study to please and gratify. It is certain that is our master which hath the greatest part in us, and power and influence over us: Mat. vi. 24, ‘No man can serve two masters: ye cannot serve God and mammon;’ Rom. xvi. 18, ‘They serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly;’ Phil. iii. 19, ‘Whose god is their belly.’ It was a speech of Luther, *Venter in omni religione est potentissimum idolum*. It doth all with men. Where the belly is served, Christ is neglected. So far as his service will comply with the interest of the belly, or a quiet, pleasureful life, so far they can be zealous: their religion must feed them and maintain them, or else they care not for it—John vi. 26, they followed Christ for the loaves—mind religion for outward advantages. When our interest and Christ’s service go contrary ways, we can dispense with our duty to God for the sake of this. It is clear, to be servants is to want a power and right to dispose of ourselves, our actions, and employments. While any other thing hath an interest in us to dispose of us, we are not God’s servants; but that thing that hath such a power with us is our master.

2. A servant is chiefly known by obedience: Rom. vi. 16, ‘To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey;’ Luke xii. 47, 48, ‘And that servant which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will,’ &c. Men may talk high for God, know much; but whom do we ordinarily obey? When the flesh bids us go, we go; come, we

come. If pride bids us display the pomp of wit in our duties, or to hang out the ensigns of our vanity, we yield straight. If lust bid us pamper the flesh; we presently obey; if coveteousness bid take the wedge of gold, we do it. But when a man knoweth anything to be the mind of God, and prepareth his heart to do it, he is one of God's servants.

3. A servant of God is one that the sight of God's will is reason enough to him: 1 Thes. v. 18, 'This is the will of God.' The will of God must be the prime and prevalent motive with a Christian; they are servants, not to do their own will, but his whose servants they are; they do nothing but what their master commandeth, and what he commandeth they see reason to obey.

Second branch, 'Give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.' This is subjoined to the former plea.—(1.) Because David would not be a servant in name and title only, but in deed and in truth; and therefore would fain know his duty. (2.) To show the difference between God's servants and the servants of other lords who command us: Prov. xiv. 25, 'The king's favour is towards a wise servant;' they see them wise, find them wise, and then love them: but God must begin with us; his favour maketh us wise.

Doct. God's best servants think they can never enough beg divine illumination.

David doth often enforce this request.

Reason 1. Our blindness in the matters of God is a great part of our spiritual misery: Eph. v. 8, 'Ye were sometimes in darkness.' There is a veil lying upon our hearts, not easily removed and taken away. All the mischief introduced by the fall is not cured at once, but by degrees; as spiritual strength increaseth we grow up into it; so spiritual light. The maim of the understanding, as well as the will, is not wholly cured till we come to heaven, for here we know but in part; till God give us understanding, we are utterly blind; the best of God's servants have cause to acknowledge it in themselves, the remnants of ignorance and incredulity. The apostle biddeth them to add to faith virtue, to virtue knowledge; that is, skill to manage the work of our heavenly calling.

Reason 2. None are so sensible of this blindness as they. It is some proficiency in knowledge to understand our ignorance: 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.' The most knowing see they need more enlightening. The best of our knowledge is to know our imperfections, 1 Cor. viii. 2. He that thinketh he knoweth anything, knoweth nothing as he ought to know.

Reason 3. There is room for increase; for in the best we never know so much of God's ways but we may know more: Hosea vi. 3, 'Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord;' Prov. iv. 18, 'But the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' True sanctified knowledge is always growing. If we sit down with measures received, it is a sign we do not know things as we should know them. Christ grew in knowledge, not in grace,

for the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily. Practical knowledge is never at a stand; though a man may see round the compass and light of saving truth, yet he may know them more spiritually and more feelingly.

Reason 4. The profit of divine revelation as to these three things:—

1. A clear discerning of the things of God, not a confused notion; as the blind man in the Gospel saw men as trees walking. So 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'For God, who commanded the 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;' and 1 John v. 20, 'And hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.' Every degree of knowledge is God's gift. What other men see confusedly, we see more distinctly in this light.

2. Firm assent. Then 'shall I know thy testimonies;' know them from others that have not divine authority. It is the spirit of wisdom and revelation that openeth our eyes to see the truth and worth of heavenly things contained in the promise: Eph. i. 17, 18, 'The father of glory may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understandings being enlightened, that ye may know the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints in light;' and Mat. xvi. 17, 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed these things unto thee.' Human credulity we may have upon the report of others, the evidence of the truths themselves; but this firm assent is the fruit of divine illumination.

3. Hearty practice. Let thy testimonies not only strike my ear, but affect my heart, command my hand, let me know them so as to do them, for otherwise our knowledge is little worth. God doth so direct, that he doth also enable us to approve our obedience to him sincerely and faithfully. There is a knowledge that puffeth us up, 1 Cor. viii. 1, which yet is a gift, and floweth from the common influence of the Spirit: Jer. xxii. 16, 'Was not this to know me? saith the Lord.' But there is a greater efficacy in practical knowledge, such as warmeth the heart with love to the truths known, John iv. 10, 'If thou knewest the gift,' &c. Such a light as proceedeth from the gracious influence of the Spirit.

Use 1. Let us be often dealing with God in prayer, that our judgments may be enlightened with the understanding of the word, and our affections renewed and strengthened unto the true obedience of it; beg for that lively light of the Spirit.

1. We need it. In how many things do we err in the things which we know! how weak are we both as to sound judgment and practice! The apostle saith, 'We know but in part,' 1 Cor. xiii. 9; 'We are but of yesterday, and we know nothing,' Job viii. 9. Therefore we have need to go to the Ancient of days, that he may teach us knowledge, and kindle our lamps anew at the fountain of light. Alas! we take it in by drops, or by degrees, as a tender and sore eye must be used to the light. We have but little time to get knowledge in, and do not improve that little time we have.

2. We have leave to ask it: James i. 5, ‘If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God;’ and why do we not, seeing we have a liberty to ask it?

3. God hath promised to bestow it; he will give his Spirit to them that ask it, Luke xi. 13. And to beget faith in us: ‘If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?’ Here is a notable argument; he reasoneth and promiseth. And Prov. ii. 3, we must cry for knowledge. Well, then, let us be earnest, that we may not miss that which is to be had for asking; beg for a heart to know, Jer. xxiv. 7, ‘I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord.’

296

Use 2. It informeth us that there is somewhat more than the word necessary to give us knowledge. God must not only reveal the object, but prepare the subject. David having a law, beggeth understanding that he might know God’s testimonies. The literal sense and meaning of the words may be understood by common gifts and ordinary industry, unless men be exceedingly blinded and hardened by their own prejudices. But to have a spiritual understanding of them, so as to profit and increase in sanctification, that is from the Lord. These things may be drawn into a system, wherein there will be nothing that exceedeth the understanding of a man. But to understand it so as to be affected with and changed by it, that is from the Spirit: 1 John v. 20, ‘And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true;’ and Eph. v. 8, ‘Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.’ He is the purchaser and author of that light.

Use 3. Is reproof to those that presume on their own wit to under stand divine mysteries. Many think they have eyes in their head, and can see into matter as far as other men, and conceive and judge of a thing as soon and as well as others can do; and so will not acknowledge their dulness and blindness in heavenly things, take it ill to be told of it: John ix. 4, ‘Are we blind also?’ In a rage scoff at those that talk of the enlightening of the Spirit, and being taught of God. Alas! you must be blind and be fools before you be wise, 1 Cor iii. 18, in your own conviction and feeling.

SERMON CXXXVIII.

It is time for thee, Lord, to work; for they have made void thy law.—VER. 126.

IN the words we have—(1.) A prayerful suggestion, *it is time for thee, Lord, to work*. (2.) The reason of it, f*or they have made void thy law*.

In the first branch take notice of—

1. The person to whom the address is made, *for thee, Lord*.

2. The suggestion itself, what and when; what they would have the Lord to do, *to work*; and when, even now, *it is time to work.*

To open these, I begin with—

1. The person to whom the address is made, the Lord. Some read the words, It is time to work for thee, O Lord, because they have made void thy law. It is time indeed to work for God, when so many work against him, in an evil generation; lest the law should perish and fall to the ground, some should keep up the authority of it, and they that fear God are to encourage one another, Mal. iii. 16. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, 'It is time to do the will of the Lord.' But the Hebrew original carries it as we do, it is time for Jehovah to do. The Septuagint, καιρὸς τοῦ ποιῆσαι τῷ κυρὶῳ. The vulgar Latin, *Tempus faciendi, Domine.*

297

2. Here is the suggestion itself—(1.) What they would have God to do. It is expressed by a general word, work; as also Jer. xiv. 7, 'Do, for thy name's sake.' What should he do? *Tempus mittendi Filium Dei*, saith Augustine; to set about the work of redemption, to send the Son of God. But that is a work rather to exercise and show forth his justice, power, and truth, both in punishing his enemies and delivering his people, to work his own proper work of justice, as becometh the judge of all the world to do; namely, to punish the wicked, and help his servants out of their hands. (2.) When it is time. Then it seemeth to be a time when man's wickedness is grown to the height: Gen. xv. 16, 'In the fourth generation they shall come again, for the sins of the Amorites are not yet full.' Good men are put to the uttermost of their patience, and God's glory abused beyond mea sure, Isa. lii. 5. Lord, it is time to work; they are as bad as bad may be; thy people have quite spent all their faith and patience; when thine ordinances and word are despised and affronted, and thy people trodden under foot, it is time for-thee to work.

Secondly. Let us explain the reason, 'For they have made void thy law.' The law is made void two ways, *formaliter et interpretative.*

1. Formally, when any deny the authority of God, as Pharaoh: Exod. v. 5, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?' Or those rebels, Ps. xii. 4, 'Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?' Or we make void the law when we deny it to be given of God, as Marcion and his followers, that the law was given by an evil god. Many now question the scriptures themselves, or deny the obligation of the moral law to believers, as the antinomians and libertines, as the apostle telleth us, Rom. iii. 31, that we 'do not make void the law by faith; yea, we establish the law.' It was the greatest ratification to it that could be. Or, finally, those that take upon them to enact things contrary to the law of God, or besides the law, as necessary to salvation, and enforce their own traditions beyond and before the law of God. These make void the law, as Christ telleth the pharisees that they 'made the commandments of God of no effect by their traditions,' Mat. xv. 6. Especially when they obtrude these things upon the consciences of others under the highest penalties.

2. Interpretatively, when men by consequence take away the honour and authority that is due to the law, by their wickedness and rebellion against God. Though in words they acknowledge the authority of God and the obligation of his law, yet they have no respect to it in their carriage and practice, doing whatever pleaseth themselves, stand in no awe of God and his word, reject it as a thing of nought. Obedience to the law is a ratifying and confirming the law by our consent: Deut. xxvii. 26, 'Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them.' Our words do not confirm the law so much as our works. So, on the contrary, they repeal or make void the law that observe it not in their practice. *Finis operis* is made *finis operantis*, as if they intended to abolish, whilst they make no reckoning of the law. Where observe, that this is a notion to make sin odious to us; it is not only ἀνομία, a transgression of the law, 1 John iii. 4; but a despising the law, 2 Sam. xii. 9; a judging or censuring the law, James iv. 11; yea, a repealing and disannulling the law, which is the notion of the text.

298

Doct. That when a flood of wickedness is broken out, we may put God in mind of doing his work of punishing the wicked and delivering his people.

I shall give you the sum of this doctrine in these four considerations.

1. That God doth for a while hold his hand, and bear with the wickedness of his enemies.

2. Though he doth for a while bear with them, yet he hath his times to punish and proceed to execution.

3. This time is usually when the impiety and insolency of wicked men is come to a height.

4. When it is come to a height, we may and must mind God of doing his work, or arising to judgment.

The first consideration is implied in the doctrine and the text; the other three are express.

First, It is implied that God doth for a while hold his hand, and not seem to mind his work. Though the least sin deserveth the greatest plagues, even when it is first committed, yet such is God's patience and long-suffering, that he wilt not at first punish even the sins of his enemies, but will let them ripen and come to a height before he smite. This he doth—

1. To show his bounty and goodness to all his creatures. He will not easily destroy the workmanship of his hands, even the provoking wicked; but giveth them time to repent and change their course; Rev. ii. 21, 'I gave her space to repent of her fornications, and she repented not.' The worst have leave to repent, means to repent, time to repent; and if they have not the grace to repent, they may blame themselves: Rom. ix. 22, 'He endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction,' ἐν πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ. The reprobate taste of God's common goodness as they are members of the world, are forborne for a long time, till they be sear and rotten through, fit for the burning. Nay, let me observe this: God, that is very quick with his people, is very patient

towards them that perish. God is quick with his own people; he will visit their iniquities with scourges, and will not suffer sin to lie upon them; and therefore they are chastened every morning. Yet this God is very patient to them that know no better, profess no better, have had no experience of his ways; and though they finally perish, it is long first, till their sins do even extort vengeance out of his hands.

2. To chastise, exercise, and prove his own people, he beareth with the wickedness of their enemies.

[1.] To chastise them for their sins, that they may be brought low, and their souls be humbled to the dust. Certainly this God expects before he will appear for us: 1 Peter v. 6, 'Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.' And because his people are backward to this work, he permitteth such instruments as will not spare, but lay on to the purpose: Isa. x. 5, 6, 'O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.' When God is angry with his people, he can easily find a rod for them; yea, not only a rod, but a staff, which is a more heavy instrument of correction: he can find instruments sufficiently exasperated, and full of malice, severe executioners; and he lets them alone till they have done his work, though they manage his controversy with cruel minds, and evil and destructive intentions. Sometimes God punisheth his people with divisions among themselves; and though they are very troublesome one to another, yet a sheep cannot worry a sheep, as a wolf will; they do it to the purpose, in a most cruel and despiteful manner. Now, though he will reckon with wicked men for their violence, for transgressing their bounds, and going beyond his revealed will and approbation, Zech. i. 15, yet not till his work be done upon Mount Zion and Jerusalem: Isa. x. 12, 'When the Lord hath done his work upon Mount Zion and Jerusalem, I will punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria.' He will not cast the rod into the fire till we have felt the smart of it, and be thoroughly humbled under his mighty hand.

299

[2.] To exercise his people, that they may not contract rust, and languish and grow idle in heaven's way. Alas! when we live at ease, and have nobody to trouble us, God is little owned, loved, and acknowledged, the throne of grace lieth neglected and unfrequented; and therefore he permitteth enemies to keep us in breath: Ps. lix. 11, 'Slay them not, lest my people forget.' Things in conceit do not leave such an impression upon us as things in feeling. Scipio would have Carthage stand, to whet and exercise the Roman valour. We need vigilant enemies as a guard upon us, that we may be kept aweful, serious, mindful of God, constantly in the exercise of faith and dependence. Wicked men have their ministry and service, to be as goads in our sides and scourges on our backs, to whip us to our duty, and make us mend our pace heavenward: Ps. xciv. 12, 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest him out of thy law;' chastened by the molestations of the wicked, for all along he complaineth of the delay of vengeance on the persecutors; and in the next verse he saith, 'Until the pit be digged for the wicked;' as condemned men are suffered to live till

their gallows and grave be made ready: if they trouble us in the meanwhile, it is to reduce us to a sense and practice of our duty; and that we may not securely go on in a course of vanity and sin. Till that be done, the pit is not ready for the wicked and ungodly oppressors; they dig their own pit by their sin and oppression.

[3.] To prove his people as well as to exercise them. To prove their faith and their patience; their faith, to see whether they can live by faith, and not by sense and present appearance; whether we are persuaded that there is a just and righteous God, that is the supreme governor of the world, notwithstanding all the oppositions and confusions they groan under: Hab. ii. 3, 4, 'Because it will surely come, and will not tarry. Behold, his soul that is lifted up is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith;' that is, the Lord's purpose in delaying to perform the vision is to try and discover who are the lofty and unsound, and who can subsist and hold out by faith on God's being, and providence, and promises, and world to come, and so wait upon God in hard times without fainting. If God should smite as soon as his enemies provoke him, faith would be of no use, and the whole world would be governed by sense. To believe the justice and mercy of God, though for the time we do not see any manifestation of it, that is the trial of faith. We know there is one that sits above and seeth all. Though the world be in an uproar, and they that work wickedness are set up, and God's servants persecuted, yet we know that God will reckon with them in due time. And secondly, to prove their patience, in bearing the present difficulties, and tarrying the Lord's leisure: Rev. xiii. 10, 'Here is the patience and faith of the saints;' that is, a sensible proof of it, when a powerful enemy carrieth. all before him: there would be little use of such a grace but for such times. This is submission to God, when we are resolved to tarry for his season, though we know it not, and will wait as long as God will have us wait, when all human probabilities are taken away, and we have nothing but God's providence to live upon.

300

Second consideration. Though he bear long, yet he hath his times to punish and arise to judgment.

1. With respect to himself and his own glory: Ps. ix. 16, 'The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth.' Little of God would be taken notice of in the world unless he did now and then give out sensible demonstrations of his power and justice, and mindfulness of human affairs. What strange conceits would men else have of God! as if no God, no providence, no distinction between good and evil; but as if God were indifferent to either, and did favour good and bad alike: and therefore it is in vain to trouble ourselves about the worship and service of God, no reward nor punishment. These are the uses the wicked make of God's forbearance, either to deny God and providence: Ps. lv. 19, 'Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.' If they have shifted from vessel to vessel, they corrupt and settle upon the lees, Zeph. i. 12; they say God will not do good, neither will he do evil, nor interpose; but suffereth enemies to trample upon his people and glorious name. Or else pervert the interpretation of providence: Ps. l. 21. 'Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself;' as if he did favour their ways. They misinterpret providence, and make the sun go according to their dial, or else ascribe the act of providence to themselves;

Deut. xxxii. 27, ‘Lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this.’ When long permitted to prosper, they think they have mastered heaven, that there is no power superior to theirs, and they can carry all before them at their pleasure. Therefore God must vindicate himself by his works, and give out some demonstrations to sense that there is a distinction between good and evil; that God is differently affected to either, that he hateth the evil and loveth the good, and accordingly there is a reward and punishment: Ps. lviii. 11, ‘Verily there is a reward for the righteous.’ God is fain to teach them by briers and thorns, or else the stupid world would not take notice of it, but think the world is governed by chance, not administered by an almighty, all-wise, and most just providence. They knew not what to think of providence when they saw the godly oppressed and the wicked high in power.

2. With respect to his people. Surely God will not always chide; for God considers the weakness of man: Ps. ciii. 14, ‘He remembers we are but dust.’ The hearts of his people would fail and faint, and they would be tempted to some forbidden course to ease themselves, Isa. lix. 16. He knows our spirits would fail; God would not have us utterly to be discouraged. We are liable to temptations: Ps. cxxv. 3, ‘The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands to iniquity.’ Therefore he hath his breathing times, and times of intermission from trouble. The spirits of a poor creature would soon be drunk up if there were not some well days; therefore he will show himself to his people.

3. With respect to the wicked, who would grow excessive and outrageous in sin: Rom. ii. 5, ‘But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath;’ Eccles. viii. 11, ‘Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil;’ grow bold, resolute, and settled in an evil way; go on without remorse, because they go on without trouble, and so grow to be monsters in sin. It is only faith that can see afar off, but infidelity and atheism mind not what is to come, and look only to what is present. Well, then, lest wicked men should thus continue themselves in sin, God hath his time to reckon with them; his justice is not asleep all this while, but God keeps a petty sessions in this world before the general assizes. Now concerning this time, let me tell you four things:—

[1.] There is a time appointed. There is an end of all things, not only an expected end. but also an appointed end: Hab. ii. 3, ‘The vision is for an appointed time;’ things are not left to their own hazard and chance to work out their own end; but ordered and appointed by the wise God: Dan. xi. 27, ‘Yet the end shall be at the time appointed;; ver. 35, ‘To try them, and purge them, and to make them white, even to the time of the end; because it is yet for a time appointed.’ There is a course of providence set by God which shall at length come to its end and period.

[2.] This is the best time: 1 Peter v. 6, ‘That he may exalt you in due time.’ There is a due time, as well as a set time. There is nothing in the whole administration of God preposterous, unseasonable, or disorderly. Wait but a little, and you shall see the reason of all this course of dispensations; for

God doth all things in number, weight, and measure. If it had come sooner or later, it would not have come so seasonably: Eccles. iii. 11, 'He hath made everything beautiful in its time.' When God's work is done, and all things are put together, you will see a marvellous beauty in it. It is just with the work of providence as with the work of creation, every day's work was 'good;' but when God saw all his works together, in their frame and correspondence, all was 'very good,' Gen. i. 31. We would think that God should come sooner to our deliverance: God is not slack, but we are too hasty; if he should come sooner, it would be the worse for us. We would have thought God should have owned Joseph in the pit. No; God stays till he be cast into prison; and in prison Joseph would fain come out as soon as Pharaoh's butler was come out, but he forgot him. God would not have it so; he must tarry there till God's time was come, and then had not only deliverance out of prison, but preferment. So many times we would be contented with half a deliverance, and would have it now, but God will give it us in the best season.

302

[3.] It is but a short time. Say sense what it will, it is but μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον, 'a little little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry,' Heb. x. 37. It is not so long as enemies would make it, for they would root out the memorial of God's children; not so long as sin would make it, or as fancy would conceive it. Suffering hours pass tediously; we count quarters and minutes when we are in pain or anxious expectation; we think an hour a week, a week a month, a month a year, and every year seven. Yea, not so long as reason would make it as to probabilities and the course of second causes. When things are fortified and backed with a strong interest, to reason it will be a long time. It is not so long as sense would make it; though we count the years, the winter is over, and the spring is come, and yet we are not saved, and can say, It is thus long; yet this is not long in comparison of eternity, 2 Cor. iv. 17. It is not long to faith, for to the eye of faith things future and afar off are present, Heb. xi. 1. Not long to love, Gen. xxix. 20: seven years are as a few days; they that believe an eternity, and have any love to God, will say it is short. But a short walk is a long journey to the sick and weak; the impatience of our flesh makes it seem long.

[4.] When the time is come, God will make speedy work: Isa. lx. 2, 'The Lord will hasten it in his time;' Luke xviii. 7, 'Shall not God avenge his own elect?' Rev. xviii. 7, 'Her plagues shall come in one day;' Isa. lxvi. 8, 'A nation born in a day.' All these places show (and it is a comfort to us) that no difficulty shall hinder when the season calls for it. He that produced heaven and earth at once, what cannot he do? We are dismayed when we consider an evil party fortified with combined interests, strength of opposite factions, force of laws and worldly powers; but God can make a nation be born in one day. It will be quick work when God once begins.

Third consideration. This time is usually when the impiety and insolency of wicked men is come to a height. Indeed there are other notes; as when his people's hearts are prepared to receive and improve deliverance, when God's glory calleth for it. But this is the season mentioned in the text; therefore I shall show you—

1. That this is a season.

2. Inquire when iniquity is come to a height.

3. Why then God doth usually interpose.

1. That this is a season: Gen. xv. 16, ‘The sins of the Amorites are not yet full.’ God showeth his patience to that wicked people, till the measure of their sins were filled up. So wrath came upon the persecuting Jews when they had filled up the measure of their fathers, Mat. xxiii. 32. While the enemy’s cup is a-filling, God delayeth, and we must wait. So Dan. viii. 23, ‘When the transgressors are come to the full.’ Once more, Joel iii. 13, ‘Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get ye down, for the press is full, the fats overflow, for their wickedness is great.’ The Lord compares sinners to a field of ripe corn ready to be cut, full fats and wine-presses to be trod out. When sin is ripe, the execution of vengeance will not be long forborne.

2, When doth iniquity come to a height? I answer—Their iniquities may be considered as to the two branches of it—their rebellion and disobedience to God, and their injuries and vexation of the saints.

[1.] Their disobedience and contempt of God.

(1.) When this is general. All orders and ranks of persons have corrupted their way, as the Sodomites compassed the house, Gen. xix. 4; both young and old, all the people from every quarter. Usually in making a judgment upon the state of a people, you will find it thus: If any part be right, it keeps off the judgment from the rest; if a zealous magistracy, though a corrupt people, or an unsavoury ministry, and a praying, mourning people, God holds his hand, and will not proceed to judgment. They are ‘the salt of the earth,’ Mat. v. 13; and Isa. vi. 13, ‘The holy seed shall be the substance thereof.’ But when all join in one, in a neglect of God, and common enmity to his ways; then, I say, the judge of the earth will do his work, then wrath breaketh out.

(2.) When it groweth impudent and outrageous, as if they would obliterate and extinguish the law of God, or take away all force and authority from it by their perverse actions and pernicious examples. They do not obliquely, and under the show of divers pretences, break God’s laws, but openly set themselves against him, and break a commandment without any shame: Isa. iii. 9, ‘They declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not;’ yea, ‘they glory in their shame,’ Phil. iii. 19; as if they would out-face heaven and religion at once, and all honesty and ingenuity by their debaucheries. Bold-faced sin doth not go long unpunished.

(3.) Desperate incorrigibleness. All remedies are unprofitable, and hope of amendment taken away, Jer. vi. 3; Ezek. xxiv. 13, ‘When God would have purged them, they would not be purged.’ He trieth them with several conditions, he hath a love for them as they are his creatures; judgments and mercies they had, yet they are no change lings, but go on as wicked as ever. God trieth key

after key, one providence after another, yet not a whit the better or wiser; but are like men that have slept: still abuse his patience, and defeat all the methods of his grace, show the same corruption they did before.

(4.) When they run into unnatural sins, and the corruption of human society is endangered: Lev. xviii. 27, 28, 'For all these abominations have the men of the land done,' &c.; when men are so wicked and filthy that a man needs to be a criminal to be acceptable to them; they think it strange that others run not into the same excess of riot, 1 Peter iv. 4; certainly then God needeth to strike in, that virtue may be upheld in some kind of reputation.

[2.] Their violence and vexation of the saints. It was Bede's observation, *Odium in religionis professores*, &c.—that hatred of the professors of religion was that undid his country. God is angry when his people are wronged; the world is kept up for their sakes. Were it not for the elect to be gathered, time would be no more; for their sakes kingdoms and churches are preserved; they are the staff and stay, the chariots and horsemen of Israel. God is tender of them as the apple of his eye; therefore, when they are wronged, and men are not only evil themselves, but haters of those that are good, and do not only break God's laws themselves, but would force others to do so, God will hold no longer. As their violence increaseth, so doth their ruin hasten, Rev. xii. 12. When they abuse their power to such an end, though God may bear with them for a time till they have done their work, yet he will reckon with them: Zech. i. 15, 'I am sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease; for I was a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.' God will not forget his relation to his sinning people, and will not suffer them to be abused out of measure. When they would destroy and root out whom God would only correct and purge, it is a sign of their approaching ruin. Now these things should be considered by us to a good end; not to feed an evil humour, or to increase our hatred and exasperation against a party, whom, it may be, we hate too much already with a carnal hatred; but to a good purpose. Partly that we may not be too confident of carnal ease too soon. God will, it may be, have the enemies' cup yet fuller, and that they shall appear more in their own colours. And so our trials may be greater. We know not the bounds of the Lord's patience. We, that are apt to extenuate our own sins, are apt to aggravate the sins of others, look upon them in the glass of fashion, and cry too soon, It is time. But of this by and by. And partly that we may see the greatness of our transgressions, by which we have provoked the Lord to give us up into the hands of such men as blaspheme his name every day, Isa. lii. 5. Our sins were full in our kind, in the abuse of God's truth and worship; and though not such moral wickedness, yet a great deal of spiritual wickedness. And God is more quick and severe upon us, and will not bear that in a professing people that he beareth in others: 'Judgment begins at the house of God,' 1 Peter iv. 17. The cup of trembling goes round, and his own people drink first, and our staggering is not yet over; in time they shall pledge us. God beareth with Balaam, though he tempted him again and again, when he would not bear with the young prophet whom the lion slew. He bore with the Philistines a long time ere they were plagued. We feel the smart of the rod sooner, Zech. xii. Yet it is apparent our kind of sins were grown to a ripeness, our self-seeking, factions, turbulency, unquietness under

government, abuse of Christian liberty, uncharitable divisions among ourselves, vexing one another, vain opinions, slighting God's ministers and ordinances. And partly that we may be humbled for their sins. It should be a grief to us to see men break God's laws, to see men out-dare heaven. David fasted for his enemies, Ps. xxxv. 14-16; and Ps. cxix. 136, 'Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law;' because God is so much dishonoured, human nature so much corrupted. If more of this spirit were stirring, it were the better for us. And partly that we may fear ourselves. We are bound up in the same community, and when God judgeth them, how shall we escape? The Jews have a proverb, that two dry sticks may set a green one on fire. The meaning is, the godly man may fall in the common calamity: wheat is plucked up with the tares. 'God saith in Deut. vii. 22, that they should not destroy all the Canaanites, 'lest the beasts of the field should increase upon them.' The safety of his people are involved in the safety of their sinning and persecuting enemies. A hedge of thorns may serve for a fence to a garden of roses, and all the relief we have is, The Lord can make a distinction: 2 Peter ii. 9, 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.'

305

3. Why doth God take this time? (1.) For his own glory. His justice is more discovered when men have filled up their measure: Ps. li. 4, 'That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.' It justifieth God's proceedings, and maketh us the more inexcusable. So also his power; it is God's time to send help and remedy, when all things are gone to utter confusion; when things are at the most desperate pass, Ps. cxxiv. 3-5, in our low estate, then is God seen. (2.) Hereby God's work upon Mount Zion is promoted. His people are humbled when their adversaries are chief, and rage against them: Ps. cxxiii. 4, 'Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with contempt of the proud.' When things come to extremity their prayers are quickened: Ps. cxxx. 1, 'Oat of the depths I cried unto thee, O Lord.' They are fitted to prize mercy, Ps. cii. 13, 14. They that thought it no great matter to have a standing temple, delight in the dust of a ruinous heap. Then shepherds' tents look lovely, we set a higher rate on despised ordinances. In short, they are waiting and praying, and humbling their souls before God.

Fourth consideration. When a flood of wickedness is thus broken out, we may mind God of the deliverance of his people. But what needs that? Doth not God know his seasons, and will not he exactly observe them? In the answer I shall show you why and how.

1. Why? (1.) Because God loveth to be awakened by the prayers of his people; and when he hath a mind to work, he sets the spirit of prayer a-work: 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.' So thus and thus will I do: Ezek. xxxvi. 37, 'Yet for this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel.' We are to give a lift by our prayers; it is a time of finding, Ps. xxxii. 6. (2.) He hath put an office upon us. God acts the part of a judge, we as solicitors and remembrancers: Isa. lxii. 6,7, 'I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace night nor day. Ye that

make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.' We are to put God in mind, so that we but do our duty.

2. How? The principle and manner must be right.

[1.] The principle; be sure it be not the impatiency of the flesh, or love to our own ease, or a mere tediousness and irksomeness of the cross. Be sure it be not passion and a principle of revenge, but a desire of promoting his honour and vindicating his glory. David doth not say how troublesome they were to himself, but, They make void thy law; as if he had said, Lord, if my own interest were only concerned, I would not open my mouth, nor ever call upon thee to revenge my private quarrels; but it is my zeal for thy honour and ordinances; not that I have received injury, but thy worship is corrupted. Work, else what will become of thy name and poor people? Offences done against God should grieve us more than our own injuries, and we should rather regard the general interest of religion than any personal offence done to us. There is often a carnal spirit breathing in our prayers, and our zeal is fleshly; the people of God beat it back: Ps. cxv. 1, 'Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory;' and Ps. lxxiv. 10, 'O Lord, how long shall the adversary reproach, and the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?' The godly can endure their own troubles better than they can bear the open dishonouring and blaspheming of God. This is the true sense, but because the heart is deceitful—(1.) Be sure your cause be good, your adversaries evil, that ye may say, Ps. lxxiv. 22, 'Arise, O Lord, plead thine own cause.' It is not for your sins, but your righteousness; the hatred is not against the body. Indeed they pretend some little faults. It is as if a leper should hate a man because he hath some pimples in his face. Some thing they would lay to their charge. (2.) That we use all means with God and men to reclaim them, praying for them: Mat. vi. 44, 'Pray for them that despitefully use you.' Mourning for their sins: Jer. xxiii. 19, 'My soul shall weep in secret for your pride.' Heaping coals of fire upon their heads by all acts of kindness, condescending to them as far as possibly we can, Rom. xii, 18. These arts become his kingdom, that is not to be planted by force, but consent, them that would have the zeal of God, not of a party. (3.) Be sure your principle be zeal for God's glory, not a desire to establish your own interest, and to see revenge on a party that differeth from you: Luke ix. 54, 55, 'You know not what spirit you are of.' Religious affections overset us, and fleshly zeal puts on a holy spiritual guise and mask, and we think it is for the honour of Christ. (4.) Not against particular persons, but the opposite faction to godliness. In general, destroy all the enemies of Christ, &c.

[2.] For the manner how. We must seek to God, first, with submission, not prescribing to God, nor making a snare to ourselves. We, that have short and revengeful spirits, cannot judge aright of God's patience, which is infinite, out of fleshliness and affection to our own ease. And so our times, John vii. 6. Your time is always ready; if none of these be, yet we are limited creatures, and great is the wisdom of God and his power admirable; it doth not belong to us to guide the affairs of the world, Ps. lxxviii. 41. We must not prescribe opportunity to him, fixing times. Besides that, it argueth a spirit too much addicted to, and eyeing of, temporal happiness. It doth much unsettle us

and harden others. The devil maketh advantage of our disappointment. Therefore not only when it seemeth seasonable to us we may seek to him for deliverance. Once more, there are other things concur besides the enemies' ripeness for judgment,—preparing his people's hearts, fitting those instruments for his work; therefore 'all is left to God's will, and let him take his time.

Use of all is—

1. To teach us how to behave ourselves in these times with patience, and yet with hope and waiting. It is the time of Jacob's trouble, but there will be a time of deliverance, Jer. xxx. 7. With patience; God will have a time to chastise his people. We must bear it patiently; it will make crosses sit easy; they may be greater and longer than our joys: Ps. xc. 15, 'Make us glad, according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.'

2. With hope let us expect it. Certainly it will not exceed the time limited by God. That time is not long: Isa. xiii. 22, 'Her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged;' Ezek. xii. 21-28, 'And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord, I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I am the Lord: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged.' Faith should see it as present, approaching; and then let us wait his leisure, minding God in prayer.

SERMON CXXXIX.

Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine god.— VER. 127.

IN the words we have—

1. A note of inference, *therefore*.

2. The duty inferred, *I love thy commandments*.

3. The degree of that love, *above gold*; amplified by the repetition, with some advantage, in the expression, *yea, above fine gold*.

Gold, by a synecdoche, is put for all worldly things, the comforts and profits of this life, as in many other places; as Ps. xix. 10, 'More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.' The two bastard goods with which the world is

enchanted are pleasure and profit. Old people are all for profit, young people are all for pleasure. Now both these, truly so called, are found in the word of God. So in Prov. viii. 10, 11, ‘Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that are to be desired are not to be compared to it.’ So Prov. viii. 19, ‘My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenues than choice silver.’ So Prov. iii. 14, ‘For the merchandise thereof is better than gold; and the gain thereof than fine gold.’ So Prov. xvi. 16, ‘How much better is it to get wisdom than gold? and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver?’ This comparison is used so often for two reasons:—

1. Because it is more prized in the world. All things that have a goodness in them have a certain bait suitable to the several appetites of men; but in most men’s opinions gold seemeth chiefly to be desired, partly for its beauty, but chiefly for its use, it being the great instrument of commerce that doth all things in the world. The corruption of man’s heart addeth a greater price to it, and therefore is the thirst of it so unsatisfied, Now the word, and that wisdom and godliness which it teacheth, is far above gold and fine gold,

2. Because it is the usual temptation to draw off men from the love and study and obedience of the word. Babylon’s abominations are offered to the world in a golden cup: Rev. xvii. 4, ‘And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.’ Preferments are the baits of that black religion. True Christianity consists in sound graces; pseudo-Christianity in pomp and state and worldly advantages; and the apostle telleth us, 1 Tim. vi. 10, ‘That the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith.’ Therefore doth the Spirit of God so often compare spiritual things to gold; and here David preferreth his love to the word before the worldling’s love to gold, yea, fine gold. For mark, it is not, More than I love gold, but, More than any man. Some have an ardent desire of it, however it be mortified in God’s children.

First, For the note of inference, together with the duty inferred, ‘Therefore I love thy commandments.’ Some refer it to God’s taking his time to work, as the judge of the world in punishing the wicked for their disobedience and contempt of his law; as if he had said, Lord, though thou dost connive, and hold thy hands for a time, yet I know thou wilt undertake the defence of the righteous, and not let the wickedness of the wicked go unpunished; it will cost them dear in the issue, ‘therefore I love thy commandments,’ &c. This sense I cannot exclude. If I thought fit to prosecute it, it would yield this doctrine, that a little faith would help us to continue our affection to the word of God, notwithstanding the wickedness of those that oppose it. For in truth here this wickedness doth soon come to an end: Ps. lxxiii. 18, ‘Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down into destruction.’ But I rather refer it to the latter clause, ‘They have made void thy law; therefore I love thy commandments.’

Doct. The more others despise the ways and laws of God, the more should a gracious heart love and esteem them.

So doth David profess that his love to God's ways was so far from ceasing that he found it increased rather.

Reason 1. Because the ways of God are still the same they were before. If there be any difference, they only need to be more owned by us with greater zeal and cheerfulness because they are despised and forsaken by others. God is the same still, heaven the same, and the scriptures the same, whether we have company to walk with us in heaven's way, yea or no; and therefore, why should not a Christian be the same he was before? Their contempt and hatred of God's ways doth not make void our obligation to God and the bonds of our duty to him. If God had only required us to be good when we may be so with safety and ease, and would dispense with us at other times when religion is in disgrace, then indeed a Christian might change his course, and run with the cry as others do. But God had required in the worst times we should take God's part, and stand for him in the worst places, and keep his name even there where Satan's throne is, Rev. ii. 13, and be saints, though in Nero's household, Phil. iv. 22, under the nose of a raging persecutor. And as God is the same, so his ways are the same. Their contempt and hatred of holiness doth not hinder the loveliness of it to a spiritual eye. There is a beauty in God's despised ways: Heb. xi. 25, 'Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.' He saw more excellency in the tents of Jacob than in the courts of Pharaoh. When the outward glory of his ways is darkened, and they are put under reproach and trouble, yet their inward beauty still remaineth, and may be seen by a spiritual, though not by a carnal eye; by those that will not judge according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment, John vii. 24. The external glory, which is the favour of the world, out ward prosperity and countenance, is foreign and accidental; but this is essential, and ever remaineth. And as holiness is the same, so the scriptures are the same; they do not speak one thing to-day and an other to-morrow, and leave us at a latitude to put ourselves into all changes and postures: 2 Cor. i. 19, 'For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, was not yea and nay,' saith the apostle, 'but in him was yea.' The scripture doth not allow saying and unsaying, and building again the things which we have destroyed: Gal. ii. 18, 'For if I build again the things which I have destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.' Truth is the same in all ages; not like an almanack, to be changed every year, or calculated peculiarly for one meridian. Nor is it always the same. Indeed, in some lesser things, that serve only for the conveniency of religion, we may upon weighty grounds change practice, and do that which is good where best may not be had. So heaven is the same still; it not only serveth us as an antidote in prosperity, but as a cordial in adversity, and is at all times to be regarded. Well, then, since God, and holiness, and scripture, and heaven are always the same, why should not we? If there be change, it should be in the degree of our love, that it be greater than it was before, to repair God in point of honour, and to testify against the defection of others, that we are not of their stamp, who do not see by their eyes, nor walk by their principles, nor allow of their warpings.

Reason 2. God expects more from gracious hearts, because of their relation to him and acquaintance with him; and therefore, if others despise the laws of God, they should esteem them the more: John vi. 66, 67, 'From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will you also go away?' It goeth nearer to Christ's heart that those should forsake him that are trained up in his bosom, that the devil should steal away souls under his own arm. Whatever defection others make, yet that those who have tasted of his mercy, drunk of his cup, feasted with his loaves, have had experience of his grace, will ye also? He stood not upon the multitude's going so much as his disciples'. Therefore they should rouse up themselves in evil times.

Reason 3. The good and the bad do exercise and keep one another in breath and vigour. When there are but two factions that stand in opposition to one another, one apparently for God, the other apparently for Satan, it addeth zeal and indignation to both sides, and they mutually inflame one another, and are as Jeremiah's two baskets of figs, the good figs very good, and the evil figs very evil, Jer. xxiv. 3. When others are so very bad, it should not quench zeal but inflame it; we should be not only good, but very good. Corruption, the more it is opposed, the more it stormeth and groweth outrageous, as a river swelleth by opposing dams and banks against it, they rage upon restraints now the floods break loose. So on the other side, should grace be more earnestly and zealously exercised the more it is opposed, as the casting on of water sets the lime on fire. To be sure, their malice will put us to a great deal of trouble, and trouble is a time to exercise grace. To be much in prayer, and faith, and patience, and mortifying corruptions, and watchfulness, and wary walking, that we may neither take infection ourselves, nor give occasion to others to stumble at the ways of God: Col. iv. 3, 'Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time.' When they lived among unconverted heathens they should carry it wisely towards them, that they might not be occasions of stumbling or hardening. So by proportion those who profess the ways of God should carry it wisely towards such as they live amongst, who declare their non-regeneration by a profane life, and live like heathens, that they give no occasion to such adversaries of truth and holiness to speak reproachfully; but they should observe the apostle's rules, 1 Peter ii. 12, 15. Christians should be good in bad times, that the times may not be worse for them, nor they the worse for the times. They should labour to live down the vices and errors of the age wherein they live, and labour to save themselves from this untoward generation, and should cut off occasions from them that watch for occasions against them, and, like fishes, keep their freshness in salt water. Ham will scoff to surprise a Noah in a fault; when their foot slippeth, they will magnify themselves against them. Experience of the madness and fury whereby others are carried on in the ways of sin should more confirm others in the ways of God that are opposed by them. Surely such men would not hate what is evil, and so earnestly persecute what is good. *Non nisi grave bonum a Nerone damnari.* A good man would not choose by their liking and loathing. If any argument may be taken from them, it is to like the things the better because they slight them, and to love them because they persecute them. For it is to be presumed they will hate what is good, and love what is evil; and

though no certain argument can be concluded thence, yet their love is but an ill token; for Christ telleth us, 'The world will love its own,' John xv. 19. All things love what is suitable to themselves.

Reason 4. Unless our love be increased when men oppose and despise the laws of God, it will not hold out against so great a trial. Sin is very infectious at all times, and when it is common it is less odious. But the force of example is great; we think we may do as others do: a cold neutral love, or loose and general owning of the ways of Christ, will not bear us out. I confess this is a very great temptation that prevaileth with many: Mat. xxiv. 12, 'When iniquity aboundeth, the love of many will wax cold.' Loose professors are soon shaken off, and dead fish swim with the stream. Yea, some of notable eminency in the church may miscarry, but yet always they are such as had their worldly affections unbroken and unmortified: 1 Tim. vi. 11, 12, 'Some through the love of money, have erred from the faith; but thou, O man of God, follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, and patience, love, meekness, fight the good fight of faith.' There needs great diligence and fervency to increase in solid grace, or else we shall not dare to own God and his ways; yea, I confess the soundest may be sorely shaken, and therefore need warning and confirmation. The godly have seeds of the same evils which draw away others. Evil example is very forcible, especially when it is general. In a time of public infection it is hard to preserve health. And then usually sin is disguised and carried on under plausible pretexts, and evil men blinded by their interests may easily warp, *Ingeniosa res est esse Christianum*, as Hierom of an Arian time. It is a matter of skill to discern God's interest, and by consequence our duty. The prophet complaineth, 'I am a man of polluted lips, and I dwell among a people of polluted lips,' Isa. vi. 5. We contract some contagion and taint from those among whom we live; grow careless of sabbaths by general profanation; take more liberty for the flesh when others wallow in all filthiness, and are given up to all manner of vanity. Therefore, as the force of example is great, the force of zeal should be greater, that we may stand for God, though we stand alone. As Elijah did: 1 Kings xix. 14, 'And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets by the sword; and I, even I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away.' We must keep up our savour in a corrupt age, as Noah did: Gen. vi. 9, 'Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God.' Lot lived more upright in Sodom, where he was besieged with temptations that made him constantly to stand upon his watch, than he did in the cave, when he neglected and grew secure. As fire burns hottest in the coldest weather, so a Christian's zeal, by a holy antiperistasis, should flame most in a corrupted, debauched age.

311

Reason 5. Because it is very acceptable to God, and a note of sincerity to hold out against trials, yea, to increase in zeal when others desert him. Many will flock to Christ, and resort to him in his prosperity. When religion is befriended, painted butterflies and gaudy carnalists will prove summer friends to him; but when winter frosts and blustering storms come, they are gone; like those that go to sea, not for a voyage to ride out all weathers, but for recreation: Christ maketh little of their friendship. But now, Luke xxii. 28, 29, 'Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations;

and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.' When David was crowned king in Hebron, then those that followed him in the wilderness were not forgotten, but preferred by him. To serve God in a crowd, and with store of company, is not so praise worthy. Every one will be in the fashion, and there is a revolution of fashions in religion; but to own him in a time of defection, when others look strange upon him; then to keep our zeal and strictness i& commendable. *Temporibus malis ausus esse bonus.*

312

Use 1. Information. That the general corrupt custom and example of those with whom we live is not a sufficient excuse for our sinning. It is so in the minds of many, but it is not so indeed. It is indeed a temptation, and a strong incitement; but temptations to the contrary do not excuse from duty. This will appear to you if you consider—

1. The state of a Christian; he is not of this world: John xv. 19, 'If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' He was separated for God's use in baptism, and must make good his baptismal vow, live as one that is separated from the world and their course of life, that he may act for God: Ps. iv. 3, 'Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself;' therefore it is no excuse for him to say, I do but as others do; he is to reckon his hours by the sun, not the town-clock; to take God's direction, not the voice of the multitude, as one of their stamp, and at liberty to comply with their fashions.

2. The course of God's dispensations, which is to exercise and try his children before he crowneth them. None go to heaven without their trials.

3. The duty of God's children, intimated in the cautions and descriptions and injunctions of the word: Exod. xxiii. 2, 'Not to follow a multitude to do evil; nor to walk according to the course of this world;' Eph. ii. 2, 'The lust of men,' 1 Peter iv. 2; nor the corruptions of the times: Rom. xii. 2, 'Be not conformed to this world,' &c. Many such hints everywhere, that show it a crime, &c.

4. The opposition of the wicked should make us more courageous; for then it is put to a plain contest, who shall have the better, Christ or Satan? Therefore we should discover that he that is in us is stronger than he that is in the world, 1 John iv. 4. Wicked men have their end and purposes if they can overcome the disciples of Christ, and discourage them from owning their profession. We are to be more than conquerors, Rom. viii. 37.

Use 2. We ought to be so far from being involved in the conspiracy of others against God, that our zeal should increase by others declining, and we should love religion when it is commonly despised. That is our commendation, *esse bonum facile est*, &c. Till we are *in termino*, we have our difficulties, till we are gathered to angels, ἔξω βέλους, out of gunshot. Our business is not to give way to evils, but to resist them with the greater courage. Indeed it is hard for a man to keep

himself free from the infection of the times he lives in. We all complain of the badness of the times; but let us not make them the worse for us. If we would be good in bad times, we need—

1. Much holiness and heavenly-mindedness, that we may be burning and shining lights, conducting men to Christ, as the star that shone at Christ's birth: Phil. ii. 15, 'That ye be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.' Noah, by preparing an ark, condemned the world, Heb. xi. 7. This is the way to appear for God in the lustre of real grace, when we are taken off from other means.

2. Much faith or foresight of things to come: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark.' To see the ruin of the wicked when prosperous, this kept David in his integrity: Ps. lxxiii. 17, 'I went into the sanctuary, then understood I their end.' When he was once able to look through their honours and greatness and riches by the light of the sanctuary, he overcame the temptation which did so greatly press and shake him. So here in the text, 'It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law; therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.' There is a worm in the root; they are under God's curse: Job v. 3, 'I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his habitation;' which predicteth their ruin, though little appearance of their fall.

3. There needs much zeal and strong love to God. When profaneness is in fashion, let us give check to it in our place, either as magistrates by appearing against evil-doers, as Nehemiah contended for God: Neh. xiii. 11, 'Then I contended with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken?' and ver. 17, 'Then I contended with the nobles of Judah. and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath-day?' Not like Gallio, that cared for none of these things. As ministers, more active against sin: Isa. lviii. 1, 'Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice as a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.' As governors of families, careful of ourselves and families: Josh. xxiv. 15, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' As private Christians, give out more of the lustre of grace: 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;' 1 Peter ii. 12, 'Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.' Not only stop the mouth of iniquity, but bring about the conversion of wicked men. Thus should every one of us in our place glorify God, and strive to make the times better: Rom. xii. 11, 'Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' That is a good time; serving the Lord can make a change, if we would ply this means. Thus did David serve his generation: Acts xiii. 36, 'For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep.' When you die, people will be able to say, We miss such a man; he was zealous against sabbath-breakers, and drunkards, and swearers; one that owned the people of God, a friend to religion.

4. Caution, that we be not carried away with the deluge of corruption: Gal. ii. 13, ‘The other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.’ Example hath a kind of compulsion in it; the best men can hardly stand out against it. It secretly insinuateth itself, weakeneth our love to God, abateth our care; therefore we cannot be enough watchful, that we be not secretly tainted, as a man in the sun tans unawares. As in times of common contagion, every man is careful of his diet and company, so should we watch to keep our garments clean and unspotted of the world.

314

5. Sincerity, not dissembling; as Josh. xiv. 8, ‘I wholly followed the Lord my God;’ not loving the ways of God on foreign respects, but their own internal reasons; otherwise a man soon miscarrieth, for these motives will be changed, and those very inducements that moved him to take up religion will move him also to cast it off. None but the solid Christian will hold out, whilst light chaff is carried about with every wind, and the carnal-minded cuts the coat of his profession to the fashion of the times. A false heart cannot long hold out: Prov. x. 9, ‘He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely; but he that perverteth his ways shall be known;’ that is, to his shame; cannot long dissemble his nature.

6. A fixed resolution, that we may not be easy, and merely do as others do. It is the resolved man that encounters temptations, and maketh them fly back, as arrows shot against a brazen wall. Though others fall, I will serve the Lord, whatever others do: Josh. xxiv. 15, ‘And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.’ If he meet with reproaches and scorns: 2 Sam. vi. 22, ‘And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight.’ If enticed by evil company: Ps. cxix. 115, ‘Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God.’ If threatened: Acts iv. 19, ‘But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.’ Thus they stood by a self-denying resolution; whereas the unresolved man, James i. 8, ‘is unstable in all his ways;’ is turned like a weathercock with every wind, fitteth his religion to every interest. God biddeth us thus unmovably to fix our selves: Jer. xv. 19, ‘Thus saith the Lord, Let them return unto thee, but return not thou to them.’ A man that would live quietly must either bring himself to the times, or expect the times should come over to him. A resolved man stayeth God’s leisure, doth not serve his conscience to fit the times, but waiteth till God fit the times to his conscience.

7. A true sight of the worth of spiritual things above carnal. This in the text, ‘More than gold, yea, fine gold.’ Till a man cometh to this, his conscience will not be guided by his religion, but his interest, and give up all for the world’s sake: 2 Tim. iv. 10, ‘Demas hath forsaken us, and loved the present world;’ Phil. iii. 19, 20, ‘Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also

we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' Loath to suffer, turn themselves into all shapes. God doth not command them, but themselves.

Secondly, The degree of his affection; whence this doctrine—

Doct. We ought not only to love the word, but to love it above all worldly things whatsoever.

1. Let me explain the grounds of our love to the word.

2. Speak of the degree of it.

1. Let me explain the grounds of our love to the word. We love the word, as it is the charter of our hopes and the rule of our duty. We have both respects in this psalm. As the charter of our hopes, ver. 111, 'Thy testimonies have I taken for an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.' As a rule of our duty, ver. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches;' and ver. 140, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' So that—

[1.] To love and esteem the word as the charter of our hopes is to love and esteem spiritual privileges, such as the favour of God, pardon of sins, peace of conscience, taking away the stony heart, and eternal life. To have a deep sense and value for such things is the fruit of faith. It is true that some loose velleities and general inclinations men, as men, have to their own happiness; but being but weakly persuaded of these things, they are but slightly affected with them and the promises that reveal them. Men that have no faith, but altogether live by sense, know nothing more excellent than gold or riches, which do all in the world. If God would let them alone here, to have their portion in Paris, they would part with their share in paradise, such dunghill-souls have they. Let God keep spiritual things for whom he will, so they may live at ease in the world, they never mind communion with God, or enjoyment of God; but gracious hearts love the word, as offering and revealing these things.

[2.] To love the word as a rule of duty is in effect to love holiness, loving things as suitable to our necessities, and as suitable to our dispositions. 'I love thy commandments,' saith David in the text, as urging and directing us to our duty. This is also proper to gracious souls, to them all outward things are but toys and trifles for our senses to play withal. The least grain of grace seemeth better to them than a mountain of gold. They have a spiritual discerning, and love things according to the nature and worth of them. The things themselves are not to be compared together, so should not our affections to them.

2. The degree of it, more than all riches, 'Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.' Take riches as riches, in that notion as the word implies happiness, abundance, contentment. The word of God containeth the true riches, both in the promises and precepts of it.

[1.] In the promises, to us are given, τὰ τίμια καὶ μέγιστα ἐπαγγέλματα, 'exceeding great and precious promises,' 2 Peter i. 4. There the great controversy is decided about the true happiness

and salvation, God or the creature; there you have the ‘unsearchable riches of Christ;’ Eph. ii. 7, ‘That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus.’ The riches of the glory of the saints’ inheritance: Eph. i. 18, ‘That ye may know what is the hope of your calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.’ These are things that make us truly rich: Rev. iii. 18, ‘I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.’ He is not rich that floweth in wealth and plenty, but he that hath Christ, and an interest in his benefits. They are possessors of all things, though they have nothing: 2 Cor. vi. 10, ‘As having nothing, yet possessing all things.’ A little serves the turn; they have the good things purchased by Christ, happiness enough if he can make them happy.

316

[2.] So in the precepts, they are means to work grace, the least dram of which is more worth than all things in the world. He is rich enough that is rich in faith: James ii. 5, ‘Hearken, my beloved brethren; hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom,’ in paradise, ‘which he hath promised to them that love him?’ It is more precious than the trial of gold: 1 Peter i. 7, ‘That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.’ The smallest measure of saving faith, or love to God, or fear of God, or repentance, is of more worth than what is most precious. The word of God does more enrich a man; and true benefit is to be preferred before counterfeit.

Reasons for the degree of our love.

1. From the worth of the word, the reward, and those benefits that are gotten by studying and obeying it; they exceed worldly things, as will appear, because the one suits with our bodily necessities, the other with our spiritual. Our bodily necessities are supplied by gold, our spiritual necessities by grace. Gold will not comfort a distressed conscience, no more than nosegay flowers a condemned man. *Quod si dolentem*, &c., saith Horace: Prov. xi. 4, ‘Riches avail not in the day of wrath.’ The one renders us acceptable to men, the other to God. The world knoweth all things after the flesh; they measure men by splendour and pomp of living; but it is grace that God approveth most, and accepteth most. Grace is of great price in the sight of God: 1 Peter iii. 4, ‘But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.’ The one much embaseth our nature; it is something more vile than us, therefore that affection is debased. But grace always ennobleth our nature, and is something above us. A greater affection is due to things above us than to things beneath us. The one is useful to us *in via*, the other *in patria*. Surely that which is of eternal use and comfort to us is better than that which is only of a temporal use. In our passage to heaven, we need gold and silver for the supply of our bodily necessities, and the support of outward life, so far as we have to do in the world; but with respect to the world to come, gold doth nothing; there we leave our wealth behind us, but our works follow us. Our treasure we quit when we die, but our grace we carry with us. Once more; the price by which things may be purchased showeth the worth of them. Wisdom

is of so great a price, that all the treasures of the world cannot purchase it: Job xxviii. 15-20, ‘It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof; it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire; the gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not he for jewels of fine gold: no mention shall be made of coral or of pearls; for the price of wisdom is above rubies: the topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.’ What cannot money do in the world? yet it can do nothing as to the procuring of grace. The apostle telleth us this is a dear-bought blessing: 1 Peter i. 18, 19, ‘Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversations, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot.’ To despise the favour of God, the image of God, is to despise the price that was paid for these things, to have lessening thoughts of the blood of Christ. To conclude; those we count lesser[15] gifts which we bestow upon friends than upon enemies. A man would give meat and drink unto enemies when they hunger and thirst; but other gifts of a greater value to friends and relations. God giveth his Christ, his Spirit, his grace to his friends, children, servants; but corn and wine and oil, these he giveth promiscuously, yea, to his enemies a larger portion. Surely, then, these are better than gold. Our love should be according to the value of things.

317

2. Because if the word be not preferred before earthly things, it is not received with any profit and good effect. Christ saith, ‘He that loveth anything more than me, is not worthy of me,’ Mat. x. 37. He that studieth to please his friends rather than Christ, or to gratify his interest more than his conscience, within a very little while his Christianity will be worth nothing. It is not a simple love, but a greater love that we show to worldly things: Mat. xiii. 44-46, ‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.’ We must part with all, rather than miss of his grace, all that is pleasant and profitable, renounce all other things. When Christ propounds his terms, he would have us surrender all to his will and pleasure: Luke ix. 23, ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.’ He must not avoid the cross by sinful shifts: we are ready to do so every day. These are the necessary terms, else we are not fit for the master’s use: 2 Tim. ii. 21, ‘If any man therefore purge himself from these, lie shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.’

3. Unless we love the word above riches, we cannot possess riches without a snare; then it will be not only hard, but impossible, to enter into the kingdom of heaven: Mark x. 23-27, ‘And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into

15 Qu. “greater”?—ED.

the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking about him, said, With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.' Riches will so prevail over us, and wholly sway us, if they be our chief good and portion, and we have not a higher end to check our love to them. If a man would have all things cleave[16] to him, he must be sure the world doth not sit nearest his heart; for if they do, such a man, as he is unfit for heaven, so he is unfit for the world too. If they be your good things, Luke xvi. 25, 'Son, remember thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things;' you will get and keep and use them otherwise than the word doth allow.

318

4. From the fruit of grace; where it is planted in the heart and prevaileth, the desire of wealth is mortified, worldly lust denied: Titus ii. 12, 'Teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts;' and desires of grace enlarged and increased: 1 Peter ii. 2, 'As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.' And when it prevaileth further, and to a higher degree, they come to Moses* frame, to count the worst of Christ better than the best of the world: Heb. xi. 26, 'Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.' Not only the graces of Christ, or the benefits of Christ, but the reproaches of Christ. So much is the world lessened, and the desires of grace increased. The heaviest part of Christ's cross is sweeter than the worldly plenty, where sin accompanieth it.

Use 1. To press us to get this esteem and love of the word above all earthly things: by what names soever they are called, whether gold or fine gold. Consider—

1. The word of God containeth the true riches, in comparison of which all other things are but a shadow.

2. Except God's word be clearly esteemed above earthly things, it is highly contemned. You would think yourselves highly slighted if once it should be put to the question whether you or an ass or a swine be better. The case is as clear whether it be better to have a child's toy or land of inheritance. You think it a disparagement of their reason. It is so to compare spiritual things with carnal: Prov. xvi. 16, 'How much better is it to get wisdom than gold, and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!'

3. The word of God observed and obeyed bringeth all earthly things along with it; gold and fine gold, so far as they are necessary and good for us: Mat. vi. 63, 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;' and 1 Tim. iv. 8, 'Godliness is profitable unto all things; having a promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.'

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16 Qu. "clean'?—ED.

It hath all kind of promises, it doth not come empty-handed; it bringeth in a portion in this life, and blessing in these outward things.

4. How constant the word is, and in one tenor: 2 Cor. i. 20, 'All the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen; unto the glory of God by us.' But worldly things are uncertain: 2 Sam. xix. 43, 'And the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye.' Compare this with the next words, 2 Sam. xx. 1, 'Sheba blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse.' The people cry Hosanna to Christ, and presently after, Crucify him. Peter once made a glorious confession of Christ, and afterwards a gross denial. Paul was received as an angel by the Galatians: Gal. iv. 14, 'My temptation which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus;' but afterwards accounted an enemy; ver. 16, 'Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?' Nebuchadnezzar flourishing in a palace of gold, Dan. iv. 30, 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of my kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty?' But a voice came to him from heaven, ver. 31, 'O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee.'

319

Use 2. Have we such an esteem and affection to the word of God? Then—

1. We will do that which in other cases a greater love would incline us to do; otherwise it is but a compliment; we will diligently exercise ourselves in the word of God. Labour is the fruit of love: 'Remembering your labour of love,' 1 Thes. i. 3. He that doth not take more pains in the pursuit of heavenly things than of carnal, doth not love the one above the other; for love is industrious: John vi. 27, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.' What a deal of pains do men take for a little pelf, to heap up treasure, and fill their houses with the good things of this world, and spend all their time and wit, their care and strength, on outward things! The stream runneth stronger for the world when there is no proportionable care taken for the benefits which the word offereth. God maketh offer of grace and glory. Men are as those that travel by water, and see buildings ashore, and praise them as they pass by, but never enter into them, never look after them more. If you are ready and earnest in the pursuit 0f the one, careless and cold in the other; you think no time enough for the one, but grudge all time for the other: it is a sign the one hath a greater share in our hearts than the other. We are to seek worldly things in some measure, because God hath appointed every one some work to do; but when there is such a manifest disproportion between our seeking the one and the other, it showeth which way our souls bend; if a nice difference, that hardly distinguished it, give suspicion, more especially when such a manifest disproportion.

2. We will part with the one for the other's sake, if carnal things can withdraw us from the pursuit of heavenly things: Heb. xii. 16. 'As Esau, who for one morsel of bread sold his birthright;' and heavenly things cannot make us to part with carnal things. Many make void the law to seek riches and wealth: 2 Tim. iv. 10, 'Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world;' break

God's commands for a small hire, and do so constantly, frequently, easily; it is a sign they do but compliment, and speak from their judgments, not from their hearts, when they say they love God better than the world, or fine gold, the chiefest excellency of it. Would a man dispense with his obedience to the word, and be thus affected? What is deliberately, habitually preferred, that hath the greater love. We can neglect our duty to God, trample upon God, Christ, heaven, scripture, conscience, duty, in the way to make speed after worldly things.

3. Wherein do we place the happiness of us and ours? To carnal men nothing is so dear as their present prosperity. Do you value yourselves to be more happy when you have a little grace and sense of God's love than if you had all the world: Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.' And for your children, do you rejoice to see them great or good? Many are delighted to see their children thrive in the world, do well in the world, but careless whether they have grace, yea or no. If you take the world still as a great part of your felicity, it is a sign you have low thoughts and respects for the word of God.

SERMON CXL.

Therefore, I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.—VER. 128.

IN this verse a child of God is set forth by two marks:—

1. His approbation and esteem of the law of God in all the parts and points thereof, *I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right*.

2. His hatred of all sin as contrary thereunto, *and I hate every false way*: the one as the effect of the other.

First, In the first branch, take notice of—(1.) The illative particle, *therefore*. (2.) His respect to the word, *I esteem thy precepts to be right*. In the Septuagint it is πρὸς πάσας τὰς ἐντολάς σου κατωρθούμην, I was directed or set right unto all thy laws. But it maketh no difference in effect from our translation; for they that esteem the law will embrace and practise it. (3.) The extent and universality of this respect: there is a double universal particle, *all thy precepts concerning all things*; the general drift of them, and every particular matter and circumstance that falleth under this law, it is all right; I approve of whatsoever thou commandest, without any reservation and exception; all, even all, have I approved.

1. Something might be observed from the illative particle: it is inferred from their making void of God's law.

Doct. In times of defection, when others slight, contemn, and for sake the ways of God, we should approve and esteem them the more.

The reasons are—

1. To make amends for the contempt of others: 2 Peter iv. 14, 'On their parts he is evil spoken of; on your part glorified.' Let not God want his glory; if he be dishonoured by their sins, he should be the more honoured by your obedience. It concerneth us to look that God be no loser. As the sea, what it loseth in one place, it gaineth in another; or as a river, what it loseth in breadth, and is pent within narrow channels, it gets in depth; so you should give him the more respect the more it is denied him by others; the sincere professors of the name of God should be the more earnest.

2. To show that we do not choose the ways of God upon foreign reasons, as public countenance and consent. Many men owe their religion not to grace, but to the favour of the times; it is in fashion; they may profess it at a cheap rate, because none contradict it. Indeed it showeth they are extremely bad, that are bad when they may be good without any loss to themselves; but it doth not show they are good, that are only good in good times. Dead fish swim with the stream. They do not build upon the rock, but set up a shed leaning to another man's house, which costs them nothing; carried with a multitude, are not able to go alone in a good way; if they be religious, it is for others' sakes. Then is integrity discovered when persons dare be good in bad times, as Noah was said to be an upright man, because he was perfect in his generation: Gen. vi. 9, 'When all flesh had corrupted their way.' And so it is said, Job vii. 9, 'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger;' that is, when there are discouragements and oppressions, as a resolved traveller holdeth on his journey, whether he meeteth with fair way or foul, good weather or bad.

3. There is an antiperistasis in grace as well as nature. Every quality, when it is pent up, is the stronger. Stars shine brightest in the darkest night. Fountain-water is hottest in winter, when the heat is pent up. In bad times good men are best; wicked men's badness exerciseth and increaseth good men's graces. The more odious sin appeareth in them, the more grace is strengthened in the saints; their looseness maketh you strict; their vanity and carelessness maketh you serious; their intemperance maketh you sober; their worldliness and sensuality maketh you spiritual; as they are instances of the cursed vigour of nature, you are instances of the sacred power of grace, Phil. ii. 15, shining as lights in the world 'in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation;' to be eminently holy among a company of profane, godless, atheistical spirits, showing forth the lovely beauty of holiness.

4. To show the difference between the people of God and others; and this is a fruit of God's eternal choice. God hath made a difference in the purposes of his grace, and they discover the

difference in the course of their conversations: John xvii. 25, ‘The world hath not known thee, but these have known thee, that thou hast sent me, and hast chosen them out of the world.’ The opposite ignorance and obstinacy of the world showeth their acknowledgment of Christ was of more value and acceptation. When the world neither knew nor believed on him, but rather opposed and persecuted him, they owned Christ, and so walked in a countermotion to the times.

5. To defeat the enemies’ purpose, which is to hinder the success of the gospel, and destroy all affection and respect to the word and ways of God, and that the service of God should fall to the ground; as we hold a staff the faster, when one would wrest it out of our hands: Titus i. 9, ‘Holding fast the faithful word.’ The pastor of the church should be good at holding and drawing, as the word signifieth; so people’s zeal should be the more kindled in the worst times. God hath a number that do fear him; Christ is never a king without subjects, nor a head without a church; he ruleth in the midst of his enemies, Ps. cx. 1; therefore he hath some to rule over. Where Satan’s throne is, there he hath some to confess his name. Elijah thought himself left alone, yet then God had reserved to himself seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal.

322

Use. It is very seasonable for us in these times to mind this; therefore—

1. That we may increase in practical godliness. Now wickedness is broken loose and the law is made void, this should not damp our zeal, but quicken it. You should walk with God, as Noah and David did, in the worst of times: yea, the badness of the age you live in should make you the more wise, more circumspect, more humble, more heavenly; as fire burneth hottest in the coldest weather. Study to serve God in thy generation. A man that is not good in the age he liveth in, would never be good. A lily will thrive in a wilderness, and a brier is but a brier though it grow in paradise. Their fury in sin should warn you of your duty to God. Shall a lust prevail more with them to damn themselves, than the love of God and the hope of salvation with you? shall they act more regularly to their ends? What zeal and earnestness have they in their course, and how open and bold-faced in sin! We read that Pambo wept when he saw a woman dressing herself curiously to please her wanton lover, to see her take so much pains to undo her soul, and that he had not been so careful to please God, and provide things honest in the sight of God, as she to please herself.

2. They are set up as warnings to us, as a beacon on fire warneth all the country to be in arms. You see what it is to give way to the beginnings of sin, not to be under the blessed conduct of God’s Spirit. Some are notoriously wicked, judicially given up to be more visibly under the dominion of sin, that others may take warning how they come into that woful slavery: Phil. iii. 19, 20, ‘For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, who glory in their shame, who mind earthly things; but our conversation is in heaven.’

3. It should make us fly to God for grace when the whole world lieth in wickedness: Isa. vi. 5, ‘I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips.’ It is hard to converse

with defiled ones and not be defiled, to keep ourselves unspotted from the world: Ps. cvi. 35, 'They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.' The contagion of sin overspreads presently, as a man by touching that which was unclean became unclean. We easily catch a sickness from others, but we cannot convey our health to them.

Use 2. Teacheth us to keep up our profession even in lesser truths: 'I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things.' When men would wrangle us out of our duty, we are to be πιστοὶ ἐν ὀλίγῳ, faithful in a little. Great matters depend on little things. We are tried, ἐν τῇ παρουσῃ ἀληθείᾳ, 2 Peter i. 12, by the 'present truths,' whether we will own the ways of God: Rev. xiv. 13, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,' or for the Lord, 'from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labour.' Why 'from henceforth?' Why! before the sufferings of Christians were from heathens and professed enemies, and they were acknowledged blessed as dying for the Lord. But now, when antichrist and false Christians came up, they did pretend to be for Christ, and friends to him, and this might be a discouragement to them in their suffering; but saith the Holy Ghost, 'From henceforth blessed are they which die for the Lord,' when pseudo-Christians begin to come up, and persecute the heavenly Christians. It is as blessed a thing to suffer under pseudo-Christians and antichristianism as it was to suffer under heathens and pagans, professed enemies to Christianity. I speak of this, because the orthodoxy of the world is usually an age too short. In things publicly received, it is easy to be right Christ is forced to gain upon the world by inches. A man may acknowledge the Trinity, the satisfaction of Christ, among Papists; but it is exceeding praiseworthy to own Christ when others scorn and reject him. The world will allow us to esteem the ways of God in some lesser things, that are out of controversy and are not maligned; but this esteem must have that extent as becometh the people of God, to have a hearty esteem of all the precepts of God, and all things contained therein.

323

Secondly, Let me come to his respect to the ways of God; and from his respect, with the extent, I shall observe this doctrine:—

Doct. That it becometh the people of God to have a practical heart-engaging esteem of all the precepts of God, and all things contained therein.

Let me show you what is this esteem the children of God have for his precepts.

1. There is something implied and presupposed.

2. Wherein it doth formally consist.

3. The qualifications of a right and saving esteem of the ways of God.

1. There is something implied and presupposed before we can come to esteem the precepts of God. As—

[1.] Knowledge and a right discerning. This is necessary, partly that a man may be able to make a distinction between good and evil, otherwise he cannot esteem the good and eschew the evil, for 'without knowledge the heart is not good,' Prov. xix. 2. If we should stumble blindfold upon a good way, we are not the more accepted with God, nor advantaged in our spiritual course. The clearer our light, the warmer our love. The more clear and; certain apprehension we have of spiritual things, our faith is more steadfast, love more vehement, joy more sound, hope more constant, patience more sublime, our pursuit of true happiness more earnest. And partly because a man cannot esteem that which he knoweth not. The will being *caeca potentia*, blind in itself, followeth the direction and guidance of the understanding. The ignorance of the nature and necessity of holiness is the cause of the neglect of it: John iv. 10, 'If thou knewest the gift,' &c. Many condemn good for evil, take evil for good, boldly rush into sin, reject the ways of God for want of knowledge. But then it is spiritual illumination that begets estimation, 1 Cor. ii. 14. The truth and worth of spiritual things must be seen by a spiritual eye. When the Spirit enlighteneth a man, he beginneth to see that which he knew not before, to see things in another manner.

324

[2.] Advertency, or application of the mind to the object or things esteemed; that he seriously consider the matter, and what it is best to do; it is not a sudden, rash undertaking. The scripture speaketh of 'applying our hearts to wisdom,' Ps. xc. 12; and Prov. ii. 2, 'Apply thy heart to understanding;' Prov. xxiii. 12, 'Apply thine heart to instruction, and thine ears to the ways of knowledge.' Make it your business seriously to consider things that differ. But then—

2. Wherein lies this esteem, or wherein doth it formally consist? Esteem is an approbation of the will, or a hearty love. There is the approbation of the understanding, and the approbation of the will. The approbation of the understanding is a naked sense, or an acknowledgment of what is good: Rom. ii. 18, 'Thou knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent.' There is an excellency in holiness that winneth esteem, even there where it is not embraced. All convinced men see the evil of sin, and are half of the mind to quit it; they approve the law which they violate by a bare naked approbation. But then there is the approbation of the heart or will; there is love and liking in it, and this is called esteem. This is seen in two things—consent and choice: consent, to take this law for our rule; and choice, whatever temptation we have to the contrary. Men choose what they highly esteem. In short, it is such an approbation as doth engage affection, such an affection as doth engage practice. Esteem is the fruit of love.

[1.] There is a consenting to the law that it is good, Rom. vii. 16. There is a difference between assent and consent. A man may *assent* to the truth and goodness of the law that doth not *consent* to the goodness of it; as the devils assent to the truth of God's being, that do not consent to take him for their portion, James ii. 19. Therefore, besides the advertency of the understanding, there is the consent or approbation of the will. Paul speaketh good words of the law: Rom. vii. 12, 'The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just, and good,' νόμος and ἐντολὴ—the law in general, and that commandment which wrought such tragical effects in his heart, that rifled all his confidence

and hopes, and left him wounded with the sense of sin; it is holy in teaching duty to God, just in prescribing duties to our neighbour, good in respect to ourselves; a law becoming God to give and us to receive, suitable and profitable. Thus should we approve and like the law of God.

[2.] Choice, whatever temptation we have to the contrary; a preferring or prevailing love, a heart-engaging approbation, that doth prevailingly determine the soul to the ways of God. *Non differunt re consensus et electio,* saith Aquinas, *sed ratione tantum, ut consensus dicatur, secundum quod placet ad agendum; electio autem secundum quod praefertur his quae non placent*—consent to the law and choice of the law are all one and the same act, distinguished by divers respects and considerations. It is called consent to the law, as it approveth of what the law adviseth; and it is called choice or esteem, as it preferreth the law and our obedience to it above other things. It is *actualis praelatio unius rei prae altera,* a preferring one thing above another.

Thirdly, I come to the properties or qualifications of this esteem.

1. It is not a simple, but comparative approbation. There is a twofold act of judgment—the first act and the second. The first act is that whereby I distinguish good from evil, and pronounce the one to be embraced, the other eschewed; approve the one, disapprove the other. But there is a comparative approbation; that is, that which the understanding judgeth best, all circumstances considered, better than all other things that can be represented. This is the proper notion of esteem: Heb. xi. 26, 'Esteeming the reproach of Christ,' &c. We approve of many things simply, and in the first act, which we disallow in the second, when we consider them as invested with some difficulty and unpleasantness, or overpoised with contrary desires, when we compare them with the pleasure and profit which we must forsake; it consents to walk in the ways of God, as Orpah will follow Naomi into the land of Israel, if she may do it without inconveniency, Ruth i. 14. The young man esteemed salvation worthy to be inquired after, Mark x. 20, but is loath to forego his earthly possessions to purchase that inheritance. When the judgment that we make of the thing simply considered in itself, and of the thing as considered with all circumstances, as it cometh in comparison with other things that must be endured or foregone.

2. There is a judgment of general estimation, and a judgment of particular application. By the one I bind duty upon others; by the other I engage my own heart, as the expression is, Jer. xxx. 21, 'Who is he that engageth his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord;' to engage his heart to take God for his portion. An instance we have in David: Ps. lxxiii. 28, 'But it is good for me to draw near to God.' I may approve many things as good, for which I have no appetite my self. Many will yield that it is good to serve God that cannot work, or do not engage their heart to it. Many approve piety in the general; it is good to be religious, to live a holy life; but when it cometh to our own case, when we are to abstain from this or that sin, we draw back. Many know what things are more excellent, but do not practise or embrace them; commend those that are religious, but do not imitate them. Acts v. 13, the people highly esteemed the Christians, but yet would not become Christians themselves: Ps. xlviii. 14, 'This God is our God for ever and ever.' Many a wicked man judgeth it

best for him to continue his evil courses, and thinketh religion is good for other men, but it is not good for him; but God's children are of another mind.

3. It is not a slight and superficial esteem, but such as is deep and solid: Mat. xiii. 20, 'He heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it.' It is a blessed thing to hear of the pardon of sin, Heb. vi. 5, to taste of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come; as they that cheapen wines taste, though they do not go through with the bargain; some inclination of heart, half a mind to be thoroughly godly and religious: John v. 35, 'They rejoiced in his light for a season.' They were much taken with John for a while, and the novelty and excellency of his doctrine. But when is this esteem deep and solid? It may be known—(1.) By the root of it; (2.) The ground and formal object of it; (3.) The manner or way how we come by it.

[1.] The root of it When the root of this esteem is a vital principle of grace: Mat. xiii. 21, 'He hath not root in himself.' The word is not ingrafted, James i. 21. The people had a good inclination: 'All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do,' Deut. v. 29. But, 'Oh! that there were such an heart in them, that 'they would fear me and keep all my commandments always,' &c. They had a mind to do well; but where faith, fear, and love are not planted, there may be some stirrings of conscience, but not a full purpose of heart. There is the approbation of an awakened and enlightened conscience, and the approbation of a renewed heart. A convinced man approveth, and a converted man approveth, but in a different manner. The one is but a flash, like fire in straw, the other hath a durable affection.

326

[2.] When the ground and formal object of it is not a temporal, natural, or carnal motive, but the moral goodness of the law; because it is the pure and holy word and will of God, who is the lawgiver, whose authority is absolute. There may be carnal motives to incline us to esteem the word, as the novelty of John's doctrine: John v. 35, 'They rejoiced in his light for a season;' delight to hear a plausible and rational discourse, as Ezekiel's hearers, Ezek. xxxiii. 32, 'And lo thou art to them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, that can play well upon an instrument; for they hear thy words, but do them not.' Or carnal motives, as they Gen. xxxiv. 22, 23, 'Herein will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised. Shall not their cattle and their substance be ours? Only let us consent unto them,' &c. And so temporal interests. Religion hath a portion for which it is courted. The consent of many to the law is the same which Mahometans have to the Alkoran; education in it, ancestors embracing of it, the countenance of the law, the custom of the country, &c.

[3.] The manner or way how we come by it, by much prayer and serious deliberation. Some by chance are surprised and affected with a good motion, suddenly good, but habitually bad; they will in all haste become religious, but, alas! this estimation or approbation of God's ways is entertained but for a time, but afterwards vanisheth and cometh to nothing. There must be a clear distinct knowledge of the excellency of God's ways: otherwise in a fit, or in a good mood, we choose that which is good; but the interest in evil not being renounced in heart, it causeth an easy retreat into the former sinful course.

4. It must be such an esteem as hath a lively and effectual influence upon our hearts and ways. There is a liking that only produceth a velleity and wish, and doth not engage the soul to prosecute the things willed, or forsake the things nilled; but there is such an effectual liking and esteem as will produce a constant, habitual willingness, that will have the authority of a principle, and hath a powerful command over the whole soul, to set it a-working to do the will of God, and will admit of no contradiction by contrary desires, but maketh us act with life, power, and earnestness. Cold and inconstant wishes produce no fruit in the heart. The general course of most men's lives is as if they had no liking to the law of God. It may be they may dislike and sacrifice some of their weaker lusts and smaller interests, which they can well spare, but corruption doth ordinarily bear sway in their hearts and lives. In the text it is, 'I esteem all thy precepts, -and hate every false way.' It is true, a man that approveth the law is not wholly freed from sin. There are sins of ordinary infirmity, that cleave to us while we are in the world, yea, taint our best actions: Isa. lxiv. 6, 'But we are all as an unclean thing, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.' And sometimes, though there be a principle of grace, a child of God may be overborne by the violence of a temptation, carried into presumptuous sins, which may make strange havoc in the soul. David prayeth, Ps. xix. 14, that God would keep him from presumptuous sins; but for the most part the children of God are influenced by their consent and esteem of the law of God. And the renewed part for the generality hath the upper hand, and prevaileth, and the flesh is weakened; as the house of David grew stronger and stronger, 2 Sam. iii. 1, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.

327

5. It must be a universal, not partial esteem: 'I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right;' Ps. cxix. 6, 'When I have respect to all thy commandments;' Luke i. 6, 'Zachary and Elizabeth walked in all the commandments and ordinances of God blameless;' Acts iii. 22, 'Him shall you hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you;' and he shall fulfil all my will. It is not enough to be right in commands in general, or the lump, but in this and that particular; not in some, but in all. We pretend to give up ourselves to the will of God in the general, but particulars we stick at. Men are convinced that holiness is necessary, that they must have some religion; therefore when they take up duty in the lump, and abstract notion or naked consent, it doth not exasperate opposite propensions: 'Ye cannot serve the Lord,' &c., saith Joshua, Josh. xxiv. 18, 19; but when they come to particulars, and see what it is to wait upon a holy and jealous God, they tire and grow weary: so that there must be a consent and purpose to obey, not some, but all and every one, without exception; not partial, like that of Herod to John: Mark vi. 20, 'He did many things.' The worst man in the world loveth some good and hateth some evil, but he doth not esteem all God's commandments in every point. Nay, the great enemy of our salvation, Satan, can be content to let us yield to God in many things, if he would be contented with half our duty: one sin reserved keepeth afoot his interest in our hearts, as a bird tied by the leg is fast enough. The devil will suffer men to do many things, but if he hath them fast by one lust, be it an inclination to sensuality, or love to the world, he is contented. The world likes many things in religion; they are good and profitable for men; but sticketh at others. To live godly in Christ Jesus will draw on persecution, 2

Tim. iii. 12. The flesh will dispense with us to do many things, for the more cleanly conveyance of others, if it can but get us to spare the bosom lust which the soul delighteth in. Every man, as he is enslaved by his own customs, opposeth one this law, another that; the proud man doth not approve of that law that doth forbid his pride, nor the sensual man that which toucheth his intemperance and unbridled appetite, nor the worldly man his covetousness, cannot endure that part of the law that would abridge him of his gain. Nothing more common than to cast off what liketh us not in the law of God, and to wish there were no precept given in that kind. But our consent must be to all in general, and to this and that in particular. Many could be content with God's law, so far as it doth not cross their carnal interest, or hinder their corrupt desires; but we must esteem all the laws of God; they are all holy, just, and good, not one excepted; all conduce to perfect our nature, and make us happy creatures; they all conduce to the benefit of human nature; they are all enjoined by the authority of the same God: 'God spake all these words.' They are linked as rings in a chain; one preserveth another; they are all necessary for our eternal happiness; not one given in vain. So much thou continuest thine own misery, and art defective in the way that leadeth to true happiness, as thou art willing to indulge in any one sin. They are all written in the hearts of God's children, Heb. viii. 10, all suited to the new nature; and he hath given grace to keep all, 1 Peter i. 15, perfection of parts, not of degrees. The new creature is not maimed in the birth. A child hath not the bulk and strength of a man. Want of perfection of parts cannot be supplied by any after growth. Nay, all are necessary to our communion with God: Ps. lxvi. 18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me;' Mat. v. 19, 'Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments,' &c. If we dispense with ourselves in the least things, we are not fit for communion with God, 2 Cor. vii. 1; having such promises of God's being in us, and dwelling in us, and maintaining communion with us, then 'let us cleanse our ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit;' Col. i. 10, 'that ye might walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing,' εἰς πασὰν ἀρέσκειαν. If you do not consent to keep all, you can keep none; for the same reasons that move us to break one, will move us to break all. Herod, that heard John gladly, when his lust moved him to it, put him to death. To be sure it must be total.

328

Reasons of this esteem.

1. From the excellency of God's law. The law of God deserves it: Deut. iv. 6, 'Keep, therefore, and do them; for this is your wisdom and your 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.' We should esteem the law, because it doth not infringe our natures, but makes them perfect, puts an excellency upon us. But of this in other verses.

2. This esteem and approbation is the ground of practice. When we are convinced of the ways of God, and the excellency that is in them, the heart consenteth and embraceth them, and then followeth a ready practice; we will observe what we do approve. Whereas, on the contrary, if we have no esteem for the ways of God, we shall take no care to walk in them, but could wish such

laws expunged; for still these two go together—hearty embracing and diligent practice. The will is the great master-wheel. Now esteem implieth the bent of the will or heart; it implieth consent and election; it is the act of the will, is the act of the man: Prov. xxiii. 26, 'My son, give me thy heart.' The man is never overcome till then. You may kill him, but you cannot conquer him till he give his consent. There may be a kind of force and violence offered to the other faculties; the understanding may be overcome with light, which though it would, it cannot keep out. The conscience may be awakened, though men endeavour to lull it asleep; but the will is free, and is not conquered, but by its own consent and choice. The Lord will not force himself upon any; he dealeth with the reasonable creatures in a covenant way, to which our consent is required. It only bindeth as a law, till we consent to yield to it as a covenant: 2 Chron. xxx. 8, 'Yield yourselves to the Lord.' Now bring your hearts once to consent, and heartily approve of the ways of God, and the rest will succeed without difficulty. It will not be hard to give a law to the tongue, to restrain the hand, govern the body; our affections will more easily come to hand if we have a will to the things of God. The smallest matters against our wills are grievous to us. It was no great matter for Haman to lead Mordecai's horse, but it was an unwelcome and unpleasant service; he had no mind to it. It is no great matter for men to do the things that God requireth; but they have no mind to it, and therefore are off and on: James i. 8, 'The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.'

329

3. This is some comfort to a child of God, that though he faileth in some part of his duty, yet he esteemeth all; for where this approbation is, you may use the apostle's plea,; Not I, but sin that dwelleth in me;' Rom. vii. 15, 'For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I.' The allowance or approbation of the will is there spoken of; he speaketh of willing and nilling, loving, delighting, and hating. Though you cannot do that good you would, in that purity and perfection which love requireth, and the renewed heart intendeth, yet your hearts are upon your work: 'The evil which I hate, I do.' The new nature hates and dislikes what the carnal part prompts to.

Use. Learn to approve the law of God in all things, as right and good for you.

1. Do not dispense with yourselves in anything. In two cases we are apt to do so:—(1.) In small things; it is nothing, we think; it is but a little one. Nothing that cometh from God should be light and contemptible; though the matter be never so small, if God hath inter posed, it should be regarded by us. There may be great obstinacy in small sins, as a slender line may be very crooked, or as in some cases the dye is more than the cloth. Will you break with God in a small matter? If some great matter were required, would you not have done it? as 2 Kings v. 13; dare you offend this holy God for trifles? (2.) Do not dispense with yourselves, though never so contrary to your humour and interest. This is to set up a toleration in your own hearts, or a court of faculties without God's leave: 'God be merciful to me, if I bow in the house of Rimmon.'

2. Do not so much as wish there were no such law. It is a contra diction of the law when you could wish there were no law to put a restraint upon your beloved lusts and darling corruptions.

Carnal men wish there were no God, not as a creator and preserver, but as a lawgiver. There may be much enmity in such a thought. Every thought must be brought into subjection to Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5. Not a disallowing thought of God's government but doth much prejudice your hearts. God hath given such laws, that if all things were left to our own option and choice, nothing better could be devised to preserve the liberty and perfection of the human nature. It is an ill note to count the command grievous. Holiness is so amiable in itself, that men are not frightened unto God's laws, but choose them.

3. Bring thy heart to approve the law by mortifying that distemper that ariseth against it, be it pride, self-conceit, sensuality, covetousness. Appetite that is lost to wholesome food is restored by purging the stomach; there is a preparation of mind required to receiving of moral things. So in divine things: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit.' We are prepossessed, *intus existens prohibet exitum*. Therefore bring your heart to approve God's law *removendo prohibens*, by mortifying those corruptions that rise against it.

4. When you see no other reason to yield to God's law, let his will and sovereign authority be reason enough to you. This is reason enough for God to use to his creatures: 'I am the Lord,' Lev. xviii. 4, 5, 'Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord.' This is the will of God. We owe God blind obedience. This should silence all perverse reasonings against God, both as to his laws and providence. His will is supreme, and our will must be yielded up to his.

Secondly, We come to the other branch, *and I hate every false way*. Where we have—the act, *hate*; the object, *false way*; the extent, *every*, whatsoever is contrary to the purity of God's word.

Doct. That it is a good note of a renewed and obedient heart to hate every false way.

This will appear from—

1. The sorts and kinds of hatred.

2. The causes.

3. The effects, or the comparison of hatred with anger.

1. From the sorts and kinds of hatred, which are reckoned up to be two—(1.) *Odium abominationis*; (2.) *Odium inimicitiae*.

[1.] *Odium abominationis*, a hatred of flight and aversation, called by some *odium offensionis*, the hatred of offence. It is defined by Aquinas to be *dissonantia quaedam appetitus, ad id quod apprehenditur ut repugnans*, &c. It is a repugnancy of the appetite to what is apprehended, as contrary and prejudicial to it. Such there is in the will of the regenerate, for they apprehend sin as

repugnant and contrary to their renewed will; to the unregenerate it is agreeable and suitable, as draff to the appetite of a swine, or grass and hay to a bullock or horse. Now this hatred is a good sign, that cannot be found in another that is not born of God. The mortification of sin standeth principally in the hatred of it. Sin dieth when it dieth in the affections; when we look upon it as an offence to us, destructive to our happiness, and as it is truly grieved for and hated by us. The unregenerate may hate sin, materially considered; that is, the thing which is a sin; but they cannot hate it formally considered, as sin under the notion of a sin; for then they would hate all sin, *a quatenus ad omne valet consequentia*. As, for instance, thus: A covetous man hateth prodigal and riotous courses, not as they are sinful and contrary to God's law, but as contrary to his humour and covetous will.

331

[2.] *Odium inimicitiae*, or the hatred of enmity. This enmity is nothing else but a willing of evil or mischief to the thing or person hated, and that out of mere displacency, dislike, or distaste of the person hated. This is a sure note; the regenerate hate their sins, in that they would have them arraigned, crucified, mortified; they would fain see the heart-blood of sin let out; therefore they oppose, watch against, and resist it as their mortal, deadly enemy. When a man pursues sin, would have the life of it, this enmity cannot be quiet; it is an active enmity, diligent in praying, mourning, watching, striving, using all holy means to get it out of our hearts, wishing, groaning, waiting, complaining, that we may get rid of it: Rom. vii. 24, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' They follow their work hard.

2. The causes of this hatred. There are three causes of it:—

[1.] Spiritual knowledge and illumination, that is one cause of hatred: Ps. cxix. 104, 'Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.' When the heart is thick-set, and well fraughted with divine knowledge, a man cannot sin freely. Those that are exercised in the word of God find some consideration or other to quicken to the hatred of sin. The word is a proper instrument to destroy sin: Ps. cxix. 11, 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee;' Eph. vi. 13. Our affections follow our apprehensions. We come to the heart by the mind: Jer. xxxi. 19, 'After I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh.' In the word of God are the most proper reasons and arguments to kill sin.

[2.] The love of God: Ps. xcvii. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord hate evil.' He doth not say forbear it, but hate it. The cause of hatred is the love of that good unto which the thing or person hated is contrary and repugnant. Love to the chiefest good is accompanied with hatred of sin, which is the chiefest evil. The one is as natural to grace as the other. The new nature hath its flight and aversation, as well as its choice and prosecution, to things that are hurtful to it, as well as good and profitable.

[3.] A filial fear of God: Prov. viii. 13, 'The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride and arrogancy and the evil way and the froward mouth do I hate.' Certainly this is to fear God, to hate what God hateth, and as God hateth, and because God hateth. Now God hateth all sin, pride, and arrogancy;

that is, sins of thought, which put us upon vain and foolish musings. And then the sins of the tongue are expressed by ‘froward mouth.’ Nothing so natural to us as filthy and evil speaking. And then the sins of practice, ‘the evil way.’ They that fear God will hate all these sins. These graces are strangers to unrenewed hearts. It argueth a divine nature when we hate when, what, and as, and because God hates it. *Eadem velle et nolle est summa amicitia.*

3. A third argument is from the comparison of hatred with anger. Unregenerate men may be angry with sin, because anger is consistent with love. One may be angry with his wife, children, friends, whom yet he tenderly affects.

[1.] Anger is a sudden and short, hatred a lasting and durable passion. Anger is *furor brevis*, curable by time; hatred incurable by the greatest tract of time. The unregenerate are displeased with their sins for a spurt, but the regenerate constantly disaffected towards them. There is, 1 John iii. 9, σπέρμα, there is a constant principle of resistance in the renewed heart. Passion is a casual dislike, but the new nature a rooted enmity, a habitual aversation to what is evil.

[2.] Anger is only against singulars, but hatred is εἰς τὰ γένη, to the whole kind. Thus we hate every wolf and every serpent, every thief and every calumniator. So is this universal; it respects sin as sin, and hateth all sin, though never so profitable and pleasant. Not upon foreign and accidental reasons; as, Esther iii. 16, Hainan thought scorn to lay hands upon Mordecai alone, but sought the destruction of all the Jews. The same reasons that incline us to hate one sin, incline us to hate all sin. The violation of God’s law is a contempt of God’s authority, a breach of spiritual friendship; one grieveth the Spirit of God as well as the other. Every sin is hateful to God, so it is to those that are made partakers of the divine nature.

[3.] Anger may be pacified or appeased with the sufferings of the thing or person with which we are angry, but hatred is implacable; nothing can content and satisfy it but the ruin or not being of the thing and party hated. David was angry with Absalom, but loath to have him destroyed, only corrected and reduced: when he sent out forces against him, ‘Deal gently with the young man.’ So many deal with their sins; we reason, pray, strive, complain; but it is but an angry fit; we are displeased with them at present, but could easily be reconciled. They seek not after the death, but the restraint and imprisonment of their corruptions and lusts, that they may not disgrace or otherwise prejudice them. Nothing contents the regenerate but the killing and mortification of them; they would have them dealt with as Samuel by Agag, hewn in pieces; therefore they study revenge upon their sins: Gal. v. 24, ‘Crucifying the flesh, with the affections and lusts.’

[4.] From the state of the regenerate. They have sin in them, but yet they hate it. Their will and consent to sin is always abated, and made remiss by a contrary principle, the grace that is in their wills: Gal. v. 17, ‘The spirit lusteth against the flesh.’ Sin cannot reign in them with a full and uncontrolled dominion: Rom. vi. 14, ‘Sin shall not have dominion over you.’

Use 1. How few are there that are God's children, for how few are there that hate sin! Some love it, Job xx. 12, 13, and the love of sin is the life of it; and what is it they hate? They hate the word that discovers sin, John iii. 20; they hate God's messengers that do cry aloud against sin, and do rub their sores; as Ahab said of Micaiah, 'He doth never prophesy good of me.' They hate the magistrate that would reform them, they hate God's image in his saints; they cannot endure the lustre of holiness that shineth forth in them.

Use 2. Do we indeed hate sin? We had need look after this.

1. Because this is the true principle of resistance against sin. Till a man hateth it, the soul is not thoroughly resolved against it, as a man is never thoroughly gained to God till he love holiness for holiness' sake: his affections may be bribed with other considerations, but then he is rooted in godliness. So a man is not resolved against sin till he hate it for its own sake. He may be frightened out of sin for a fit, put out of humour with it, but his heart is in again with his old lusts, till there be a detestation of sin; but when once he cometh to hate it, per suasions cannot easily move him, nor example draw him, nor difficulties compel him, to that which is evil; nor allurements, that have a great force upon us: 'Straightway he followed her.' But they cast away sin with indignation: Hosea xiv. 8, 'What have I any more to do with idols?'

333

2. This is a true distinctive note between good and bad. Men may forbear sin that do not hate it: they forbear it by constraint, for fear of punishment, shame, worldly ends; but regard it in their hearts, Ps. lxvi. 18. The dog hath a mind to the pail, but feareth the cudgel. But God judgeth not as man judgeth.

SERMON CXLI.

Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.—VER. 129.

IN the words are two parts—

1. The dignity and excellency of God's testimonies, *thy testimonies are wonderful*.

2. The effect it had upon David's heart, *therefore doth my soul keep them*.

Accordingly two points—

Doct. 1. That the testimonies of God, when duly considered and thoroughly understood, will indeed be found to be wonderful.

Doct. 2. The wonderful excellency of the word should beget in our hearts a readiness and diligent care to keep it.

Doct. 1. The testimonies of God are wonderful.

1. The word in itself is wonderful, as containing truths of a sublime nature.

2. It is wonderful in its effects; as it produceth effects rare and strange.

1. In itself considered, it is sometimes called the mystery of faith, as it containeth principles of faith; and sometimes a mystery of godliness, as it containeth rules of practice. As it is a mystery of faith, there are many strange doctrines in it above the reach of man's capacity, which we could neither invent nor understand, unless we be enlightened by the Spirit of God; as that three to be one, and one to be three; God to be made man, &c.; these are riddles to a carnal mind. And as it is a rule of faith, still it offereth matter of wonder, the duty of man being represented with such exactness and comprehensiveness: Ps. cxix. 96, 'I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.'

2. What rare effects it produceth: where it is entertained it maketh a Christian become a wonder to himself and others.

[1.] A wonder to himself: 1 Peter ii. 9, 'He hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.' There is no man converted by the word of God but hath cause to wonder at his own estate, at the condescension of God in plucking him as a brand out of the burning, or that woful condition wherein he was before, when others are left to perish: John xiv. 22, 'Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?' And then that we are brought into the possession of such excellent privileges as we enjoy in our new estate, peace that passeth all understanding, Phil. iv. 7, joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 Peter i. 8; privileges greater than can be imagined or expressed. So are their hearts ravished in the sense of their reconciliation with God and communion with him. So also in giving them such an undoubted right to an everlasting blessed estate in the heavens: 1 Cor. ii. 9, '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.' He hath promised them a happiness which they can never think of, but every day they must fall a-wondering anew; and all this wrought by an exceeding great power working together with the word, Eph. i. 19; as Peter wondered at his own deliverance, when chains and gates and bars did all give way to the power of the angel that brought him forth: Acts xii. 9-11, 'And he went out, and followed him, and wist not that it was true that was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth into the city, which opened to them of its own accord, and they went out and passed on through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation

of the people of the Jews.' So may every one that is converted to God stand wondering, when he considereth how, from whence, and to what he is called by God; all this is wonderful indeed. There is more of God seen in inward experiences than in outward; in converting, comforting, quickening, and carrying on the work of grace in our own hearts, than in governing the courses of nature; therefore the apostle appealeth to this internal power, Eph. iii. 20, 'Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.' He instanceth in that which God hath done for us in Christ, which is beyond our prayer, conceptions, and hopes; transcending the hopes and apprehensions of the most enlarged hearts. Thus is a Christian a wonder to himself.

[2.] He is a wonder to the world, if he keep up the majesty and vigour of religion: 1 Peter iv. 4, 'Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.' It was strange to them that they should be altered so of a sudden, that of filthy puddles they should become clear as crystal waters; a sink turned into a pure fountain. That men should live above interests of nature, row against the stream of flesh and blood, this is all strange to the world; and this is the fruit of the word; for 'the word of God is perfect, converting the soul,' Ps. xix. 8. Every grace is a mystery and wonder; especially faith, for a man to believe that which he understandeth not, to hope for that he seeth not, to have that which he wants; to be tossed with tempests, and yet to enjoy a sweet calm in our own hearts; to be destitute of all things, and yet be as little anxious as if we indeed had all things; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things; to be a rock in the midst of a storm; as dying, and yet we live: 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9, 'We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;' 2 Cor. vi. 10, 'As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.' Thus is a believer the world's wonder, a very riddle to carnal sense. So in other graces; he can hate father and mother for Christ's sake, can also love enemies at Christ's command. He that doth even break his heart for the least sin can bear up against the greatest trouble.

335

Thus I might exemplify the point, but I must go a little largely to work.

1. God's testimonies are wonderful in their majesty and composure, which striketh reverence into the hearts of those that consider; it speaketh to us at a God-like rate. Jesus Christ leaves a character of his divine Spirit upon his words: Mark vii. 28, 29, 'And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.' There was an impression of his authority upon his word, his hearers were convinced of a sovereign majesty proper to the dignity of his person. Those that went to take him returned this account, John vii. 46, 'Never man spake like this man,' for authority, power, and evidence. Now the scriptures being Christ's doctrine, why should they not have the same power, authority, and divine character in them? It is the same doctrine; the voice could add nothing to it, and the writing take nothing from it. Could not God discover his sovereign majesty

in writing as well as speaking? Look into the scriptures; are you not even compelled to say, This can be no other but the word of God? They speak not as conscious of any weakness, or as begging assent, but as commanding it. Thus saith the Lord, hear it, or ye are undone for ever. The wisdom, majesty, authority of the author showeth itself in every line almost of scripture. Longinus, a heathen, admired the majesty of that passage, γενέσθω καὶ ἐγένετο. Indeed, everywhere there is great authority mixed with simplicity and plainness of speech, such as moveth reverence and awe in the consciences of men. It may be it is not seen in every phrase and clause of a sentence, but it is clearly discovered in the whole frame; as the majesty of a man's countenance is not so fully discovered in any one part of the face as in the whole visage taken jointly together. *Scriptura sic loquitur*, saith Austin, *ut altitudine superbos irrideat, profunditate attentos terreat, veritate magnos pascat, affabilitate parvos nutriat*—scripture so speaketh that it laughs proud and lofty men to scorn with the height of it; with the depths of it it terrifieth those who with attention look into it; with truth it feedeth men of greatest knowledge and understanding; with affability and sweetness it nourisheth babes and sucklings. Let a man have but anything of a prepared mind, and he cannot contain his wonder and reverence, but will tremble at the word of God: Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.'

2. It is wonderful for the matter and depth of mystery, which cannot be found elsewhere, concerning God and Christ, the creation of the world, the souls of men, and their immortal and everlasting condition, the fall of man, &c. Here God is set forth to us in the clearest representation that we are capable of in this mortal state. God is in part seen in the creatures: Rom. i. 20, '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.' Everything that hath passed his hand discovereth some what of the author and maker of it. But as imperfectly as God is discovered there, we cannot behold him without wonder and reverence, if we use never so little of an attentive mind; those strictures of God that are seen in man's body—Galen wondered when he saw a man's hand—the sun, moon, and stars; yea, a gnat, yea, a pile of grass: but these discoveries are not to be compared with the scriptures revealing the glory of God in the face of Christ: 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.' If we wonder at so much of God as we find in a gnat, shall not we wonder much more at so much of God as we find in his law, in his gospel, in the whole economy and frame of his gracious dispensations? Besides that, the scriptures help us to interpret the book of the creatures: they show forth more of God than all the creatures can do; the book of nature is an imperfect piece in regard of the book of scripture. You cannot look upon the book of the creatures, but in every page and line of it you will find this truth presented to your eyes, that there is an infinite eternal power that made all things; this is enough to leave the world without excuse. But in the book of the word, you may see more of God, and the way how to enjoy him. In the 19th psalm David doth first admire the glory of God by the beauty of the heavens, then by the light of the word. By reason the heathens found out πρῶτον

αἴτιον τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῆς ταξεως πάσης, a first mover and a first cause; but when and how the world was made they were left in uncertainties, which was first, the egg or the hen, the oak or the acorn: Heb. xi. 3, 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things that do appear.' A child is taught more than they could find out by their profound researches. So concerning the fall of man, conscience will inform us of a distinction between good and evil; and heathens, by the light of nature, could speak of virtue and vice as moral perfection and a deordination; but nothing of sin and righteousness relating to a covenant; and whence this mischief began they knew not. They complained of nature as of a stepmother, observed an inclination to evil more than to good, that vices are learned without a teacher, that man is born into the world crying, beginneth his life with a punishment; but the first spring and rise of evil was a secret to them, but clearly discovered to us: Rom. v. 12, 'Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' Man's restitution and redemption by Christ is wonderful indeed: 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.' This could not be found by man; how could they know the free purposes of God's grace unless God revealed them? This is the mystery of mysteries, which angels desire to pry into, 1 Peter i. 12. So excellent and ravishing a mystery is this plot of salvation of lost sinners by Christ incarnate, that the very angels cannot enough exercise themselves in the contemplation of it. So union with Christ, and communion with him, a mystery that nature could never have thought of. God's keeping a familiar correspondence with his creatures, God's dwelling in us, our dwelling in God: 1 John iv. 13, 'Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.' Words we should not dare to have used if God had not used them before us; it would have looked like blasphemy to speak so, if we had not the warrant of scripture. So the resurrection of the body, and life eternal, they are all wonders: 2 Tim. i. 10, 'But is now made manifest by the appearance of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.' Heathens might dream of a life after death, but could never under stand it distinctly. It is brought to light. Their wise men saw it, like the blind man who saw men walking like trees, or a spire at a distance, no clearness, no certainty: Lord, 'thy testimonies are wonderful.'

337

3. It is wonderful for purity and perfection. The decalogue in ten words compriseth the whole duty of man, and reacheth to the very soul and all the motions of the heart. All the precepts of morality are advanced to the highest perfection. Those fragments and sorry remainders of the light of nature, that have escaped out of the ruins of the fall, will show us the necessity of a good life. But the word of God calleth for a good heart, a regeneration as well as a reformation, not only abstaining from acts of sin, but lusts: 1 Peter ii. 11, 'Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, that ye abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' Not only the outward work, but the spirit, that is weighed in the balance of the sanctuary: Prov. xvi. 2, 'All the ways of a man

are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.' It mightily establisheth faith, fear, and love to God, as the essential graces. When we consider duty in the lump, we have no admiring thoughts; but when we look abroad into all the parts and branches of obedience whereunto the law diffuseth itself, then the holiness which the law requireth is admirable; then we see it no easy matter to serve this holy and jealous God; it is no easy matter to go to the bottom of this perfection.

4. It is wonderful for the harmony and consent of all the parts. All religion is of a piece, and one part doth not interfere with another, but conspireth to promote the great end of subjection of the creature to God. The law hath a mighty subserviency to the gospel, and the first covenant shutteth up the sinner immediately under the curse, that mercy may open the door to him. The gospel is first darkly revealed, and still it groweth as the light doth till noonday. At first an obscure intimation, 'The seed of the woman;' to Abraham, 'In thy seed,' which after was repeated to Isaac to cut off Ishmael; then to Jacob, to cut off Esau; yet not what tribe: Gen. xlix, 10, 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, till Shiloh come;' yet not what family of Judah; to David: 2 Sam. vii. 13, 'I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever;' then Isa. vii. 14, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call his name Emmanuel;' then John the Baptist, John i. 29, 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,' points with a finger to Christ. Thus while in short the scriptures do so set forth the mercy of God as that the duty of the creature is not abolished, so offers grace as not to exclude our care and use of means; justification and sanctification promote one another, all is ordered with good advice: 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, 'Although my house be not so with God, he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.' Thus the wonderful harmony, order, and consent of all the parts with respect to the great end, which was the glorifying of God and the subjection of the creature, demonstrates the wonderfulness of God's testimonies, the glorifying of God's grace and mercy in those that are saved, and his justice in those that are damned. With respect to this, God made man upright, furnished with abilities to do his will; but mutable, and, in case of a fall, to begin with a new covenant. He will have his mercy honoured without prejudice to his justice; the comfort of the creature established, so as duty not abolished; not all of commands, nor all of promises, but these inter woven, that they may serve one another. A promise at the back of a command, to make it effectual; command besides a promise, to cause humbling; neither looseness nor rigour. If the covenant had been left to our ordering, it had been a confused business. Now it is wonderfully suited; God keepeth up his dominion and sovereignty, notwithstanding his grace and condescension; justice hath full satisfaction, yet grace glorified.

5. Wonderful for the power of it.; There is a mighty power that goeth along with the word of God, and astonisheth the hearts of those that consider it and feel it: 1 Thes. i. 5, 'Our gospel came to you not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost.' By this power it doth not only fill the head with notions, but pierceth the heart, alarms the conscience, awakens the affections: Heb. iv. 12, 'The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts

and intents of the heart.' This power was seen in the wonderful success of that doctrine and religion which the scriptures do establish. It hath diffused and spread itself like leaven in the mass and lump, through out all parts of the known world, within the space of thirty or forty years or thereabouts. *Hesterni sumus*, saith Tertullian, *et tamen omnia vestra implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum, forum; sola vobis relinquimus templa*—We are but of yesterday, and yet how are we in creased! Christians are found in all places, cities, villages, isles, castles, free towns, councils, armies, senate, markets; everywhere but in the idol temples. Such a wonderful increase and success was there in a short time! The apostle: Col. i. 6, 'The word of the truth of the gospel is come unto you, as it doth to all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you.' The doctrine itself is contrary to nature; it doth not court the senses, nor woo the flesh; it offereth no splendour of life, nor pleasures, nor profits; but biddeth deny all these things, and expect persecution: Mark xvi. 21, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' It only telleth us of spiritual comforts, and the recompenses of another world. Mahomet allures his followers with fair promises of security and carnal pleasure; there wind and tide went one way. Man is credulous of what he desireth; but Christ telleth us of denying ourselves, taking up the cross, cutting off right hand, and plucking out right eye, rowing against the stream of flesh and blood, bearing out sail against all the blasts and furious winds without: here is nothing lovely to a carnal eye. This was the doctrine. It taught the proud world humility: the uncharitable world love of their enemies; the unchaste world that a glance is adultery: Mat. v. 25, 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart;' the revengeful world to turn the other cheek to the smiter; the covetous man to be liberal, not to cark and take thought for worldly things, but to lay up treasures in heaven; the dissolute world to walk circumspectly in all godliness and honesty. The persons and instruments that were to manage the doctrine were in the world's eye contemptible: a few fishermen, destitute of all worldly props and aids; of no power, wealth, secular wisdom, authority, and other such advantages as are apt to beget a repute in the world; yet they preached, and converted many nations, though they had no public interest, were not backed with the power of princes, as superstitions are wont to prevail by their countenance and example: 'Every one seeketh the ruler's face;' but the gospel had gotten firm footing in the world long ere there was a prince to countenance it; there were many to persecute it, none to profess it. As the instruments were poor, so the persons that received their message: James ii. 5, 'Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?' 1 Cor. i. 26, 'Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.' When destitute of worldly succours and supports, it held up head. *Ne videretur authoritate traxisse aliquos, et veritatis ratione, non pompae gratia praevaleret*, saith Ambrose. It was much it should hold up head; yea, the powers of the world against it, bonds and sufferings and deaths did abide for them everywhere that professed this way. Horrible tortures; never did war, pestilence, and famine sweep away so many as the first persecutions; poor Christians were murdered and butchered every where; yet still they multiplied, as the Israelites

339

did in Egypt, under oppression; or as a tree lopped sends forth more sprouts. As without worldly interests; they had not such gifts of art, eloquence, and policy as the world with whom they had to deal; all was carried on in a plain way, without pomp of words. Paul was learned, but he laid aside his ornaments, lest the cross of Christ should he of none effect: 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5, ‘And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.’ They were to deal with men of excellent parts and learning, some of which received the gospel. This plain doctrine was set afoot in that part of the world where arts and civil discipline most flourished at that time, and were in their ἀκμή. Thus as Aaron’s rod devoured the magicians’ serpents, so was the gospel too hard for the wisdom of the world: it prevailed not by force of arms and the power of the long sword, as all dotages do, and superstitions are planted; but ‘overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death,’ Rev. xii. 11. Christ’s sword is in his mouth: Ps. viii. 2, ‘Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.’ This way seemed to the world a novel way; they were leavened with prejudices, and bred up by long custom, which is a second nature, in the worship of idols: 1 Peter i. 18, ‘Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers.’ Men keep to the religion of their ancestors with much reverence. Christ did not seize upon the world as a waste is seized upon for the next owner. The ark was to be set up in the temple that was already occupied and possessed by Dagon. Before Christ could be seated in the government of the nations, first Satan was to be dispossessed, and superstitions received by a long tradition and prescription of time were to be removed, the wolf hunted out. Thus the power great.

340

But this is past and gone. There is a wonderful power that goes along with the word.

[1.] A power to humble and terrify those that scoffed at the miracles: Acts ii. 37, ‘When they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ The word can do that which a miracle cannot; make the stoutest hearts relent and yield. One instance more: Acts xxiv. 25, ‘And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.’ Mark the disadvantage; the prisoner maketh the judge tremble, the man none of the tenderest, a pagan, and to boot an obdurate sinner; but Paul by his power caused these. Terrors of conscience, which are raised by the word, all wicked men feel not, but soon may; they fear them that feel them not: John iii. 20, ‘For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.’ Conviction in one of these spiritual agonies exceeds all natural passions; fears of the wrath of God scorch more, and breed more restlessness and disquietness to the soul, their thoughts become a burden to them: ‘He is convinced of all, and judged of all; and 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,’ 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. His sins revived, the poor creature lieth grovelling.

341

[2.] There is a converting and transforming power in the word of God: Rom. i. 16, ‘For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,’ Thes. i. 9, ‘For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God;’ from a false to a true, a bad to a better. Men brought up in a false religion, there is much ado to take them off: ‘Have any nations changed their gods?’ Though their worship be never so vain and foolish, yet this power the word hath, even over those that have been rooted and habituated in superstitious customs. The gods they had prayed to in their adversities, praised in their prosperity, deprecated their anger when any judgment upon them, magnified their goodness when any good received, built them temples, offered them gifts; must they break those images, destroy those temples, deny those gods? How dear idols are, Rachel’s stealing away her father’s images clearly showeth, Gen. xxxi. 34. She was one of them that built God’s Israel, yet she hath a hankering after her father’s idols. No humours so obstinate and stiff as those that are found in religious customs. They accused Stephen for changing the customs Moses delivered, Acts vi. 14; and Paul, that he taught customs which were not lawful for Romans to observe, Acts xvi. 21. Certainly it is a very hard thing to bring men out of an old religion into a new one. Again, the converting of man from a state of nature to a state of grace, so that they are, as it were, born again: James i. 18, ‘Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth; that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creation.’ It is a hard matter to change natures, to turn a lion into a lamb: Isa. xi. 6, ‘The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.’ Yet this will the gospel do, make him that resembleth the devil in his contempt of God, envy, revenge, to be like Christ; I say the gospel doth it: 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.’ To bring us to love what we naturally hate, and to hate what we naturally love; that the heart should be turned from all creatures, himself and all, to God; that they should be induced to turn from the creature to God, to seek out happiness in him; from self to Christ, from sin to holiness; that God’s desires should be our desires, his will our will, his delights our delights; the natural heart is averse from this: Rom. viii. 7, ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.’ That the hearts, spirits, dispositions of men should be turned upside down: 1 Cor. vi. 9-11, ‘Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;’ Isa. lv. 13, ‘Instead of the thorns shall come up the fig-tree; and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree.’ A mighty change wrought, to be changed not only in their lives, but natures.

342

[3.] In comforting poor distressed souls. Their sore runneth upon them, and their soul refuseth comfort, when they have all things in the world; but yet as there are no sorrows like wounds of

conscience for degree, so no comforts: groans unutterable, so joys unutterable: nothing left that will comfort; it is as the whole of their joy. The reviving of poor wounded spirits is one of the greatest wonders in the world. Creatures can do nothing, reason and human discourse can do nothing; it proceedeth from the apprehension of God's wrath provoked by sin: Job xxxiii. 23-25, 'If there be an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom: his flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth.' Nothing but the covenant of his peace will still such a soul; a scripture wound will only be cured by scripture plasters. He that puts the soul on the racks of conscience can only release us: 'I create the fruits of the lips to be peace;' Jer. vi. 16. '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;' Mat xi. 28, 29, 'Come unto me. all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'

[4.] The confirming and strengthening power of the word, that we may despise the world, encounter all difficulties and discouragements, and to be cheerful as the martyrs were in the midst of flames, all the oppositions of Satan: 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;' Acts xx. 32, 'And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.' In the word of his grace God hath assured us of the great privileges of Christianity, support and defence here, and glory here after; and that is a mighty strengthening to the soul, and maketh a Christian also glorious and becoming all those hopes and promises that are given him.

SERMON CXLII.

Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore doth my soul keep them.—VER. 129.

USE 1. Reproof to several sorts.

1. Of those proud carnalists that scorn the simplicity of the word. Many wit themselves into hell by lifting up the pride of reason against the word of God; think all respect to the word to be fond credulity. To them the gospel seemeth a base and a mean doctrine, whereas it is indeed wonderful. They never studied it, and therefore think nothing but plain points in it, have no spiritual eyes, and are looking on what is uppermost. There is nothing vulgar. The angels prize what they contemn: Eph. iii. 10, 'To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' They despise the word, as if it were too low a discipline for their wit and parts, scoff at that as mean which a gracious heart findeth to

be mystery; they see none of this sublimity that we speak of; this pearl of price seemeth to them but as a common stone. This is pride not to be endured, for the foolishness of man to contemn the wisdom of God. The excellency of scripture can never be sufficiently understood; they never pierced the depths of scripture, else they would find it sublime and subtle enough; but they are ignorant of what they seem to understand so well: 1 Cor. viii. 2, 'If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.'

2. Others that give up themselves to the itch of curiosity must have mysteries made more mystical, and therefore fly from the letter of the scriptures to ungrounded subtleties and spiritualities, as if all the written word were an allegory: Rev. ii. 24, 'But to you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan.' Men must have βάθη, but βάθη τοῦ Ζατανᾶ, are loath to be tethered, and tied up to a few common truths. The bait to our first parents was the fruit of the tree, it is good for knowledge: Gen. iii. 5, 6, 'God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. 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 and did eat.' If any be of such a rigid temper and constitution as not to be moved with the pleasures of the senses, Satan draweth them to nice and ungrounded speculations; they would be wise above the rate which God hath allowed, run into strange and uncouth notions; and so many, otherwise of a sober life, have an unsound judgment.

3. Those that would fathom these mysteries by the line and plummet of their own reason, believe God's word, and the things contained in it, no further than they can see natural reason for it, these are not disciples of the doctrine of Christ, but judges, and set a prince at the subject's bar; the scantling of their own private senses and reason is made the standard for the highest mysteries to be measured by. They come to judge the word rather than to be judged by it. Mysteries are to be admired, not curiously searched and discussed by mere human reason. Every light must keep its place; sense, reason, faith, light of glory. If sense be made the judge of reason, there is wrong judgment. Some things we apprehend by reason that cannot be known by sense, as that the sun is bigger than the earth. So faith corrects reason. Shall we doubt of that to be true which droppeth from God's own mouth, because it exceedeth our own understanding?

4. Those that prostitute their wonder to every paltry, carnal vanity. Oh, what trifles are these to the wonders of God's law! If we see a fair building, we cry out, Oh wonderful! as the disciples: Mark xiii. 1, 'Master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are these.' Oh! there are God's testimonies; a more noble nature, the person of Christ: Col. ii. 9, 'In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' Oh, wonderful! at an heap of money: what are these to the unsearchable riches of grace? Rare plot! μέγα μυστήριον: all in and about Christ is rare; his name is Wonderful. He that found out the causes of things by philosophy could say, *Nihil admirari*; but he that hath the most knowledge of religion as to divine things may say, *Omnia admirari*—the transcendent

goodness of God in the pardon of sins, riches of everlasting glory, purity of divine commands; but as to the world, *Nil admirari.* You know better things in God's testimonies.

5. Those that find more favour and more matter to wonder at in other books, in Plato, in Aristotle, or heathen writers, they have a savour there, a wonder there; but are not affected with those mysteries and those notions which are in the gospel. They like those books where they find flowers of rhetoric, chemical, experiments, philosophical notions, maxims of policy, but they slight the word.

6. Those that admire more what man puts into an ordinance than the word of God. The further off anything is from the majesty of the scriptures, the more it taketh with unregenerate men, taken with toys and baubles of delight more than the substantial goodness of Christianity. We are apt to say of the labour of man, excellences of man, admirable! but we little regard the truths of God; as in a field of corn, prize the poppies and well-coloured weeds, but slight and overlook the more valuable corn.

Use 2. Instruction. To instruct us how to entertain the word of God. We never entertain it rightly till we entertain it with wonder.

Considerations.

1. We have not a true sight and sense of the word if we admire it not. There is such transcendent love, admirable depths of wisdom, unsearchable treasures of happiness, raised strains of purity, a harmonious coincidence of all parts. What would we admire but that which is great and excellent? Why are not we then transported and ravished with those wonderful felicities, as the favour of and fellowship with God, everlasting enjoyment? Nothing is of such weight and importance as this is; all is nothing to this: Phil. iii. 8, 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' Would we admire what is rare and strange? As the object of wonder is *inauditum et insperatum*, it could not enter into the heart of man to conceive what God hath done for us in Christ; unheard of, unlocked for: 2 Sam. vii. 19, 'And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come; and is this the manner of man, O Lord God?' If we wonder at what is wise and deep, the terms upon which salvation is dispensed and propagated are with excellent wisdom: 1 Cor. ii. 2, 'We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world, to our glory.' These are mysteries that lie out of the road of vulgar understandings.

2. Upon every new looking, it argueth some distemper unless we wonder. Either carelessness of soul-necessities, or stupidness, and inattentiveness, or else carnal savour, prevailing too much.

3. It is a great help to practice. The more the word is admired, the more reverence it striketh into the conscience; the more it is submitted unto, the more should we frame our practice. In the text, 'Therefore doth my soul keep them.' The word must be kept; not only affected with it, but our esteem must last, and we must ever be tender of doing anything contrary to it. It must be kept

by the soul; there is the directive and commanding power; it must be preserved or kept there, not confined there. If not kept there, it will not be kept elsewhere. There understanding is clear, conscience aweful, heart ready. Human authority reacheth no further than to bind men to conform to order in the course of their practice; but divine authority bringeth under the heart and thoughts to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5. It bindeth the conscience to approve of God's commanded will, to choose it with affection, to embrace it with the whole man. to follow on with strength and constant endeavours. Therefore wonderful, partly because a renewed esteem is the beginning of a pure and entire subjection to it. Why did any give up themselves to the discipline of it? Plato and Zeno's doctrine was admired. Sc to God; reverence is the mother of obedience. If we have not a slight esteem of the word, we shall look more after keeping of it. And partly because wonderfulness of promises evidenceth them to be of God; it commendeth itself to the consciences of men.

Means.

1. A spiritual gust to relish knowledge and spiritual things. A brutish soul admires the sweetness of carnal things; the sober part of the world, that prize intellectual food, the perfections of the mind, they have a taste and relish for those things: Ps. cxix. 103, 'How sweet is thy word to my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.' A sensual heart is not affected with these things.

2. A diligent search: Eph. iii. 9, 'And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.' The more diligently we search into these things, the more we admire them. A superficial view satisfieth and contenteth sooner than a deep search. Herein they differ from other things, for the more they are searched into, the less they are admired; imperfections which formerly lay hid then come in view.

3. A thorough insight or spiritual illumination: Ps. cxix. 18, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;' and ver. 27, 'Make me to understand the way of thy precepts; so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.' The testimonies of God have more in recess than in open view.

4. Experience; if we have felt the wonderful power, majesty, and authority of the word: John viii. 32, 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' Where there is no such effect they have no experience.

5. Show forth the wonderfulness of God's testimonies by the raisedness of your conversations. They disparage the word that live at a mean rate: 2 Tim. iii. 5, 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power;' 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.'

SERMON CXLIII.

The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.—VER. 130.

IN the former verse, David had commended the word from the wonderfulness and mysteriousness thereof; here from its clearness and perspicuity, 'Thy testimonies are wonderful;' yet they give light, 'The entrance giveth light to the simple.' The one property doth not hinder the other, upon a twofold account:—

1. Because the truths revealed in scripture are of two sorts: some are plain doctrines, fit for the entertainment of novices, and may be called the porch and entrance; others are deep mysteries, to exercise the wits of the strongest. In the waters of the sanctuary in some places the elephant may swim, in others the lamb may wade. The penmen of the scripture acknowledged themselves to be debtors to wise and foolish, learned and unlearned: Rom. i. 14, 'I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise.' And accordingly were made use of to discover truths of all sorts. There are δυσνόητά τινα, not all things, nor the most material, but some things hard to be understood, 2 Peter iii. 16. God hath expressed his mind in some points so, that the sharpest-sighted will not at first glance easily take up the meaning of it. Other things are plain and easy and obvious, so that the very entrance or first sight of them giveth understanding.

2. From the manner; because though there are mysteries, and things naturally unknown to us, yet they are not obscurely delivered, so as that we should despair to understand them; but in a plain and familiar style, depths of mystery in plainness of words. Therefore the simplest who desire to know so much as may comfort and save their souls, ought not to be hindered and discouraged in the study of the scriptures. The sum is: some things are open and clear, other things dark and mysterious; but though hard to be understood, yet not impossible to be understood; most things plain, none impossible: 'The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.' In these words—

1. What, or the benefit we have by the scriptures, set forth by two words, the one metaphorical, *giveth light*; the other literal, *it giveth understanding*. That is it which is meant by light.

2. How or whence we have this light, from *the entrance of the word*.

3. To whom, *to the simple*.

The first thing is explained in the text; it giveth light, that is, it giveth understanding. Two questions then remain by way of explication:—

1. What is meant by 'the entrance of thy word'? Some render it *ostium*, the door, as Jerome; the Septuagint, δήλωσις; the vulgar, the declaration; we, the entrance. The word *petack* signifieth door, gate, or opening. The expression giveth us occasion—

[1.] To distinguish of truth in scripture. There is *ostium* and *penetrale*, the porch of knowledge and the secret chambers of it. The porch I should take for the first vital essential necessary truths that concern faith and practice: those are obvious to every one that looketh into the scriptures. The inner chambers are those more abstruse points, that do not so absolutely concern the life of grace, but yet conduce *ad plenitudinem scientiae*, serve for the increase of knowledge. Those that are in the porch, and have not as yet pierced into the depths of scripture, may yet have so much light as to direct them into solid piety.

347

[2.] Every door hath a key belonging to it, so hath this a key to open it, which Christ hath in his keeping: Rev. iii. 7, 'He hath the key of David, which openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.' The officers of the church are in part intrusted with it for the good of the church. Christ saith, Luke xi. 52, 'The lawyers had taken away the key of knowledge, and entered not into the kingdom of God themselves, and them that were entering in they hindered.' Such unfaithful ones hath every age almost afforded; that shut the door of knowledge against the people. Papists, that lock up the scriptures in an unknown tongue, are grossly guilty of it. Others that hinder plain and powerful preaching, cannot excuse themselves from being accessory to this guilt; yea, those that obscure the plain word of God by philosophy, traditions of men, or careless handling: Tertullian complained long ago of those, *qui Platonicum et Aristotelicum Christianismum procudunt Christianis.*

[3.] By this door opened there is entrance, and so cometh in our word. This entrance may be understood actively or passively; when the word entereth into us, or we enter into it.

(1.) Actively, when the word entereth upon a man's heart, and maketh a sanctified impression there; as the expression is, Prov. ii. 10, 'When wisdom entereth into thy heart, and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul.' This entrance of the word bringeth light with it. The first creature God made was light, so in the new creature; therefore it concerns us to know what manner of entrance the word had upon us: 1 Thes. i. 9, 'For they themselves know of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.

(2.) Passively, when men do first enter upon the study of the word. It may be read 'the entrance into thy word,' as well as 'of thy word.' When once acquainted with it, and the first rudiments of knowledge, we should soon discern the Lord's mind in the necessary truths that concern faith and practice.

2. The other question is, what is meant by the simple? The word is sometimes used in a good sense, sometimes in a bad.

[1.] In a good sense. (1.) For the sincere and plain-hearted: Ps. cxvi. 6, 'The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me;' 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 had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-wards.' (2.) For those that do not oppose the presumption of carnal wisdom to the pure light of the word: so we must be all simple, or fools, that we may be wise: 1 Cor. iii. 18, 'If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise; 'that is, in simplicity of heart submitting to God's conduct, and believing what he hath revealed The Septuagint in the text, φωτίζει καὶ συνετίζει νηπίους, it enlighteneth and giveth understanding to the babes; and so they often translate this word, babes or little ones: thence Christ's saying, Mat. xi. 25, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' Not to worldly wise, but babes in comparison; not to conceitedly wise, but those that are sensible of their own ignorance.

248

[2.] In a bad sense, for the ignorant. (1.) In the general, every man is naturally dull and ignorant in divine things: Job xi. 12, 'Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt;' for grossness as well as untamedness. So every man is simple. (2.) Those that are naturally weak of understanding, or of mean capacity: Prov. i. 4, 'To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion;' Prov. viii. 5, 'O ye simple, under stand wisdom, and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.' In all these senses may the text be made good. I take the last chiefly intended.

Observations.

1. Observe somewhat from that word 'the entrance.'

Doct. 1. That in getting knowledge there is a porch and entrance that we must pass through before we can attain to deeper matters.

As in practice there is a gate and a way: Mat. vii. 14, 'Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to life.' An entrance and a progress. An entrance by conversion to God, and a progress in a course of holy walking. So in knowledge there τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶ λογίων τοῦ Θεοῦ, 'the first principles of the oracles of God;' or some elements and afterwards deeper i milk for babes as well as meat for stronger men: Heb. v. 12-14, 'For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and riot of strong meal. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of rightness; for he is a babe: but strong meat belongeth to them that full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.' There is an order in bringing men to knowledge.

[1.] There is something obvious and lies uppermost, in all truths, that is soon understood, and this we put into catechisms. We must teach as able to bear; Mark iv. 33, 'And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they are able to hear it.' Indeed, afterwards we come to die into the mines of knowledge, and to dive deeper, as choice metals do not lie on the surface, but

in the bowels; therefore we should not content ourselves with a superficial search, but dig as for treasure in a mine: Prov. ii. 4, ‘If thou diggest for her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures.’ So Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2, ‘And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ: I have fed you with milk, and not with strong meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.’ By milk, he meaneth the plain handling of the doctrines of Christian religion, according to the capacity of those that are weak in knowledge; and by meat, the more exact and curious handling those points. Our weakness enforceth that we begin with the one, but we must go on to the other, for several reasons. Partly because we are to grow in knowledge, as well as other graces: 2 Peter i. 5, ‘Give all diligence to add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge.’ Besides that knowledge that maketh way for faith and virtue, there is a knowledge to be added to it, a great skill in divine things. Partly because those obvious truths will be better improved and retained when we look more into them : after notions do explain and ground the former. First we receive the truth, and after we are rooted and grounded in it: Col. i. 23, ‘If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.’ A half light makes us very unsettled in our course; but, when we grow judicious, have a fuller and clearer apprehension of truths, we are the more confirmed against the error of the wicked; whereas otherwise light chaff is carried about with every wind. Partly because the more we understand a truth, the more dominion it hath over our faith and practice; for God beginneth with the understanding, and grace is multiplied by knowledge: 2 Peter i. 2, ‘Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.’ A truth simply understood hath not such operation and force as when it is soundly and thoroughly understood. Love aboundeth with judgment: Phil. i. 9, ‘And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment.’

349

[2.] There are first principles and fundamental doctrines that must be first taught in a plain and easy way. I say, some things are initial and fundamental, others additional and perspective; we must regard both—the one in our entrance, the other in our growth. The one are called the first principles of the oracles of God, Heb. v. 12, &c., partly, because they are first in order, and first to be taught and learned; partly, because they are chief and fundamental truths of the gospel, upon which the rest depend, most conducing to salvation: the foundation laid well, the building will stand the stronger. They are reckoned up, Heb. vi. 1, 2, ‘Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptism, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.’ In the general he calls them the principles of Christ. The doctrine of Christ is the sum of religion; he that hath learned it well hath learned all. In particular, repentance from dead works is made the first, or that a sinful creature must turn to God by Christ before he can be happy. The next is faith towards God, believing the promises and privileges of the gospel, and depending on him till they be accomplished. Indeed, in these two is the sum of religion sometimes comprised: Acts xx. 21, ‘Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the

Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.' So Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God raised up to be a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.'

350 Doctrine of baptism is the initiating ordinance, what it signifieth, to what it obligeth. Laying on of hands, the way of Christ's officers entering the church. Resurrection and last judgment bindeth all. Again, because the prime truths are few and clear, ignorant and unlearned people may know them; they are milk, babes and ignorants may swallow them, as most easy of digestion, God's end in the scripture being to guide his people to true happiness. Those truths that are necessary to this end are few and clear, and plainly set down, that he that runneth may read them. Though we reach not other points, yet if we get but to this door, there is a great deal of profit.

[3.] They which do not first learn these, cannot profit much. Some confused knowledge they may acquire, but distinct, clear, and orderly understanding they never grow unto. When men run before they can go, they often get a knock. They that were never well grounded are always mutable; therefore before We are brought into the chambers of knowledge, we must stay in the porch, begin with most necessary things, which are most clear and plain, and thereby we are made capable of higher mysteries.

2. Though all Christians must come to this pitch, to know what is necessary to salvation, yet we must not stay here, nor always stay in the porch, nor always keep to our milk, nor be always infants in understanding: 1 Cor. xiv. 20, 'Brethren, be not children in understanding.' Other things must be regarded, or why hath God revealed them? No part of scripture is expressed in vain, or at random, but all by divine direction; though the first points are most necessary, yet the rest are not superfluous, but have their use: 2 Tim. iii. 16, 'All scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;' one part of scripture as well as the other, and maketh much for the increase of spiritual knowledge, comfort, and godliness. One part is milk, another stronger meat; but all is food for the soul. The grown are more ready to every good work, more strong in the resistance of sin, more stead fast in the truth; therefore we should improve our knowledge. If a man layeth the foundation, and doth not carry on the building, he loseth his cost; therefore let us go on to perfection.

Use 1. Let us bless God for this door and porch, that the scriptures are so plain and clear in all things necessary to salvation. Many complain of the difficulty and obscurity of religion, and the many controversies that are about it, and they know not what to choose, nor where to find the truth, till the world be more of a mind. It is true, in some things there is difficulty, but not in the most necessary things. *Pascimur apertis, exercemur obscuris; ibi fames pellitur, hic fastidium.* God has made his people's way clear and sure in necessaries, for which we have cause to bless his name, for exercising our diligence and dependence. Something is difficult: if those that complain of this difficulty would enter into the porch that standeth open, other things would soon be understood. Whatever differences there are in Christendom, all agree that there is one God, Jesus Christ his only Son, who died for the world, and accordingly must be owned by his people; that a man must

be converted to God, and become a new creature, and walk holily, or else shall never see God; all are agreed in this. Pre pare thy heart for entertaining the light and power of these truths, and in due time God will show thee other things. In the meantime bless God that whatever is necessary is plain to them that are docile and heedful, and willing to do the will of God. As in the world, the most necessary things are at hand, the less necessary are hidden in the bowels of the earth; so in scripture, necessaries are facile and easy.

Use 2. Let us use this method in learning, and teaching of others. In learning ourselves, first, be sure to get a clear understanding of, and firm assent unto, the main plain truths of scripture; that there is one God: Heb. xi. 6, 'He that cometh to God must believe that he is;' that Jesus Christ is the Son of God: John xvii. 3, 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' It is a corner truth, that enliveneth all religion: Mat. xvi. 16, 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God; 7 then, 'Upon this rock will I build my church;' John vi. 69, 'We believe and are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.' This is the great enlivening truth, that hath influence both on faith and obedience. We must believe that he is able to bring us to God, John xiv. 6, Heb. vii. 25, and must be obeyed, Heb. v. 9; that every man needeth this Christ to bring him to God, Acts iv. 12. There is a necessity of his merit, that God may be propitious; of his Spirit, as the foundation of a new life, that we may be reconciled to God; that we should live holily, because there is a day of account when every one shall receive according to his works. We should bestow more cost upon the main truths, to get a clear distinct knowledge of them; there must be a removing of rubbish, and digging, to lay the foundation of the knowledge of the principles of the doctrine of Christ, before there can be any safe building or going on unto perfection, Heb. vi., and firm assent to them; for he is the best Christian that doth most clearly understand and firmly believe these things, not the opinionist, the disputer, he that best promotes the interest of his party or side, which are the distempers now afoot in Christendom. Those truths well accepted would so purify the heart as we should sooner discern God's interest in other things, and be able to find out that. So for teaching our children, God reckons on it from his people: Gen. xviii. 19, 'For I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment;' Deut. vi. 6, 7, 'And these words that I command thee 'this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' Train them up in wholesome truths, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Eph. vi. 4; how to carry themselves towards God in matters of religion; how towards men, in righteousness, civility, and good manners; chiefly that _they may be instructed in the knowledge of Christ, and salvation by him.

Use 3. Let the entertainment we have upon our first entrance into the study of religion encourage us to follow on to know the Lord, that we may see more into his mind and counsel concerning us.

352

When we are first serious, we have notable experience of light and comfort and power; this is a bribe to draw us on farther; more light, for it is a growing thing: Prov. iv. 18, ‘The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day;’ more taste, 1 Peter ii. 3, 4, ‘If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to whom coming as to a living stone,’ &c. It should sharpen and put an edge upon our desires; more power: James i. 18, 19, ‘Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creation; wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.’ You saw the entrance, and your first acquaintance with the word succeeded well.

Doct. 2. By the word of God we get light, or our understandings m-e enlightened: Prov. vi. 23, ‘For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.’

1. Light is a great benefit. This is the perfection of the rational nature, the benefit that we have above the beasts: ‘He teacheth us more than the beasts of the field.’ They are guided by instinct, ruled by a rod of iron; we have reason, and in it more resemble God, who is light, and in him is no darkness at all, 1 John i. 5; we come nearest to our happiness in heaven; it is called ‘The inheritance of the saints in light,’ Col. i. 12. Our knowledge is perfected, and the vision of God is our happiness: 1 Cor. xiii. 12, ‘For now we see through a glass darkly, then face to face; now I know in part, then I shall know even as also I am known.’

2. This light hath excellent properties.

[1.] It is *lux manifestans*; it manifesteth itself and all things else. How do I see the sun but by the sun, by its own light? How do I know the scripture to be the word of God, but by the light that shineth in it, commending itself to my conscience? So it manifests all things else. By this light a man may see everything in its own colours; it layeth open all the frauds and impostures of Satan, the vanity of worldly things, the deceits of the heart, the odiousness of sin: Eph. v. 13, ‘All things that be reproved are made manifest by light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.’ It sets out the odiousness of sin as a breach of God’s most holy law, enmity against the great God, the procurer of his eternal wrath. Nothing manifests things as this light doth.

[2.] It is *lux dirigens*, a directing light, that we may see our way and work. As the sun lighteth man to his labour, so doth this direct us in all conditions: Ps. cxix. 105, ‘Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.’ It directs us how to manage ourselves in all conditions, in prosperity, adversity; in all affairs, paths, steps; in all the particular actions of our life; it filleth us with spiritual prudence; the wayfaring, the fool, the man of parts that is a stranger, the man of mean parts, all may meet with plain and clear directions hence to guide them in the way to heaven.

[3.] It is *lux vivificans*, a quickening light, *lux est vehiculum influentiarum*: John viii. 12, ‘I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of

life;' Eph. v. 14, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' That light was the life of men, so is this spiritual life; it not only discovereth the object, but helpeth the faculty, filleth the soul with life and strength.

353

[4.] It is *lux exhilarans*, a comforting, refreshing, cheering light: Eccles. xi. 7, 'Light is sweet, and it is a comfortable thing to behold the sun.' It is so in two respects:—

(1.) It presents us with excellent grounds of comfort, not only against afflictions, but against distress of conscience, which is the greatest trouble that can befall the creature, such as the sense of God's love in Christ; so it rejoiceth the soul: Ps. xix. 8, 'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes.' It doth good to the heart. Others tickle the senses, but are not affliction-proof, stead us not when God rebuketh us for sin. The light of God's countenance is displayed in the word: Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased.'

(2.) Because it is a soul-satisfying light, as light easeth of trouble and restlessness of mind, which we always lie under till we find a safe way of salvation, which we never do till we give up ourselves to the conduct of the word: Jer. vi. 16, '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 to your souls.' There we find enough to satisfy conscience, though, it may be, not to satisfy curiosity, which is *libido intellectus*—thirst of a sober man and thirst of a drunkard, the one satisfied, the other mortified.

Use 1. Information.

1. That without the word men lie in darkness, whatever learning they have, if they want the gospel. As the Ephesians, before it came to them, though given to curious arts, the apostle telleth them they 'were sometimes in darkness,' Eph. v. 8. The wisest heathens could only grope and feel about for happiness. If they neglect the light, though it be among them, it is not excusable: John i. 5, 'And the light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not.' But if they refuse the light, and this carelessness groweth obstinate, their condition is the worse: John iii. 19, 'This is the condemnation, that light is come, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.'

2. If we get not understanding of the mysteries of salvation, we may blame ourselves: 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, 'But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' If thou miss the way to heaven, accuse thine own blindness; thou canst not accuse the gospel, plead its darkness. The true cause of their non-proficiency is unbelief, they believe not; the superadded cause is spiritual blindness.

Use 2. Exhortation to look after this light, without which we shall be in the dark as to comfort: Isa. l. 10, 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and seeth no light?' Either under actual horrors or doubtfulness and uncertainty. Every wicked man is troubled, as the leaves of the trees of the wood are shaken with the wind. Now who would live in such a condition, to be at the mercy of the tempter? You are in the dark as to duty; our own reason, the counsels and examples of others, will mislead us; and we shall be unsteady, carried away with every deceit of sin, at least unsatisfied whether in God's way or not: 1 John ii. 11, 'He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.' Oh! study the word.

354

But who have this light? He that heartily desireth knowledge: Prov. ii. 3, 'If thou criest after wisdom, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;' he that diligently labours for it: Ps. i. 2, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' That propoundeth a right end, to be Christ's disciple, to do God's will: 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.' That humbleth himself for his ignorance. John got open the book with weeping: Rev. v 5. 'And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not; behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book.' Those Bereans were πρόθυμοι: Acts xvii. 11, 'They received the word with all readiness of mind,' εὐπειθὴς; James iii. 17, 'Easy to be entreated.' The opposite on the one side is slowness of heart: Luke xxiv. 25, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!' Or obstinacy on the other, a sluggish easiness, when light of belief, to believe anything without searching into the reason of it, or given up to a foolish credulity: Eph. iv. 14, 'That ye be not as children, tossed to and fro. and carried about with every wind of doctrine and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;' like a reed shaken with every wind. But he that is endued with this light is one that doth not depend on his own wit, but submits his reason to God: 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.' Well, then, this earnest desire in the next verse, 'I opened my mouth and panted: I longed for thy commandments.' This painful seeker will find out this treasure; this humble trusting soul will have it.

Doct. 3. That the scriptures are written so that plain and private men may get this light and spiritual understanding by them: Ps. xix. 7, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.'

1. From the author, God, who is the fountain of light; and surely he was able and willing conveniently to express his mind to his creatures. Cannot God speak plainly? *Deus et mentis, et linguae, et vocis artifex,* as Lactantius calleth him. He that is so wise, so loving of mankind, our supreme judge and king, would he hide this light under a bushel? Would he conceal his mind, and leave thee in the dark? Micah vi. 8, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'

2. For whom the scriptures were written; not for ministers or professed students. God speaketh to all sorts of men in the scripture, and therefore would have all understand them. He wrote the scripture that it might be read of all, young and old: Deut. xxx. 11, 12, ‘This commandment which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off: it is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it,’ &c. Rich and poor; the king was to read in it all the days of his life: Deut. xvii. 18, 19, ‘It shall be that when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, he shall write him a copy 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 good man is to meditate in it: Ps. i. 2, ‘His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night;’ Deut. vi. 6, 7, ‘These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.’ The apostles wrote epistles to the whole church, spake to old men, youth, little children: 1 John ii. 13, ‘I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. 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.’ To kings, judges, men, women, husbands, wives, fathers, children, masters, servants, was it written for their use; nor must it be taken out of their hands, nor is it above their reach.

355

3. The end why it was written, to be a sure and infallible direction to guide us to eternal life, and make us wise unto salvation: 2 Tim. iii. 15, ‘And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.’ Not only so, but it is our food and means of growth: 1 Peter ii. 2, ‘As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.’ Every life hath food convenient for it. It is our weapon in temptation: Eph. vi. 17, ‘And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.’ To be read by all in this spiritual warfare they are all engaged in. It is God’s testament, therefore should be viewed by his children; the epistle of the creator to his creatures, therefore to be read by them to whom it is sent. God’s letter must not be intercepted upon all these reasons. There is enough to make wise the simple in scriptures.

But is there nothing difficult in scriptures? *Ans*. Yes, to subdue the pride of man’s wit, to quicken us to wait and depend upon him for knowledge, to prevent contempt, to exercise our industry and diligence, and to fasten truths on our minds. There is some difficulty, but not such difficulty as that the people neither can nor ought to read them with profit, which is the dispute between us and papists. There is no difficulty but what is conquerable by that grace that God ordinarily dispenseth, and the means of explaining or applying; not a whole loaf, but a *dimensum*, his share; for it distributes to every man his portion.

Use 1. For the confutation of them that forbid the simple use of the word. The papists say, God's word is dark and hard to be understood; therefore they lock it up from the people in an unknown tongue, as if none could profit by it but the learned sort. Yea, many among us are ready to say, What should simple men do with scripture? and think that all the confusions and troubles of the world come from giving people this liberty. *Ans*. Though in the word there are mysteries to exercise the greatest wits, yet there are plain truths to edify the simple. This text is a notable proof against them. It is good to have a text against every error of theirs. They are injurious to God; as if he had revealed his mind so darkly, or his word, that it were so doubtful and harmful that there were danger in reading it: injurious to the scriptures, while they tax them with obscurity; injurious to the people of God, while they despise those whom the Lord inviteth with their pharisaical pride: John vii. 49, 'But this people who know not the law are cursed;' hinder them of their comfort; the simple have souls to save, therefore have need to see with their own eyes, to consider God's charter. They pretend they do it in mercy to the people, lest by their mistakes they should ruin themselves, and introduce confusion into the world. They should as well say all must be starved, and deny meat and drink because some surfeit. But certainly they do it for their own interest; they have false wares to vend, and to keep the people from discovering the errors they impose upon them, they would conceal the scriptures from them. Ignorance is a friend to the devil's kingdom. The blind go as they are led. They are afraid of the scriptures as a thief of a candle or the light which would discover his villany and hinder his design, John iii. 20.

Use 2. Of encouragement to poor Christians that have a sense of weakness. Before Plato's school was written, 'Let none but the learned come in hither;' but Christ inviteth the simple. That none might be discouraged, he speaketh to all sorts: Prov. viii. 4, 5, 'Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men: O ye simple, understand wisdom; and ye fools, be of an understanding heart.' That which is spoken to all is thought to be spoken for none. Christ speaketh to men under their several distinctions, noble, base, young or old, rich or poor. If any earthly profit be offered to any that will take it, who will exempt themselves? None are so modest. But in spiritual things persons are more stupid. Let none be discouraged by weakness of parts; all are invited to learn, and here they may be taught, of any capacity. Oh! but how many will say, I am so weak of understanding, that I shall make no work of such deep mysteries as are contained in the scriptures. I answer—

1. Many times this objection cometh from a sluggish heart; to ease themselves of the trouble of a duty, as meditation or prayer, they pretend weakness, they would have a rule that would make knowledge.

2. If it be serious, God is able to interpret his own book unto thee. He must indeed open the door, or we cannot get into the knowledge of truths there. If you had better parts you would be but groping about the door. He that hath not the right key is as far from entering the house as he that hath none. If the Spirit of God be thy master, thou shalt learn, though never. so blockish.

3. Wisdom stands upon the threshold, or at the door of God's word, as ready to open the treasures of knowledge: 'The entrance of thy word giveth light.' No sooner is a soul entered into the Spirit's school but he becometh a proficient; on first acquaintance with scriptures he seeth great light. Yea, she sendeth abroad to invite comers: Prov. ix. 3-5, 'She hath sent forth her maidens, she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple let him come in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.' Therefore go on with thy duty. He that sent an interpreter to the eunuch to guide him, when reading part of Isaiah's prophecy which he understood not, will direct and guide thee in the knowledge of all necessary truths, Ps. xxv. 8, 9; Prov. ii. 2-5.

357

4. It is a good advantage to be sensible of our blindness: Rev. iii. 17, 18, 'Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thee thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see.' The first thing a man seeth is his own blindness, nakedness, and wretchedness: John ix. 39, 'And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.' Many times they which conceitedly think they see are made blind. Those that are ignorant and humbled under the sense thereof, Christ will open their eyes; but they that are conceited of their own parts and knowledge, their hearts are darkened more and more, and they are given up to follow their own fancies. The simple may see further than others, because they swell not with the presumption of their own wit. *Surgunt indocti, et rapiunt coelum, cum nos doctrma nostra detrudimur in gehennam.* Sometimes simple people are more forward and earnest than others, and men of weak parts and small breeding may have strong affections. A blunt iron, when heated, may enter deeper into a board than a sharp tool when cold. Great doctors and rabbis are proud and careless, and poor broken-hearted sinners are warm and serious. Your labour will not be in vain.

SERMON CXLIV.

I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.—VER. 131.

HERE is the use that the Psalmist maketh of the former commendation of the word; it is wonderful and mysterious, clear and perspicuous; now he declareth his great affection to it. These words were used by Nazianzen when his father committed to him the care of the church of Nazianzum; he beginneth his speech with it, Orat. viii., as being a word of more than ordinary comfort and grace and direction. David was in a fainting condition through the passionateness of

his desire, ‘I longed;’ and that longing caused a languor, as all strong desires do. His affection wrought upon his body, or else affected his soul, as bodily refreshments desired and wanted do the body, ‘I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.’ In the words there are—

1. The vehemency of his passion, *I opened my mouth, and panted*.

2. The reason or cause of it, *for I longed for thy commandments*.

First, ‘I opened my mouth, and panted;’ a metaphor taken from men scorched and sweltered with heat, or from those that have run themselves out of breath in following after the thing which they would overtake. The former metaphor expressed the vehemency of his love, the other the earnestness of his pursuit; he was like a man gasping for breath and sucking in the cool air. Judea was a hot country, and therefore such expressions are frequent. The like expressions, that come somewhat near it, are those: 2 Cor. vi. 11, ‘O ye Corinthians, our mouth is opened to you, our heart is enlarged;’ when he did vehemently desire their profit. And Job saith, ‘They waited for my speech as the rain; they opened their mouth wide, as for the latter rain,’ Job xxix. 22. A vehement, passionate desire affects the mind as an insatiate thirst the body. Thus will they be affected that are sensible of the wonders of the law, and enlightened by it. The reason of this passion: ‘I longed,’ noteth a high degree of desire. What did he long for? God’s commandments; that is, the saving knowledge of the doctrine of salvation, or to find the use, benefit, light, comfort, and power of the word of God.

Doct. That God’s children have strong and vehement affections and desires after the comfort and benefit of the word of God.

Here is—(1.) Opening the mouth; and (2.) Panting, as for fresh air; and (3.) Longing for the commandments. All three expressions imply an intensiveness of affection. Surely David prized holiness at a greater rate than we do, or else he would not use expressions so strange to us! See the like, Ps. cxix. 20, ‘My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy judgments at all times.’ Desire is the stretching forth of the soul to the thing desired. Now his soul did so stretch towards these spiritual comforts, that it did even break and crack again in the stretching. So Ps. xlii. 1, ‘As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.’ Harts are thirsty creatures, especially when chased, or having eaten serpents.

Considerations.

1. The soul never worketh better than in the strength of some eminent affection. In all things that we take in hand we do but so-so, act but chilly and weakly, while we have a listless and remiss will; but when the force of affection is upon us, the soul is carried on strongly, either in abomination or prosecution; for affections are the forcible and vigorous motions of the will. Now the soul never doth well but under such an affection. Were it not for affections, our nature would be sluggish and

idle; as Plutarch, ὥσπερ κυβερνήτης πνεύματος ἐκλίποντος, like a pilot at sea without a wind. The ship moveth slowly when there are no winds stirring to fill the sails; or like a chariot without wheels or horses, or a bird when her wings are clipped. They spur us on to what we affect. Men are heavy and lazy because they have no affection: Exod. xxxvi. 2, 'And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab and every wise-hearted man, in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it.' Man findeth a force within himself, his heart maketh him willing; the stronger the affections, the better the man acteth, with greater strength and vivacity; for they are the vigorous motions of the will.

359

[2.] Of all affections, desires are most earnest and vehement, for they are the vigorous bent of the heart to that which is good, the motion and endeavour of the soul after it. As to good, the will chooseth it, and the heart affects a union with it, or desires to obtain it. This affection of union, simply considered, is love, which is an inclination of the soul to good, it presseth the heart to it; but as it is an absent good, it is desire, which exciteth to pursue it earnestly. Desire doth all that is done in the world, for it lifteth up the soul to action, that we may possess those things that we desire; I desire it, and therefore I labour for it. Therefore the main thing that God craveth is the desire: Prov. xxiii. 26, 'My son, give me thy heart,' which is the soul of desires; and therefore the people of God plead their sincerity: Isa. xxvi. 8, 9, 'The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee; with my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.' Get but a desire to good things, to God, to his word, and it will be a great help to you in spiritual things: Prov. xi. 23, 'The, desire of the righteous is only good.' It is well when the soul is set right; this is a strong, active, commanding faculty.

3. Of all desires, those which carry us out to holy things should bear sway, and be the greatest; for affections are not rationally exercised unless they bear proportion to the objects they are conversant about. Now the word and things contained therein are the most noble objects, and so most suitable for our desires, if we would act ration ally. That appears upon these accounts:—

[1.] Spiritual things are more noble; partly because they concern the soul, whereas carnal things concern only the outward man. Our liveliest affections should be exercised about the weightiest things. Can we desire riches and honours and pleasures, which only concern the body, and shall we not desire comforts and graces, which are necessary for the soul? It is irrational, for by this means we grow brutish and sensual. If our appetite desire only food and good pastures, and propagation of our kind, these desires soon exceed, and grow tempestuous and hurtful to the soul: Rom. xiii. 14, 'Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' There is a lawful care for the body, but this desire should not be chief, because the body is not the chief part of a man: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added unto you.' The ennobling of the soul with grace, the settling of our conscience, the assuring of our everlasting estate, these things deserve our chiefest care. Partly because these things are only useful to us in our passage, and so for a time; they are not useful to us in our home, and

so for ever: Deut. xxiii. 24, ‘When thou comest into thy neighbour’s vineyard, thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel.’ We have these things for our use when here, but we carry nothing with us when we go hence. They who did occasionally pass through their neighbour’s vineyard, might take for their necessity, but they must carry none home; and therefore as to these things all our acts must be non-acts: 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31, ‘Rejoice as if we rejoiced not,’ desire as if we desired not. Affections here need a great deal of guiding, and a great deal of curbing, lest we sin in these less noble things; but in spiritual, heavenly things we can never do enough.

360

[2.] Common and ordinary affection will not become God, or any thing that cometh from God, or concerneth our enjoyment of him, or our communion with him. Surely ‘we are to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and with all our might, and with all our souls,’ Deut. vi. 5. And as we are to love God, so in proportion his word, which is the means to enjoy him; therefore here we should stretch our desire to the utmost.

[3.] An earnest bent will only do us good, and make us hold out in the pursuit of heavenly wisdom. It doth us good for the present., as it fits us to improve the word, as an appetite to our food. To eat with a stomach maketh way for digestion: 1 Peter ii. 2, ‘As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.’ And it is zeal will only bear us out. Besides the difficulties and oppositions from without, our hearts are full of contrary qualities and desires, ‘The flesh lusteth against the spirit;’ so that nothing but a strong affection is for our turn. The greatest vehemency is but enough to bear us up in the prosecution of what is good; a weak desire will be soon chilled. Herod had some good desire; so have many, but not strong desires. He that affects grace, should affect nothing so much as grace. A carnal man may be affected with what is good, but there is something that he affects more, vanities, profits, pleasures. Well, then, spiritual desires should be drawn out to the utmost, because the object is more noble. These desires cannot degenerate, nor this affection be corrupted, and a common and ordinary affection doth not become these things. Nothing else will serve the turn.

[4.] Wherever these desires bear sway it will be sensibly discovered by the effects, both to ourselves and others. A man may have a little joy, or a little grief, or a little anger, and nobody see it; but none of these affections can be in any strength and vigour but we shall feel it and others will observe it; for strong affections cannot be hid. Can a man carry fire in his bosom and hide it? So there will be some expression of what thy heart affects. Can a man be under terrors, and not show it in his face? A concealed affection is no affection. Men may hide their hatred, but cannot hide their love: Prov. xxvii. 5, ‘Open rebuke is better than secret love.’ These things tie body and soul together, move the spirits. So desire will show itself, yea, spiritual desire. What desire doth in other things, it will do in this. If there be longing, there will be fainting, gaping, breathing; for strong desires are hasty and impatient of satisfaction. Ahab’s eager desire of Naboth’s vineyard cast him upon his bed. The spouse was sick of love: Cant. v. 8, ‘I charge ye, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,

if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love.' What! desire, and nobody see it? What! desire, and you never feel such a strong urging affection? Surely there will be secret, deep, and frequent sighs, there will be a striving with God in prayer, and constant attendance upon God. Such an active affection cannot be hid. Most men desire so little, it cannot be known whether it be desire or no.

361

[5.] God's children have these desires, because they see more in the word than others do or can do. Spiritual discerning is a help to spiritual affections. They whose eyes are anointed with spiritual eyesalve see wonders in the law, and so are wondrously affected with them. But why should God's children see more?

(1.) They look through the spectacles of faith, they believe the commands to be the commands of the great God, the promises to be the promises of God, and therefore as good as performance; and so what to others seem fancies and fine dreams, to them are the chiefest realities: Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' Who would, having the promises, be so strangely transported, but they that are strongly persuaded? Faith, that looketh upon the things promised as sure and near, maketh them more active and lively. They that have not faith, or do not exercise faith, have but cold affections; but they who believe these wonderful felicities which the word of God speaketh of, long to enjoy what they are sure is true.

(2.) They look into it with an eye of love, and love sets a price on things: they see more of the loveliness of spiritual things than others do. Men's affections are according to the constitution of their souls, or the end they propound to themselves. They that are carnally disposed know all things after the flesh, and value them by the interests of the flesh, as that is gratified; and they that are spiritually disposed are affected accordingly as men's genius lieth. And that is the reason why eminent grace hath strong affections, which carnal men are not competent judges of. It seemeth improbable to them that a man should have such fervent desires of holiness, and be able to speak thus to God, 'I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.' The constitution of their souls is quite otherwise, and their hearts hang world-ward; they have not such a sense of their duty, and do not make it their business to please God; and so, having no deep sense and conscience of their duty, they do not see such a need of the word as their guide and help. They have no love to these things, therefore no passionate desire; for this is the order—the will chooseth, love desireth the union, desire presseth to endeavours after it. But now a godly man, that maketh it his business to please God, the principal desire and choice of his will is to be what God would have him to be, and to do what God would have him to do.

(3.) Because they have experience. Two things quicken our affection to anything that is good, viz., the knowledge of the worth and use of things, and our want of them. And the children of God know both of these by experience, in the course of that life wherein they are engaged; and nothing is known so intimately and pressingly as what is known by experience. By experience they see the

want of the word of God, and its comforts and helps; not only when God first touched their hearts with care of saving their souls, and they were humble, and parched with a sense of sin and wrath; all things were then unsavoury, as the white of an egg; then they longed, they panted for one comfortable word from God, one passage of scripture to give them ease; and the word becometh as necessary as meat to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty, and cool air to the weary: Mat. xi. 28, ‘Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and ye shall find rest to your souls.’ But still they are sensible of their spiritual necessities, so as they cannot breathe without it, nor thrive without it, they find such a necessity of it. It is the food of their souls, the seed and principle of their being, the rule of their lives, the means of their growth, the charter of their hopes, their defence and strength in temptations and assaults. Christ himself guarded himself with the word when he was assaulted. Now, being practically convinced of this, they must needs have vehement longings after it; and after a more full understanding of it, they find by experience that the soul is apt to faint as well as the body: Heb. xii. 3, ‘Lest ye be weary, and faint in your minds;’ and that in all these things nothing relieveth them but the comfort and direction God giveth them in his word.

[6.] The more godly any are, the more they feel these strong affections. All that have life, their pulses do not beat alike strongly; some are weak, others more robust. So it is in grace; some have larger souls than others, and so, as they are more in action for God, they must have more supplies, and a greater measure of spirit and grace; these long and pant. In others there is a greater sluggishness and narrowness of mind, and they rest satisfied with what they have, their spiritual affections are not so raised; and therefore every one that is godly is not acquainted with this panting and breathing and longing; they have so much appetite as is necessary to maintain the new creature, but not these enlarged desires. I confess you are to judge by your willingness rather than the passionate stirrings of your affections. It is the heart which God requireth, and if he hath the will he hath the heart. But yet affectionate workings of the soul towards spiritual and heavenly things are very sweet, and such as all Christians should strive for, but not the best marks by which to judge of our estate. There may be a solid and sincere intention and choice, when there is little stirring perceived in the affections. If the will be fixedly set for God, the man is upright. Yet you are to endeavour to raise your affections to that height which is suitable to the excellency of the object; especially when it is movingly represented to us, our desires should be upon the wing. It is a duty; as far as we can reach it, we should. The more the soul is refined from the dregs of carnal longings and worldly lusts, the more are they enlarged towards God; and as their passionate desires of earthly things are abated, so their spiritual desires are enlarged. David saith, Ps. cxix. 36, ‘Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.’ And the apostle, Col. iii. 2, ‘Set your affections on things above, and not on things on earth.’ The more the heart is given to the one, the more it is taken off from the other. Riches, honours, and pleasures, as these are loved, they hinder this noble working of the soul, this breaking, longing, panting for better things. Worldly things have a great ad vantage

over our affections, because they are sensible and near us, and our knowledge of them is clear, and by the senses obtrude and thrust themselves upon the soul. Therefore use them with a guard and restraint.

[7.] Though this desire should always continue in some degree, yet there are some seasons when it is more vehement, and more notably stirred and raised. In some degree it should always continue, for our necessities and work are ever the same; and if it be only a qualm or fit, it is not right: Ps. cxix. 20, 'My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy judgments at all times.' Appetite followeth life; but at special times it is more notably raised, as when we are to meet with God in solemn duties; it is whetted when disappointed, and stirred upon some restraint or delay, when we meet not with what we expected, that light and comfort and strength that we looked for, but are kept off from satisfaction. When some deep distress makes spiritual comforts more seasonable, or in some great affair or temptation, we need more than ordinary strength, or in some doubt we need light and direction; in all these cases, spiritual desire is more stirring, and a strong affection is kindled in us. David panted as an hart: Ps. xlii. 1, 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.' It was when he was in some distress. So Ps. lxiii. 1, 'O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.' Oh! the sighs and groans that are sent up at such a time! Troubles will sharpen our appetite and rouse us out of security. We cannot always subsist under strong affections; they are very mutable, yet something of them should continue.

Use 1. For reproof.

1. Many are acquainted with the passionateness of sin, but know little of the passionateness of spiritual desire: 1 Thes. iv. 5, μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας, 'not in the lust of concupiscence.' Some think it should rather be rendered thus, Not in the passion of lust. Many times lust groweth to violence, men neigh like fed horses after their neighbours' wives; they feel an ardency and a burning heat in their evil passions and lusts, but none of this gasping and panting for spiritual refreshings and the comforts of the soul. They are acquainted with passionate wrath and fury, passionate envy and spitefulness, passionate lust and filthy desires, passionate covetousness, as Ahab after Naboth's vineyard; the boilings of sin they know, but were never acquainted with these gaspings after grace, as Amnon lusted for Tamar: Rom. i. 27, 'They burned in lust one towards another.' When any sin groweth so headstrong as to admit of no restraint, but men are wedded to their own inclination, that is the passionateness of sin.

2. Some that have affectionate desires for worldly things, and their souls are pained and grieved, and are sick within them if they have them not. These differ from the former, for there the object was sinful, but here the object is lawful, but the desire is irregular; they are sick of pleasures, their hearts run on them, and they cannot refrain: 'As the fool's heart is in the house of mirth,' Eccles. vii. 4. All their longings are for balls and dancings and plays and merry meetings; these are suitable

entertainments to the hearts of fools, vain and sottish epicures, that know no higher delights than the tickling of the senses; their love runneth that way, and their hearts are wholly estranged from God. So some sick of riches and wealth, they gape and gasp for them with an impatient longing: 1 Tim. vi. 9, ‘They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, that drown men in destruction and perdition.’ The more they have, the more they covet, as the laying on of more fuel increaseth the flame; they are impatient, making haste to be rich, run themselves, yea, their consciences, out of breath, to overtake the prey. The world is their element, out of which they cannot live, but spend their time, wit, strength of their souls upon it. They are sick for honour, credit, esteem; as Mordecai’s stiff knee cast Haman upon his bed: Esther iii. 5, ‘And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not the knee, nor gave him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath;’ chap. vi. 12, ‘Mordecai came again to the king’s gate, but Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered. How do men tire their spirits, waste their strength, to compass honour and esteem in the world! and if they find it not, how are they troubled! Ambition is a restless thing; how doth Absalom court the people, sick for rule and government!

364

3. It reproveth them that have only a cold approbation, but no earnest affection to the things of God. Oh, how this instance should shame us that we have no more affection! David speaketh of longing and panting; we thirst not, we pant not; their fervency reproveth our lukewarmness, we are indifferent whether we have this light, comfort, and grace, yea or no. God’s children thirst for it as dry ground for rain. We have some loose and straggling thoughts about holy things, or weak and ineffectual glances of device, some lukewarm motions; but for these strong affections, admire them we may, feel them we do not. Wicked men may have slight apprehensions of spiritual things, which may produce some slight desires and wishes, which yet are so feeble and weak that every carnal desire overcometh them.

Use 2. Information why the people of God press through so many difficulties to enjoy his word. They are urged and pricked on by a strong desire; they would fain enjoy more of God, and therefore press after the means, where it is most clearly and powerfully revealed: John xi. 12, ‘From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.’ Where the gates of heaven stand open they will break through hindrances to get in.

Use 3. It should quicken our dulness, and exhort us to get this affection. If the heart were as it should be, a little bidding would serve the turn.

1. These good desires discover a good frame, for a man is as his desires are. Such motions, when they are in their strength and liveliness, are signs of heroical grace, when your hearts are sick of love; yea, in a more temperate degree, where there are strong and prevailing desires, they show truth of grace, where there is such an affection as is industrious and unwearied, and keepeth us hard at work: Acts xxvi. 7, ‘Unto which promise the twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.’ Such an affection as is troubled when we are interrupted in our main design of

bringing the heart into complete subjection to God, or being capable of the fruition of him: Prov. xiii. 12, ‘Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life.’ If you come for grace, and are troubled and grieved when you are interrupted, if you are refreshed when you have tasted anything of God’s graciousness, any increase of light and grace is as welcome to you as bodily refreshment to a weary, panting traveller, or water to one that is in a great thirst; this is that the heart mindeth most, studieth most, remembereth most, that you never have enough of it, and are longing for more; if there be such an affection, it is a good sign, for sensitive stirring is not so great an evidence as a settled constitution of spirit.

2. These holy desires, as they have something of burthen, so some thing of pleasure in them. Though the absence of the thing desired be a trouble, yet the exercise of holy desire is a pleasure to us, because it is an act of love; the more our hearts are enlarged in them, the greater it is, even before satisfaction. While we are hungering and thirsting we are blessed. It is a blessed thing to be a desirer: Mat. v. 6, ‘Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.’

3. This is a desire which God will satisfy: Ps. lxxxi. 10, ‘Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;’ Isa. xliv. 3, ‘I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.’ This insatiate thirst of grace and comfort shall be satisfied: John vii. 37, 38, ‘In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’ The soul is prepared by it for fruition: Isa. lv. 1, ‘Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.’

If we would get it—(1.) We must get a new heart, which is the soul of these desires, and is God’s promised gift in the covenant: Ezek. xxxvi. 26, ‘A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.’ (2.) Mortify and mode rate your affections to the world and worldly things, and meddle sparingly with the comforts thereof; otherwise your hearts will be apt immoderately to leak out after them, to the interruption of the spiritual life.

SERMON CXLV.

Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.—VER. 132.

THE prophet having praised the word, and expressed his affection to it, presents his petition to God for a favourable look from him, upon the account of his grace and mercy, according to the manner and law of his dispensations towards others of his people. They that love the word may with the like confidence expect the grace of God. Observe in the words—

1. The petition or favour asked, *look thou upon me*.

2. The ground of asking, or the cause of that favour, *and be merciful unto me*.

3. The terms according to which it is dispensed, *as thou usest to do*, *secundum judicium*, according to the law, or according to thy custom towards those that love thy name.

4. The description of God's people; they *love his name*.

These are the especial objects of grace and favour. I shall explain the words as I go over the several branches.

First, I begin with the petition, 'Look thou upon me.' The Septuagint reads it, ἐπίβλεπε ἐπὶ ἐμέ. Other translations, *aspice me*, or *respice me*. Ainsworth, Turn thy face unto me: Ps. xxvi. 16, 'Turn thou unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.' God seemeth now and then to turn away from his people in their distresses, to turn the back upon them, and not the face; as it is, Jer. xviii. 17, 'I will scatter them as with an east-wind before the enemy; I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.' They had dealt so first with God: Jer. ii. 17, 'Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God when he led thee by the way?' So David, God might have seemed to have turned the back upon him. Our translation cometh to the same effect, 'Look upon me.' God's looking implieth two things, viz., his favour and his providence.

1. His favour; as Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To this man will I look, that is of a contrite heart;' that is, I will be gracious unto him, smile upon him, give him evidences of my love.

2. His providence. The providence of God is usually set forth by his eye: Prov. xii. 3, 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.' Now God hath a double eye—an avenging eye and a gracious eye. The avenging eye: Amos ix. 4, 'I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.' The other: 2 Chron. xvi. 9, 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.' Accordingly this act of looking is either—

[1.] With a revengeful eye. So upon their enemies: 1 Chron. xii. 17, 'The God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it;' 2 Chron. xxiv. 22, 'The Lord look thereon, and requite it,' said Zachary the son of Jehoiadah the priest. This is the look of anger. But—

[2.] There is the look of love and benign aspect, as astrologers speak. So Exod. iii. 7, 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows;' and Lam. iii. 50, 'Till the Lord look down and behold from heaven.' So doth he beg here that God would look upon him with a gracious eye. In this gracious aspect two things are notable, viz., his observation and his compassion.

(1.) His observation. He taketh notice of their condition and oppressed innocency: Neh. i. 6, 'Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now day and night.' What have eyes to do with hearing? To behold their pitiful and desolate condition. So 2 Sam. xvi. 12, 'It may be that the Lord will look upon mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.'

(2.) His compassion. God doth take to heart the distresses of his people, and hath a tender pity and compassion over them: Ps. xxv. 18, 'Look upon mine affliction, and my pain.' He doth not only take notice of, but take to heart their sorrows, as appeareth by some gracious effect and deliverance wrought for them. So looking implieth both his affection and actual providence for them.

Doct. The children of God apprehend it as a great favour if he will but look upon them.

So saith David, 'Look thou upon me.' Which request expresseth his modesty; one short glimpse of God's favour, a look of kindness, would be a great matter to him in this vale of tears. A look is welcome to a broken and contrite heart; they are thankfully affected with the least discoveries and manifestations of God's love to the soul. If they could have but the least glimpse of his love, it would be very reviving: Ps. lxxxvi. 17, 'Show me a token for good.' The returning prodigal could go no higher than, 'Make me as one of thy hired servants,' Luke xv. 19, any place in the family, so he might be no more absent from his father. God's people would have a nail in his holy place. This shows—

1. His necessity. God seemed to look from him, no sign of his favour appeared. Thus it is often with God's children here in the world; the sense of his love is gone and lost, we sometimes have not so much as a look from him: Isa. lix. 2, 'Your sins have hid his face from you.' In heaven our communion is more full, and it is uninterrupted: 1 Cor. xiii. 12, 'For now we see through a glass darkly, then face to face.' Here God often hideth his face, and we 'walk in darkness, and see no light;' Ps. civ. 29, 'Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.'

2. His value and esteem of God's, favour: Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.' Esteem of spiritual privileges is a great means to continue them to us. We feel no more of God's love, because we are not thankful

for the enjoyment of it. It must be a practical esteem, such as moveth us to seek it earnestly, as David professeth here it would satisfy him if God would look upon him. We count ourselves most miserable in the want of it; but if we have it, it allayeth all worldly discontents, abateth our desires of worldly comforts.

3. His confidence. One look from God is enough, it is all he beggeth; as the saints in like cases, if their God would but look upon them: Deut. xxvi. 15, 'Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel.' So Isa. lxiii. 15, 'Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory.' Without any labour, only by this look thou canst help all our evils; and will not God cast a look upon us, especially when we call him by his name?

368

Reason 1. Because in our distresses the main thing we should look on is not so much, the removal of God's anger, and the removal of the evil, as the renewed sense of his love, to be reconciled to them: 2 Chron. vii. 14, 'If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wickedness, then will I hear from heaven, and forgive their sins, and will heal their land.' It is a part of the prescribed remedy to seek the face of God, or a favourable look from him; that is put in among the conditions, otherwise we are not affected with our true misery, and the cause of all our trouble, though we may seriously enough desire to be rid of the trouble, or the effects and the strokes of God's anger. The brute creatures can feel pain as well as we, and howl when they find anything inconvenient to that nature which they have, as well as we cry to God: Hosea vii. 14, 'And they have not cried unto me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds.' God accounts it as howling when we do not seek God's favour and grace, as well as the supply of our outward necessities. It is an easy matter to be sensible of the evil of trouble; nature will teach us that.

2. Because that bringeth other things along with it. If God look upon us he will help us; his love and power are set a-work for us, for his eye affecteth his heart. When his heart is affected, he will 'stir up his strength, and come and save us.' So that, go to the fountainhead of all mercies, when you beg a favour, look for it from God, for God's favour is the fountain of all blessings, and without it all your other comforts will do you no good: Ps. lxxx. 19, 'Turn us again, O Lord of hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.' When God once showeth the evidences of his favour and reconciliation to them, other mercies come of their own accord. Oh! then, be assured of the favour of God.

3. If we continue in our misery, a look from God will sweeten all: 'We glory in tribulation also, because of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by his Spirit given to us,' Rom. v. 3-5. To be in favour with God is enough, and sweetens the bitterest of all our troubles. The comfort of the creature may be supplied with this greater comfort, that if affliction be not removed, it is made light to us.

Use 1. Beg earnestly for God's look. It is an ill sign to be careless and regardless of it. Surely the heart is too much carried to earthly comforts, if you care not how God standeth affected to you. God deliver us from such a sottish spirit, that we should neither care for God's frowns nor smiles, nor be sensible of his coming and going. David said, 'Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord,' Ps. xxv. 15, to observe him and his postures; but most men, their eyes are ever towards temporal accidents, how the times smile or frown upon them; or if they think of God, they judge of his respect to them by outward things, but have not any regard to his favour, whether God be reconciled to them or angry with them.

2. Improve it to hope: Ps. lxxx. 14, 'Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts, look down from heaven, and behold and visit this vine.' Will God love his people, and take notice of their sorrows, and not help them? God will manifest his respects and kindness to his people by some visible deliverance, when it shall be good for them.

3. Be such as God will regard, and have an eye unto. Such are—

[1.] The broken-hearted, that have a tender conscience, affected deeply with what the word speaketh concerning their everlasting condition: Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.' The word of God passeth sentence upon men; most regard it not. Now whilst they look not after God, they have no promise God will look after them. Indeed by his preventing grace he is found of them that look not for him; but then before they have any smiles from God's countenance, they are first humbled and brought to trouble: Isa. lvii. 15-18, 'For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirits of the humble, and to -revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him, I hid me and was wroth; he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him.' When the spirit is softened by a deep and serious remorse for sin, and a tender sense of their condition, with these will God dwell, to comfort, relieve, restore them.

[2.] The believer: Ps. xxxiii. 18, 'Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.' They that look for God shall find him.

[3.] The sincere: Ps. xi. 7, 'His countenance doth behold the upright.' He hath a singular care of them, to manifest his love to them, both inwardly and outwardly. A good conscience presents itself to God; none but such will say. Look upon me. Adam hid himself upon his transgression. Hypocrites cannot trust him.

[4.J Such as love his name. It is the description and mark of God's people in the text, they love God, and all that by which God is especially made known. To these God will look, that he may bless them, and comfort them with his love: Eph. vi. 24, 'Grace be with them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.' God's grace and free favour is to them: they love the name of God that rejoice to see God honoured, known, and had in request in the world, to be owned to be such as he is by themselves and others: Isa. xxvi. 8, 'The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.' Their great desire is, that God may be exalted in their own hearts, and in the hearts of others. To these God will look, who take care to honour God, love Christ, and keep his commandments: John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of the Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.'

Secondly, The ground and cause of that favour he expects, 'Be merciful unto me.' David begs what he begs upon terms of grace.

Doct. God's mercy is the cause of all his favour to us, or gracious dealing with us.

All that we have or would have cometh only and wholly from his mercy, and mere mercy. If God cast but a look upon us, or visit us with one glimpse of kindness, we can ascribe it to no other cause. Only mercy, and never a word of merit should be in the mouth of a believer.

370

1. Because there was nothing in us to move him to be thus gracious to us: Gen. xxxii. 10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant.' Let us ask the reason, and debate the cause with ourselves. Why doth or should God do this for me? What moveth him? Is he necessitated? Then he could do no otherwise, and should be kind to all. Would he be unjust if he did not? Whereby have I obliged him? 'Who hath given to God first, and it shall be recompensed to him again?' Rom, xi. 35. Could you enter your action and plea against him? Before what bar and tribunal? And with what arguments will you manage your cause? How will the beam plead against the sun, the stream against the fountain? Is it a debt to your kind and rank of being? How many of the same flesh and blood are equal in nature, but unequal in condition? nay, in the same vicinity and neighbourhood, not only Americans, but of your own nation and country? What did God see more in you than in them of the same calling and profession? 'Two grinding at a mill, one shall be taken and the other left,' Luke xvii. 35. Of the same parentage? 'Was not Jacob Esau's brother?' Indeed, what did God see to move him to give you the first grace? Rom. ix. 16, 'So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.'

2. There is much to the contrary, a manifest unworthiness and contrary desert to what God bestoweth on us.

[1.] A general unworthiness in all the sons of Adam. Man was left as a condemned malefactor in the hands of the law, without all hope and possibility of recovery, under sin: Rom. vii. 14, 'I am carnal, sold under sin.' Under a curse: Eph. ii. 3, 'We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' And that God should regard such!

[2.] A particular unworthiness, before conversion and after.

(1.) Before conversion: Titus iii. 3, 'For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,' &c. We deserve to be abhorred and cast out of God's presence, and might justly expect his vengeance rather than his bounty and goodness, his anger and frowns rather than the light of his countenance.

(2.) Since conversion: James iii. 2, 'In many things we offend all;' Eccles. vii. 20, 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.' There are mixtures of evil, imperfections of holy things. Well, then—

1. Let mercy be all your plea when you have any favour to seek from God. We cannot claim any good upon any other right and title. Justice will except against you, and conscience will take its part. What have you to say but on that: Dan. ix. 18, 'We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.' We have no other motive that will become God, nor bear weight in our own consciences, but only God hath set up a court where grace taketh the throne, and giveth out pardons and blessings to sinners.

371

2. When you have once tasted one pledge of God's love vouchsafed to you, let this kindle coals in your bosoms, and warm your hearts with love to God. It is not only his condescension to take notice of you, but his mercy to show any favour and kindness to you: 2 Sam. vii. 19, 'Is this the manner of men, O Lord God?' Is this the manner of men, to requite good for evil? Who am I?

3. Be contented with your measures. Where nothing is deserved, anything should be kindly taken. Grace communicateth itself to whom and in what measure it will: Mat. xx. 15, 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?' If we are kept under, and in great extremities, he might have dealt worse with us: Lam. iii. 22, 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.' If we had a price in our hands to procure better, we might complain. Now all is free and undeserved, we should admire and submit.

SERMON CXLVI.

As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.—VER. 132.

HERE you have—

Thirdly, The terms of the dispensation, ‘As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.’ The word is—

1. According to the law and right.

2. According to the use and custom, according to the mercy promised, and usually bestowed upon those that love thee. Both senses not improper.

First, The first sense, according to the law and right. *Prout est jus diligentium nomen tuum,* so some. The vulgar, *Secundum judicium.* Amyraldus glosseth thus, *Pro illa misericordia quam inter te et timentes nomen tuum constituisti.* Others, *Secundum jus, et foedus illud.* Take it thus, and it beareth a good sense; for there is the obligation of justice, and the obligation of grace; a judgment of righteousness, and a judgment of mercy. This merciful judgment the saints appeal unto. I cannot exclude this; for otherwise this verse would not have one of those ten words which express the word or law of God.

Doct. That there is a gracious way of right established between God and his people, according to which they may expect mercies.

This will be best understood by comparing the two covenants, their agreement and disagreement, not in all things, but such as are pertinent.

1. Let us see how the two covenants agree.

[1.] They agree in their author. God appointed both, and man is y to accept or take hold of what is offered. Man was not thinking of any such thing when God instituted the first: Gen. ii. 17, ‘But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;’ or revealed the second: Gen. iii. 15, ‘It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.’ For God to enter into a covenant with the creature, either of works or grace, was an act of condescension; and who is he that could bid the Almighty humble himself, and prescribe conditions and laws of commerce between God and us, but only God alone? Man did not give the conditions, or treat with God about the making of them, what they should be; but only was bound to submit to what God was pleased to prescribe. In the covenant of works God gave forth the conditions of life, and a law and a penalty; and in the covenant of grace, man is bound to submit to the conditions without disputing. They are not left free and indifferent for us to debate upon, and to modify, and bring them down to our own liking and humour; but to yield to them, and take hold upon them, not to appoint them: Isa. lvi. 4, ‘Thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant;’ Rom. x. 3, ‘For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.’

[2.] They agree in the moving cause, which in both was the grace of God. The first covenant, it was grace for God to make it. It was the grace of God to accept of man's perfect obedience, so as to make him sure of eternal life on the performance of it. Though the last covenant hath the honour by way of eminency to be styled the covenant of grace, yet the first was so, though the condition of it was perfect obedience, and the reward had respect to personal righteousness. It was of grace also that God would at all covenant and enter into bonds with man, who was not his equal, and give his word to any of the works of his hands. It was grace that endowed man with original righteousness, and fitted him, and enabled him to keep that covenant. His absolute sovereign owed him no more than the rest of the creatures which he had made. Grace engaged the reward, there was no more merit in Adam's obedience than in ours: Luke xvii. 10, 'So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.' Nor did his work bear proportion to the eternal reward.

[3.] They agree in the parties, God and man in both covenants, not any other creatures superior or inferior to man, rational or irrational; the principal contracting parties were public persons, Adam, Jesus: Rom. v. 18, 'Therefore as by the offence of one man judgment came upon all to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life;' 1 Cor. xv. 47, 'The first man is of the earth earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.' The first and second Adam, for them and all their heirs.

[4.] That God giveth sufficiency of strength in both these covenants to the parties with whom he made them to fulfil the conditions thereof. To Adam: Eccles. vii. 29, 'Lo this only have I found, that God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.' To Adam natural, to us supernatural strength: Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them;' Heb. viii. 10, 'This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.'

[5.] In both God kept up his sovereignty, and by his condescension did not part with anything of his dominion over man. In the covenant of works he ruled by a law written on men's hearts: Rom. ii. 15, 'Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.' So by grace the believer is not freed from the law of nature, which being almost obliterated and blotted out of the heart of man, and become very illegible, it pleased God to set it forth in a new edition, and to write it over again in the heart of a renewed man: Heb. viii. 10, 'I will put my law into their minds, and write it in their hearts;' Eph. iv. 24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' Though God admitted us to new conditions of favour, yet he still requireth subjection on our part, and that we own him as Lord and sovereign, requiring obedience and service at our hands, or else he taketh a liberty to visit our transgressions with rods: Ps. lxxxix.

31, 32, ‘If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with, stripes.’

[6.] In both covenants there is a mutual obligation on both parties; this ariseth from the very nature of a covenant. *Contractus est consensio ad constituendam obligationem, qua alter alteri fit obnoxius.* In every covenant there is a tie on both sides, and some reason of right. There is no obligation of debt between God and us, but an obligation of grace. *Deus non est debitor,* saith Aquinas, *quia non est ad alia ordinatus; reddit debita, nulla debet*. His covenant doth infer a debt of favour, not of justice. We may challenge him upon his promise: Ps. cxix. 49, ‘Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.’ But God doth it not with respect to our work, but his own promise. In covenants of justice between man and man, there is a proportion and correspondence between the conditions on the one part and the other. In the covenant between God and us is a deed of favour, containing large grants of privileges, and noble conditions, upon terms and re-stipulations, which had no proportion to the favours granted. As if some prince or person of honour should, out of pure love to a poor mean virgin that hath no portion, covenant to give her a rich dowry and jointure, suitable to his own degree; so doth God with us in the covenant of grace: Ezek. xvi. 8, ‘Now when I passed by thee and looked on thee, behold thy time was a time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness, yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine;’ Jer. xxxi. 3, ‘The Lord hath appeared of old unto thee, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.’ Indeed, in the covenant of works, justice hath a greater predominant influence than grace; though in exact justice, God is not bound to remunerate us there neither.

[7.] The conditions in both covenants were suitable to the ends and scope appointed. In the first covenant God would show forth justice in rewarding man’s works and his own obedience. Now what more suitable condition than works, without the least indulgence in case of failing? 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.’ And what more suitable to show forth grace than the condition of faith required by the covenant of grace? Rom. iv. 16, ‘Therefore it was of faith, that it might be of grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.’ So he would make it full of comfort to the creature, and honour to his justice.

374

2. The differences between these two covenants.

[1.] They differ in the ends, both as to man and God.

(1.) As to man. The end of the first covenant was to preserve and continue man in that happiness wherein it found him, and in which he was created; but the covenant of grace was for the reparation and restitution of mankind to that happiness which he had lost, and from which he had fallen. The

law saith to man in his best, his pure and perfect estate, Continue in it. It speaketh to the innocent, that they may continue in their original happiness. The gospel saith, Be ye reconciled and renewed: 2 Cor. v. 20, 'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God;' for it speaketh to the fallen and miserable: it is a restitution of what was lost, and redeeming us from misery and sin. The one was made with man *in statu instituto*, as he came out of God's hand, in his primitive integrity, when he was a lively resemblance of God, and his abilities for obedience not yet broken. The other covenant was made with him *in statu destituto*, when at the worst, sinful and wretched, in his fallen estate, disabled for obedience to God: Rom. viii. 3, 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.' In the one there was perfect amity between the confederates, God and Adam, and this covenant was made for the continuance and standing thereof; but there was enmity and distance between the parties when the new covenant was set afoot; and this was to be taken away, and the breach made up; and therefore it is called a covenant of peace: Isa. liv. 10, 'For the mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.'

(2.) As to God. In the one, God is considered as a gracious and merciful redeemer, who being displeased with them for the breach of the first covenant, did enter into a new covenant to show the riches of his grace and mercy: Eph. i. 6, 'Unto the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.' Man fallen was not a suitable object of God's love, as man in innocency; he was then lovely, and an alluring object, because of the beauty God had put upon him; but now he was loathsome, like an infant in his blood and filthiness: Ezek. xvi. 6-8, '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. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxed great; and thou art come to excellent ornaments; thy breasts are fashioned, and thy hair is grown, whereas thou wert naked and bare. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine, saith the Lord.' Therefore God had a different end as to himself. The glory of his creating bounty was the end in the old covenant, the glory of his redeeming grace and pardoning mercy was the end in the new covenant, showed in the recovery of lost sinners. In the one, he intended the advancement of those attributes that were known to man by the law and light of nature, as wisdom, power, goodness, bounty, and justice: Ps. viii. 9, 'O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!' The end of the covenant of grace was to set forth redeeming mercy: Rom. v. 21, 'That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' If the creature had never been in misery, mercy had never been known, and grace had not been so glorious, as in giving Christ. All the natural attributes of God receive a new lustre in Christ.

[2.] They differ in their nature. The covenant of works stood more by commands, and less by promises; but the covenant of grace standeth more by promises, and less by commands: therefore called the promise, Gal. iii. 18, 'For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.' The commands and promises were not commensurate. There was not a promise in that covenant for every command of the law of nature, but in the gospel God promiseth what he requireth. In the covenant of works, justice is the rule of God's dealing; for though he entered into that covenant, and promised a reward out of grace; yet being entered into it, justice holdeth the balance, and weigheth the works of men, and giveth to every man according to his works, what is due to him: Rom. ii. 6-8, 'Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for life, and glory, and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,' &c. But the rule of God's dealing in the new covenant is grace. The covenant of works was more independent on God and grace without man, and more dependent on man and grace within himself. In it man was left to stand by his own strength, to be justified upon his own righteousness, God having furnished him with a stock at first, or a sufficiency of power to keep that covenant. But the covenant of grace findeth us without strength; therefore we are kept in dependence upon another: Ps. lxxxix. 19, 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty;' and Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' Man was to keep the first covenant, but here in effect the covenant keepeth us: 1 Peter i. 5, 'Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;' Jer. xxxii. 40, 'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away. from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.'

[3.] In the terms. Unsinning obedience is the condition of the covenant of works. The covenant of works is wholly made void, and the promise thereof of none effect, by any one sin, without any hope of cure or remedy. Once a sinner, and for ever miserable; as the angels for one sin were thrown down from heaven, and 'reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day,' Jude 6. It admitteth of no such thing as repentance, neither doth it offer any provision for such; it speaketh much to the whole, nothing to the sick; it maketh a promise to the righteous, but none to sinners. But the covenant of grace is otherwise: Mat. ix. 13, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous,' but sinners to repentance: Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' Every failing doth not make void the covenant, no not every grosser fault: Ps. lxxxix. 33, 34, 'Nevertheless my loving-kindness I will not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail: my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.' The first covenant is an uncomfortable covenant to a sinner, and can be only comfortable to a perfect righteous person; for in case of the least failing it speaketh nothing but wrath and the curse. But the covenant of grace is comfortable to sinners, it offereth pardon to them. As to the first covenant, it is impossible to be fulfilled by man in the state of corruption: Rom. viii. 3, 'What the law could not do, in that it was

weak through the flesh.' Since the day that Adam fell, never did nor could any man fulfil this covenant. Well, then, the demands of this covenant cannot be satisfied without a continuation in all things written therein, in height of exactness and perfection. But the gospel admits of a sincere, uniform obedience as perfect: 2 Cor. viii. 12, 'But if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.' There is a merciful lenity as to acceptance, though the rule is as strict: Mal. iii. 17, 'And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son, that serveth him.'

Use 1. Then enter into this covenant. You have no benefit by it till you personally enter into the bond of it. The covenant of works was made with man generally, universally considered, with Adam as a public person, representing all his posterity; but the covenant of grace is made with man particularly, and personally considered, and his consent is expressly required, or else it can convey no benefit to us. That was a law, and so did bind whether man did consent or no. This is a privilege, Christ draweth to consent to him, doth not force us against our will: John i. 12, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' Will you own him as the Son of God, and Redeemer of the world? Every man must consent for himself. The effects of the first covenant are uncomfortable for the present, the spirit of bondage: Heb. ii. 15, 'And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' But dreadful hereafter: James ii. 13, 'He shall have judgment without mercy.' When none to mediate for them, they have to do with justice, strict justice. The least sin is enough to rain you, it will pass by no transgression, remit no part of your punishment, it will have satisfaction to the utmost farthing, admits of no pardon, no advocate, regardeth no tears. What justice can give you, that you may look for. If justice speak no good, promise no good, you are to look for none; for justice doth all in the covenant, under which you stand: Ps. cxxx. 3, 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' What you may claim as a due debt, that you may look for; that covenant gives no gift. Oh! then, give the hand to the Lord: 2 Chron. xxx. 8, 'But be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever, and serve the Lord your God.' Receive God's condition: Acts ix. 6, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' You have not leave to choose and refuse.

377

Use 2. Let us bless God, and admire his grace in bringing about this new covenant.

1. Man irreparably had broken the first covenant, fallen from his state of life; so that all the world is lost under guilt and a curse: Rom. iii. 19, 'That every month may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.'

2. Upon this fundamental breach, the Lord was acquitted and ab solved from the promise of life, in this way of works; for man could never stand in that court: Rom. viii. 3, 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,' &c. Then—

3. God taking occasion by this miserable estate, opened a door of hope by Christ: 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' God hath set up a new court of righteousness and life, where sinners may appear, where grace taketh the throne, and the judge is Christ, and the gospel the rule, and faith and sincere obedience accepted.

4. The Lord giveth notice to fallen man, and sendeth him word, that if he will come to this court, and put himself under the laws thereof, he shall be delivered from the curse: Luke i. 77-79, 'To give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercies of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace.'

5. Because men are backward, he hunteth and pursueth them by the curse of the law, and the sense men have of it, to take sanctuary at his grace: Heb. vi. 18, 'That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.'

6. When a poor creature cometh, he receiveth him graciously: Jer. iii. 12, 13, 'Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever: only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God;' 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' If he had not set up another court of righteousness, no tears, no repentance could have helped us; there had been no help that way. Now he is willing to receive you, he standeth with his arms open. From first to last he dealeth with us upon terms of grace.

378

Secondly, Judgment is put for manner and custom or course: Gen. xl. 13, 'Thou shalt deliver Pharaoh his cup after the former manner, כַּמִּשְׁפָּט. So Josh. vi. 15, 'They compassed the city after the same manner.' The same word again: 1 Sam. ii. 13, 'The priest's custom with the people was,' &c.; 1 Sam. viii. 11, מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּלֶךְ, 'This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you;' 1 Sam. xxvii. 11, 'So did David, and so will be his manner.' So in other places.

Doct. 1. That it is God's constant method to encourage all those that serve him, by showing to them all manner of expressions of favour and mercy.

The proposition is often expressed in scripture: Ps. xxv. 10, 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies;' Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord God will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly;' Ps. xxxiv. 10, 'The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that

seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.' David presumeth it: Ps. xxiii. 6, 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.' And many other places.

Object. But it seemeth to be contradicted by sense. They that love God most are most calamitous, and have many afflictions.

Ans. 1. These belong to God's covenant, and are expressions of his good-will and faithfulness: Ps. cxix. 75, 'I know, Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.' God were not faithful nor merciful if he did not now and then take the rod in hand; our need, our good requireth it: Heb. xii. 10, 'For 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.' Discipline is necessary for a child as food, winter as necessary as summer, rainy days as fair days, to curb the wantonness of the flesh, and to withdraw the fuel of our lusts.

2. He useth to show mercy to people in their afflictions, to cause light to rise to them in darkness: 2 Cor. i. 5, 'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.' We are not capable of taking in spiritual comforts till we are separated from the dregs of worldly affections.

3. God will sanctify afflictions: Rom. viii. 28, 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' And he will finally deliver when the season calleth for it: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.'

Object. But he dealeth more hardly with them than others; he doth not punish the gross iniquities of his adversaries, when the lesser failings of his people are severely chastised.

379

Ans. It is meet 'judgment should begin at the house of God,' 1 Peter iv. 17, that it may be known God doth not favour any in their sins: Amos iii. 2, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.' Their sins, though small, have more aggravations, being committed against clearest light, dearest love: Ezra ix. 13, 'And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, should we again break thy commandments?' Isa. xxvi. 10, 'Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.' God is jealous over his people, and careful to have them reclaimed from every evil course: 1 Cor. xi. 32, 'But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.' In the bitterness of the rod God discovereth the vileness of their sin; for he will reclaim them when he suffereth others to walk in their own way.

4. His enemies shall in time taste the dregs of the cup, whereof his own people taste a little: Ps. lxxv. 8, 'For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup; the wine is red, it is full of mixture, he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out and drink

them;' Jer. xxv. 29, 'For lo, I begin to bring evil on this city that is called by my name, and shall ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts.' They shall have the bottom.

5. In the meantime God's people have his love, their sins are pardoned, they are admitted into communion with him; and God's mercy and favour to his people must not be judged by temporal accidents: Ps. xvii. 14, 15, 'From men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, whose bellies thou fillest with thy hid treasures; they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.' Christ gave his purse to Judas, but his spirit to the other disciples.

Object. But God desert eth them; his people complain of it: Isa. lix. 14, 'But Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me.' Yea, Christ himself, Mat. xxvii. 46, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

Ans. 1. There is a distinct consideration of Christ, for he was to bear our sorrows: Isa. liii. 4, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows;' to be forsaken for a while, that we might be received for ever.

2. God's people are mistaken; the saints complain without a cause. Sense maketh lies of God: Ps. xxxi. 22, 'For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication when I cried unto thee;' Ps. lxxvii. 9, 10, 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? And I said, This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.' The disciples had Christ near them when they knew it not: Luke xxiv. 16, 'Their eyes were holden, that they could not know him.'

3. Though they are forsaken for a while, yet not for ever: Isa. liv. 7, 8, 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee. In a little wrath I have hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.'

Use. Do not say God is a hard master. When the compute is rightly made, and you trace his providence through all the passages of your lives, there is more good than evil. Jacob giveth an account of his life: Gen. xlviii. 15, 16, 'God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.' So may others say.

Doct. 2. God's accustomed goodness and gracious dispensations to his people throughout all ages should encourage us in waiting upon him and praying to him.

This emboldeneth me, that all thy servants in all ages have found thee gracious and merciful unto them.

1. From God's unchangeableness. He will not leave his old wont; he is where he was at first: Isa. lix. 1, 'Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that he cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear;' Mal. iii. 6, 'For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' He is the same that ever he was.

2. All his people stand upon the same terms; therefore what he will do for one, he will do for another. God's love is the same; he is alike affected to all his children; his saints now are as dear to him as ever: Ps. cxlix. 4, 'For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people; he will beautify the meek with salvation.' They have the same covenant, it is a common charter: Acts ii. 39, 'For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' The same Redeemer: 1 Cor. i. 2, 'To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours;' Rom. iii. 22, 'Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference.' One hath not a more worthy Christ than another; faith is as acceptable as ever: 2 Peter i. 1, 'To them that have obtained like precious faith.' They are interested in the same privileges, promises, gifts, and rewards.

Use 1. Examples and instances of God's mercy should confirm us. It is not agreeable to God's nature and practice to forsake his people, or to be deaf to their prayers: Ps. xxii. 4, 5, 'Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them; they cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.' None of his people ever sought him in vain. From the beginning of the world to this day, God hath been gracious: Ps. ix. 10, 'For they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.' No age can give an instance to the contrary; therefore mark the usual dealings of God with his children: What was said to them was for the establishment of our comfort and hope: Rom. iv. 23, 24, 'Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;' compared with Gen. xv. 6, 'And he believed in the Lord, and lie counted it to him for righteousness.' God's word is a book of precedents, as a painter's masterpiece is hung out to invite custom.

381

2. Let us be sure we be of this number. If there be conformity to them in affection, there will be in consolation; if in grace, then in privileges: Ps. cxlv. 18-20, 'The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He shall fulfil the desire of them that fear him, he also will hear their cry, and will save them. The Lord preserveth all them that love him.'

Doct. 3. We should beg the favour of God's people.

Common things should not satisfy a child of God. He must have what is peculiar to the saints: Ps. cvi. 4, 5, 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest unto thy people; O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.' Nothing will satisfy the people of God but his special love; they have a new nature that must be pleased, a great, noble, and divine end to be promoted, which is to enjoy God; the creatures serve not for that. Common men are put off with common mercies; these they may have and perish.

Use. Let us be of this temper. Men commonly think that God looketh upon those whom he blesseth with a large increase of temporal things, that he is merciful to those that never see evil, nor feel pain or want. David was not of this mind; he would have God deal with him as with his friends and favourites; he leaveth it to God how to express his mercy, who only knoweth what is best for us; only he beggeth the fruits of his special love. The heart is earthly and worldly when spiritual things are not valued above all the glory and plenty of the world. Our condition is under a curse without these; in these Christ showed his love: Acts iii. 26, 'Unto you first God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' He died not to make us rich, honourable, great, but for remission of sin. This is a solid ground of rejoicing; this abideth for ever.

Doct. 4. We must not affect singularity of dispensations, but be content to be dealt with as others of God's children have been dealt with before us.

We must not expect to go to heaven without difficulties:1 Peter v. 9, 'Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.' We are not alone; our lot is no harder than others of God's holy ones. All have gone to heaven this way. God will so manifest himself to us, that still there may be room for faith and patience.

SERMON CXLVII.

Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.—VER. 133.

IN the former verse the prophet had begged for a comfortable look from God, and some renewed taste of his mercy; he now amplifies his request, and as he there prayed for pardoning mercy, so now for sanctifying grace. Many that seek mercy to deliver them from the guilt of sin, do not desire grace to deliver them from the power of it; and yet the one is as necessary as the other, that we may not offend God, as well as that sin may not hurt us. To pray only for pardoning mercy would seem to be a praying only for our own interest, and not for God's. God's interest lies in our subjection, our interest lies in impunity and freedom from the curse of the law and the flames of hell; and let

382

me tell you that our interest is not sufficiently provided for till the heart be sanctified as well as sin pardoned; for an unholy creature can never be happy, that is clear against the course of all the Lord's wise proceedings. He hath settled everything, and put it into its proper place, and a sinful creature can never enjoy impunity; therefore, as we need to pray, Lord, be merciful to us, so, Lord, 'order my steps in thy word,' &c.

In this prayer there are two branches:—

1. A petition for grace for the regulation of his life, *order my steps according to thy word*.

2. A deprecation of the contrary evil, *and let not any iniquity have dominion over me*.

The first part of his prayer is by way of prevention, the second is by way of reserve; and the connection of both doth in effect speak thus, Lord, if thou dost not order my goings, surely iniquity will have dominion over me. Therefore he first prays that God will not permit him to err; or if the Lord should by his righteous providence permit him to fall, that he might return again to his duty, that sin may not wholly and clearly carry it in his heart, and have a full power over him: Lord, 'order my steps according to thy word;' but if I should fail, 'Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' The same method is used Ps. xix. 13, 'Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.' He doth desire absolutely to be kept from presumptuous sins; but then he adds by way of supposition and reserve, that if he could not by reason of his naughty heart be kept from them, yet that they might not have full power and dominion over him. Rabbi David Kimchi indeed refers the former branch to the affirmative precept, 'order my steps according to thy word;' and the latter branch to the negative precept: and so he makes the meaning to be this, Let me neither break thy laws by omitting any duty or committing any sin. You may take that division of the words if you will.

In the former branch observe the act of grace, *order*; the subject, *my steps*; the rule, *thy word*.

In the latter branch observe the evil deprecated, the dominion of sin, the universality or degree of the deprecation, *let not any iniquity*, neither great nor small sins, take the throne by turns.

To explain these circumstances, the act of grace, 'order.' The Septuagint, κατευθυνον, direct or set straight my steps. Junius hath it, *institue*, frame or appoint; and Ainsworth hath it, *firmly direct*; for indeed the word signifies to instruct, order, and establish. We are ignorant and apt to err, therefore God must instruct us; we are various and uncertain in our motions, therefore God must order us in a way of obedience, and reduce us into a settled course and method, that all may be done in a subordination to our great end; for order respects that. And we are soon discouraged, therefore God must support and establish us: so firmly direct, that thou mayest establish our steps according to thy word.

383

The subject is, 'my steps.' Because the affections are the seat of the soul, by which it walks out after the object represented, the understanding represents and the will chooseth; therefore some

would limit these steps to the affections. I think it compriseth all the actions of the reasonable creature, that no thoughts, no deeds, no counsels, no enterprises of his might transgress the limits of God's word.

For the rule, 'In thy word.' The Septuagint, κατὰ τὸ λόγιόν σου, according to thy oracle. However the phrase is to be noted, 'In thy word;' not only according to this rule, but in this path. The sum is this: Lord, thou hast invited me to walk in thy word; now direct me, strengthen me to walk in it, and let all my motions and my actions keep within the compass of it.

For the other part, 'Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' Because the Septuagint reads, μὴ κατακυριευσάτω μου πᾶσα ἀνομία; and out of them the vulgar, 'Let not all iniquity tyrannise over me,' some have conceived the sense to be, let me not be trampled upon, not oppressed by all kind of wrong and all kind of injustice; as if he pleaded here to be kept from the tyranny of his enemies. But this is not probable, and other scriptures that are parallel to this, where the like expression is used, will not permit such a sense; and therefore he saith, Let not any or every iniquity have dominion over ne. Why? Because sins take the throne by turns. Sometimes a man finds this sin and sometimes that sin in the throne, and sometimes strange sins that we little think of may get a great power over the heart, even those that we fear least many times may steal into the throne.

From the first branch observe—

Doct. 1. That there is a constant daily necessity of grace to direct and order our motions and actions according to the word of God.

Now, that there is a daily and hourly necessity of grace, is a point that frequently offereth itself in this psalm. I shall briefly dispatch it, therefore, in these propositions:—

1. It appears from the strictness of Christianity. He that would please God had need of a tender conscience, that he may wholly frame himself to do the will of God; and not only take care to be right for the main of his course, but that every particular action should be orderly and regular: for the man of God does not beg grace here to choose a right path, but that his steps may be ordered. This is the strictness of Christianity, that a man should make conscience of every step, that every action should be under the power of grace, and fall within the rules of the word. It needs to be so. Why? Because the word of God is not only a general rule to show us our path, but a particular direction to order our steps: Ps. cxix. 105, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path;' to my feet as well as my path. Every action or step of ours is morally considered in its own tendency, either a step to heaven or hell; if good, a step to heaven; if evil, a step to hell: therefore we had need make conscience of our steps. Besides, if we do not make conscience of our steps, we shall not make conscience of our way; for he that is not faithful in a little, will not be faithful in much. Every wry step is so far out of the way, and the more we persist in it the more we wander. Therefore see what is required of Christians: 1 Peter i. 15, 'Be holy,' ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ, in every

creek and turning of your lives, ‘In all manner of conversation.’ A man that would approve himself to God, must be good in all conditions, in all his businesses, affairs, all ages of his life, young or old, in actions civil, sacred; if his condition be prosperous or adverse; when in adversity or prosperity, he must carry himself as a Christian; he ought still to approve himself to be a hater of sin, and a lover of what God loves. In all his affairs, not only in his religious actions, but in his civil and common actions. Godliness is not a holiday suit, but an apparel that is of constant wearing; and therefore a Christian is to show himself a Christian in all things, though especially in those things which are solemn and most weighty; a Christian in his prayers, a Christian in his business, in his recreation, in his meals, a Christian in the disposal of himself and condition, a Christian in all his converses. I lay this for a foundation. Certainly here are steps spoken of. The holy man would have them ordered, and that by the strictness of Christianity; so that no one particular action must allowedly be sinful. You see what need there is of direction. Care less and slight spirits, that only look upon Christianity in the lump, they think that truths are few and easy, and that the art of holy living, is soon learned, and they do not see a need of this ordering our ways, and to be willing to please God in all things. But those that count the least sin to be a very heavy burthen, a greater evil than the greatest temporal loss, that make it their business to approve themselves to God in all things they put their hands unto, will be earnest and importunate with him for his grace.

2. The necessity of the word of God. Whoever will please God in all things, and will purge his own soul and his life from sin, must take the word of God for his rule and direction. Our lives are not to be framed according to our own fancies, but God’s word, where the genuine holiness is recommended to us, and which is the only proper means to work the heart to it. I shall prove that the word of God is the great rule both to warn us of our dangers and to instruct us in our duties; and so it is the great means to sanctify the heart. I say it is the great rule to warn us of our dangers: Ps. xix. 11, ‘More over, by them is thy servant warned.’ This discovers temptations, inconveniences, snares, which otherwise we should never discern. There are many dangers that wait for us on every side. So Ps. xvii. 4, ‘Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.’ It is the only proper means to keep us from the paths of the destroyer. Alas! otherwise if we do not strictly consult with his statute and rule, we shall cry up a confederacy with those that cry up a confederacy against God; we shall embrace the temptation which opportunity offers, if he follow the guidance of his deceived and deceiving heart. And the word of God doth only discover our duties to us: Prov. vi. 23, ‘For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.’ Mark, whatever condition we are in, whether in the night, or whether in the day, whether in this or that condition, here we have a lamp and light; here is that which will show us what God requires of us in every state and condition. Now, as this is the only rule, so it is the only appointed means with which God will associate the operation of his grace for the converting and curing of the souls of men; for when God had stated a rule for the creature, it is fit the knowledge of that might be a means of sanctification; so the word is commended to us: John xvii. 17, ‘Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth;’ if the Holy Ghost will sanctify, if he

will beget not an apocryphal and bastardly holiness (that may be by the institutions of men, and rules men prescribe), but a genuine, true holiness, which is acceptable to God; put them into a capacity to serve, love, and enjoy God: Ps. cxix. 9, 'Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.' A young man, that is in the heat of his lusts, and in the ruff of his sin, is impetuously carried away. How shall he do to break this boisterous violence, and bring his heart into some competent way of obedience to God? Why, the word of God is the only means; the Lord interposeth by his word, and blesseth his word. Let a man read Seneca, Plato, Plutarch, all the philosophers, he will have but cold and faint respects to holiness and to better things, until he come to be exercised in the word of God. Man is not a vessel that comes newly out of the potter's shop, but he hath a smatch of the old infusion of sin; and he cannot have this taste and tang put out but by the word of God sanctifying his heart and breaking the power of his lusts: Ps. xix. 7, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' We are out of joint, unfit to please and serve God. Now, how shall a man do to get his soul set in joint again, that he may be in a capacity to serve and enjoy God? Why, this restores the soul to a capacity; the Lord blesseth this institution and this means; for it is not bare truth, but instituted truth, with which God will associate the operation of his Spirit. By this word of his, that was indited by the Spirit, and penned by holy men that were moved by the Holy Ghost, he doth join his virtue and power and efficacy of his Spirit to sanctify the souls of men.

3. They that make it their scope and business to please God in all things, and take his word for their rule, their souls will soon see a need for divine direction, and the establishment of his grace. This reason is taken from the temper of the persons that are to walk in this strict way, according to his strict rule; they are such as are naturally blind, and naturally opposite to God: now certainly such need to go to God for direction. I gather that from these words, 'Order my steps.' Every man is a poor blind creature, and hath a heart opposite to the ways of God; he need beg this grace of God, Lord, incline my heart. Every man is a blind creature, partly because our own spirits are blind, crooked, and unstable, that we shall neither consult our rule nor understand our duty, nor like it when it is represented to us, until the Lord doth enlighten us. A man's heart is naturally blind: 2 Peter i. 9, 'He cannot see afar off,' he hath no skill in spiritual things, 1 Cor. ii. 14. The heart is naturally full of darkness, and then this darkness grows upon us, partly by prejudice or custom, 'and many evil habits: 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'The god of this world hath blinded men's eyes.' There are many inordinate affections that increase upon us. So it is then that a man is blind by nature, more blind by custom and inordinate affection, is exceedingly blinded; which have a great influence upon our judgments in all practical cases. Though we should know general rules, yet to bring them down to every particular action is very grievous, and hard to bring the heart to. But you will say, When we have received the Spirit, God hath put his law into our minds, this blindness is cured; therefore why should such as David pray, 'Lord, order my steps,' &c.? Yes, we are cured, but in part, *non totaliter*. Grace doth heal us but in part, much of the matter that clouded the mind before is yet upon us; and when lusts are awakened by temptations, we strangely forget ourselves, our

own reason, our senses, and examples of others; we are misled, so that we know not what to do, unless the Lord order our steps. Well, as we are blind, so we are opposite too. When we know our way, what we should do, yet we are apt to stumble at every stone. Naturally the wisdom of the flesh is opposite: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God.' And so much as the wisdom of the flesh still remains, we are apt to be discouraged from walking with God according to his strict rule, and in the way that he hath given us, and we are extremely slack, that unless we be quickened by the lively and strengthening light of the Spirit, alas! how soon shall we miscarry! Therefore this ordering is a strengthening against the reluctances of the flesh: Ps. xvii. 5, 'Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.' Alas! when a man finds a good way, he is either apt to lie down out of laziness, or to stumble and fall, and we cannot keep our footing against temptations. Every man of experience seeth the need of this. Therefore, Lord, direct me, 'Order my steps.'

4. The reason is taken from the value of the blessing here asked. It is one of the chiefest blessings of his grace and favour to have his illuminating. After he had said, 'Lord, be merciful unto me,' presently follows, 'Lord, order my steps.' To prove this must needs be a great blessing and favour. It will appear out of the words of the text; partly from the word 'order;' it makes our lives orderly and regular. Alas! what a confused, disproportionable thing is a man that is half in and half out with the ways of God! His conversation is not all of a piece, sometimes right and sometimes wrong; there is not that beauty, that harmony, that holiness to be found in them. Solomon tells us, Prov. xxvi. 7, 'The legs of the lame are not equal; so is a parable in the mouth of fools.' Baines on the place saith thus, The man hath knowledge to speak well, but he lives ill; so his conversation is halting, like the legs of the lame. Sometimes his speculative light will incline him to do easy things, but his practical endeavours will carry him another way; there is no even and uniform strain of godliness. Then is a man's conversation ordered, when all is carried on with a fair respect to his last end; for it is the last end that fixeth a man's mind, and cuts off impertinences and inconsistencies, and makes a man's conversation beautiful; otherwise the man is tossed up and down in a various uncertain motion, distracted by a multiplicity of ends and objects that his will is in no composed and settled frame. I remember David prays: Ps. lxxxvi. 11, 'Unite my heart to fear thy name.' It is a blessed thing when a man is united, when his conversation is all of a piece; and James i. 8, 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' A divided mind will beget an uncertain life. I say, the last end of our lives doth unite all the parts of it, and there is a regularity and harmony between them. But others, their life is a mere lottery; the fancies by which they are governed are jumbled together by chance, and they live at peradventure and haphazard, and there is not a comely, entire, uniform order to a blessed end. Again, partly, too, from the reason here, 'Order my steps according to thy word; and let no iniquity have dominion over me.' This will prevent the dominion of sin. Perverse affections are apt to sway us, but when the Lord supplies fresh directions, the tyranny and dominion of sin is prevented and crushed in the egg. Sin usually steals into the throne by insensible degrees; temptations and occasions reduce us to some evil practice. Well, and that produceth another, then do multiplied acts get strength, then they ensnare us; and when once the soul is ensnared then

387

this bondage daily increaseth, and is hard to be broken; for by multiplied acts custom creeps upon us, and that is another nature, and that which was but indifferent at first grows more difficult. As diseases looked to at first are easily cured, otherwise they grow desperate; so sins when they come to a slavish tyranny and custom, they cannot help it. All this is prevented by the seasonable warnings of the Holy Spirit. Partly, too, because this is only vouchsafed to God's special people. God, as he loves any, so he manifests himself to them. This appears out of the text; for in the verse before the text the words run thus, 'Look upon me, and be merciful unto me; as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name;' and what then? 'Order my steps in thy word.' Oh! this is to do good to us, as he useth to do good to them that fear his name. Mark, some have only providence and natural conscience; there are others that have the word, and have an enlightened conscience, that plead God's interest in them; but there are others are honoured so far that they are his people, that have not only his word, but Spirit, to enforce his word upon their hearts. How did Christ declare his love to his people? John xv. 15, 'I call you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.' There is God's love declared, when he shows us his whole will, when he doth guide us in all his ways; this is the favour of his people: Ps. xxv. 14, 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.' There is the great privilege that God vouchsafes to his peculiar people; they know the mind of God more than others do, and in all doubtful debates and uncertain controversies they are not left in the dark: Mark iv. 11, 'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.' David surely found such direction to be a very special blessing. Again, another argument from the text that this must needs be a very great blessing, partly because it helpeth us in our way to true happiness. I gather that from the word 'steps;' for all motion hath a term to which it tends, and every journey hath its period. Now, whither doth the path of the word lead us, but to God, and to the everlasting enjoyment of him? Oh! here they have an infallible direction that they cannot miscarry in so great an affair as this is, as the getting home to God. Surely that is a great blessing. I remember David saith, Ps. lxxiii. 24, 'Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me unto glory.' They that wait upon God's direction are sure to be received into his heavenly glory; their steps are directed for the present, and they may be confident that at length they shall get home to God; for God will accept of what he hath ordered. You are sure God will take pleasure in you when you walk according to his direction. So you see the need from the value of this blessing.

388

5. Consideration, that the children of God are sensible of their need of it, that they cannot choose but pray for it. I take this from the very form of the words: 'Lord, order my steps.' It is a prayer from the man of God. They seek it humbly and earnestly, therefore they shall find it. They that make their bosom their oracle, and wit their counsellor, God is disengaged from being their guide; they need him not, but the snares they run into will soon show how much they need him. But the children of God need him, therefore they shall find it: Prov. iii. 6, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' You should ever go to God for the direction of your way, then God will not disappoint you, nor defeat your expectations: Ps. lxxxv. 13, 'Righteousness shall go

before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.' Sometimes we wander, turn aside, and walk out of the right way; at other times we fall and stumble in the right way; but the Lord will set us in the paths of his steps.

Use. To press us to seek this great privilege of God, beg of the Lord continually to order your steps according to his word. Alas! evil may surprise you before you are aware. Little did David think danger was so near him when he walked upon his terrace; he gave leave to his eye to wander, and his eye fired his heart. Every morning be with God about this business: Ps. v. 3, 'O Lord, in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.' You need not only protection against dangers, but direction against evils and snares. As we seek for protection in the night, so in the morning, prayer is for the direction of the day. Nay, we need not go to God in the morning, but all the day long: Ps. xxv. 5, 'On thee do I wait all the day.' Beg of him that you may not miscarry, but carry yourselves humbly and prudently, and may do nothing that is contrary to the will of God and his grace, but that the Lord would support and guide you continually. There is one argument that may mightily encourage you in praying. Consider your covenant interest in God doth establish this blessing, as the saints always plead the relation: Ps. xxv. 5, 'Lead me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou art the God of my salvation;' Ps. cxliii. 10, 'Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God;' Ps. xlviii. 14, 'For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.' To be a God to any is to be a guide; for to a people in covenant, God makes over his whole self. Now in God there are considerable these three great attributes—his wisdom, power, and goodness. Look, as God by virtue of his power is all-sufficient against all dangers, and by virtue of his goodness is a fountain of everlasting happiness, so also by his wisdom is a fountain of all goodness to guide and direct us. Now as God hath engaged all his goodness to make us as happy as heart can wish, and his power to defend and maintain us, so all his wisdom to guide and direct us.

389

SERMON CXLVIII.

And let not any iniquity have dominion over me.—VER. 133.

FOR the second branch of the prayer I observe—

Doct. 2. That the dominion of sin is a great evil, and ought earnestly to be deprecated, even by the children of God.

1. What is the dominion of sin.

2. That it is a great evil.

3. Why the saints should deprecate this evil.

First, What is the dominion of sin? It may be known by some distinctions.

1. There is a dominion of sin that is gross and sensible, and a dominion of sin that is more secret and close.

[1.] More gross and sensible. For though sin do reign in every one by nature, yet this dominion more sensibly appears in some than others, who are given up to be visibly under the dominion of sin, as the just fruit of their voluntary living under that yoke; and usually these are set forth as a warning to the rest of the world; God hangs them up in chains of darkness in the sight of men, as an instance of this woful slavery, that every man that seeth them, and is acquainted with their course of life, may say without breach of charity, There goes one that declares himself to be a servant of sin. This is either to sin in general, or to some particular sin.

(1.) To sin in general. He, whosoever he be, that, instead of trembling at God's word, scoffeth at it, and maketh more account of this world than of the will of God, of the fashions of men than of God's word, and thinketh the scorn of a base worm that would deride him for godliness a greater terror than the wrath of God, and the love of his carnal company a greater happiness than communion with Christ, and instead of working out his salvation with fear and trembling, runneth into all excess of riot, and carelessly neglecteth his precious soul, while he pampereth his frail body, and doth voluntarily and ordinarily leave the boat to the stream, give up himself to serve his corruption without resistance or crying to Christ for help, this man is without dispute, and in the eye of the world a slave to sin: Rom. vi. 16, 'Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?' It is an apparent case. A man that giveth up himself to go on in the ways of his own heart, restraining himself in nothing which it affects, he is one of sin's slaves. So saith our Lord Christ: John viii. 34, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.' He needeth no further doubt nor debate about the matter. He that goeth on in a trade of sin, and maketh that his work and business in the world, without serious looking after the saving of his soul, is one in whom sin reigneth.

390

(2.) So some particular sins. As we have instances of carnal wretches in general, so of some poor captive souls that remain under the full power and tyranny of this or that lust, and are so remarkable for their slavery and bondage under it that the world will point at them and say, There goeth a glutton, a drunkard, an adulterer, or covetous worldling, a proud envious person; Their sin is broken out into some filthy sore or scab that is visible to every eye, either their covetousness or gluttony or ambitious affectation of worldly greatness, one whose god is his belly, who is a slave to appetite: 2 Peter ii. 19, 'For of whom a man is overcome, of the same he is brought in bond age.' They grow proverbial for giving up themselves wholly to such a conquering and prevailing lust. As in the natural man several men have their distinct excellences, some are famous for a strong

sight, some for a quick ear, some for a nimble tongue, some for agility of body; so these for notable excesses in some corruption. Or as the saints of God are eminent for some special graces, as Abraham for faith, Moses for meekness, Job for patience, and Joseph for chastity, and Paul for zeal, Timothy for temperance; so these have their notorious and contrary blemishes.

[2.] There is a more secret and close dominion of sin, that is varnished over with a fair appearance. Men have many good qualities and no notorious blemishes; but yet some sensitive, good, and created thing sitteth nearest the heart, and occupieth the room and place of God, that is loved, respected, served instead of God, or more than God. That which is our chiefest good and last end is our god, or occupieth the room of God. So our Lord telleth us, Mat. vi. 24, 'No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or will hold to the one and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon;' and John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, that seek honour one from another, and not the honour that cometh from God only?' and Luke xiv. 26, 'If a man come to me, and hate not father and mother,' &c. We must be dead not only to carnal pleasure but to credit, estate, yea, life and all. It must not sit nearest the heart, nor bring it under its command and power: 1 Cor. vi. 12, 'All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.' We are besotted and bewitched with some created thing, that we cannot part with it. or leave it for God's sake, or notwithstanding all the mischief it is to the interest of his soul. Though a man serveth it cunningly, closely, and by a cleanly conveyance, yet all his religion is but either to hide or feed his lust.

2. Distinction. There is a predominancy of one sin over another, and a predominancy of sin over grace. In the first sense, renewed men may be said to have some reigning corruption or predominant sin, namely, in comparison of other sins. That such predominant sins they have appeareth by the great sway and power they bear in commanding other evils to be either committed or forborne, accordingly as they contribute to their advancement; as a wen or a strain draweth all the noxious humours to itself. So it appeareth by the violent and frequent relapses of the saints into them, or their unwillingness to admit of admonition and reproof for them, or their falling into them out of an inward propensity, when outward temptations are none, or weak, or very few; some sins that are less mortified than others, or unto which they are carried by a natural inclination, constitution, or education. Thus David had his iniquity, Ps. xviii. 23, whether it were hastiness or distrust of the promise, or an inclination to revenge him self. Some sins that men favour most, and are most urgent and importunate upon them, and steal away their hearts most from God; the great pond into which other rivulets or streams of iniquity do empty themselves; that sin that outgroweth all the rest, as the tall tree taketh away the nourishment from the under shrubs; that which is loved and delighted in above other sins; and when other sins will not prevail, the devil sets this a-work; as the disciples looked upon the disciple whom Jesus loved; when Christ told them that one of them should betray him, Simon Peter beckoned to him that he should ask who it was of whom he spake, John xiii. 23, 24. Well, then, in regard of other sins, one may reign and sit in the throne of the heart, be beloved more than another, but not in regard of predominancy over grace; for that is contrary to the new

nature, that sin should have the upper hand constantly and universally in the soul: for any one thing, though never so lawful in itself, habitually loved more than God, will not stand with sincerity, Luke xiv. 26. If not our natural comforts, certainly not our carnal lusts. To love anything apart from Christ, or against Christ, or above Christ, is a dispossessing Christ, or casting him out of the throne.

3. Distinction. There is a twofold prevalency and dominion of sin—actual or habitual; actual is only for the time, habitual for a constancy. Though a regenerate man be not one that lets sin-reign over him habitually, yet too often doth sin reign over him actually as to some particular act of sin.

[1.] The habitual reign of sin may be known by the general frame and state of the heart and life, where it is constantly yielded unto, or not opposed, but breaketh out without control, and beareth sway with delight. Men give the bridle to sin, and let it lead them where they will. That is *peccatum regnans, cui homo nec vult, nec potest resistere*, so Coppen. The sinner neither can nor will resist, *non potest*, because usually after many lapses God giveth up men unto penal or judicial hardness of heart. But he is willingly taking these bonds and chains upon himself. Such are said, 2 Peter iii. 3, 'To walk after their own lusts;' to 'live in sin,' Rom. vi. 2; to be 'dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. ii. 1; to 'serve divers lusts and pleasures,' Titus iii. 3; to 'draw on iniquity with cart ropes,' Isa. v. 18. Such as addict and give over themselves to a trade of sin with delight and full consent.

[2.] Actually, when we do that which is evil against our consciences, or yield *pro hic et nunc* to obey sin in the lusts thereof; when it gaineth our consent for the time, but the general frame and state of the heart is against it. In short, when sin is perfected into some evil action, or (in the apostle's speech) when lust hath conceived and brought forth sin, James ii. 15; that is, some heinous and enormous offence. At that time, no question it hath the upper hand, and carrieth it from grace, and the flesh doth show itself in them more than the spirit. A man may please a lesser friend before a greater in an act or two. Every presumptuous act doth for that time put the sceptre into sin's hand. Note, that both predominants spoken of in the former distinction, and the actual reign of sin in this, do much prejudice a Christian, waste his conscience, hinder his joy of faith; and if not guarded, and we do not take up in time, or if often, cannot be excused from habitual reign. They are rare by the violence of a great temptation, unlikely acts, as for a hen to bring forth the egg of a crow.

392

4. The next distinction is of sins reigning with a full and plenary consent, and with reluctancy and contradiction; as Herod reigned over the Jews for many years by mere force, they opposing him and contradicting him, but afterwards willingly consented to his government: so sin reigneth in some, who readily, willingly obey the lusts thereof, and take its bonds and chains upon them. And on the godly it doth sometimes prevail, yet not quietly and without blows: 'The evil which I hate that do I,' Rom. vii. 15. They are in combat and conflict with it. The virgin that cried out was innocent; it was a ravishment, not a consent, *peccatum patitur, non facit*, as Bernard. The seed of God is disliking and opposing, 1 John iii. 9. They are sometimes foiled, but they keep up their resistance. Sin gets the mastery in some acts, but as a tyrant, not a lawful possessor. They groan

under that oppression, ever strive for liberty and freedom, and in time recover it. Chrysostom hath an expression on that of Rom. vi. 12, 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies,' &c., οὐκ εἶπε μὴ τυραννεῖτο, ἀλλὰ μὴ βασιλευέτω. Sin will play the tyrant in the best heart, but let it not have a quiet reign. It will take advantage of present distempers and difficulties; it may encroach upon us, but it hath not our hearts: whereas it is otherwise if a man be not in arms against it, but liveth in peace and good contentment under the vigour and life of his lusts; there is no opposition unless it be some checks of a natural conscience, or a few thoughts of fear and shame, or some temporal mischief and inconvenience; no opposition of a renewed heart, no hatred of it and opposition as it is an offence to God; then your condition is evil.

Secondly, That it is a great evil, &c. It must needs be so—

1. Because it is a renouncing of the government of Christ. We transfer the kingdom from him to Satan, and take the sceptre out of his hands, when we give way to the reign of sin. What though we do not formally intend this, yet virtually we do so, and so God will account it. It is *finis operis*, though not *operantis*. Look, as the setting up of a usurper is the rejection of the lawful king, so the setting up of sin is the setting up of Satan, John viii. 44, and by consequence a laying aside of Christ; for every degree of service done to him includeth a like degree or portion of treason and infidelity to Christ. For a man cannot serve two masters, Mat. vi. 24, cannot have two chief goods at the same time; therefore he that cleaveth to the one refuseth the other. If you cleave to sin, you renounce Christ; and though we profess Christ to be our Lord, that will not help the matter, Mat. vi. 21; we are, for all that, as true bondmen to Satan as the heathen that offered sacrifice to him. A drunken or wanton Christian giveth the devil as much interest in him as those that sacrificed to Bacchus or Priapus or Venus; for he doth as absolutely dispose and command your affections as he did theirs: you are his by possession and occupation; the bond of your servitude to Satan is altogether as firm and strong as their rites of worship. Now we that know Christ's right both by purchase and covenant, cannot but know what a great sin this is. By purchase we are his: 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, 'Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price.' The buyer hath a power over what he hath bought. We were lost and sold; we sold ourselves against all right and justice, and Christ was pleased to redeem us, and that with no slight thing, but with his own blood, 1 Peter i. 18, 19. How can you look your Redeemer in the face at the last day? If you have any sense and belief of Christian mysteries, you should be afraid to rob Christ of his purchase: 1 Cor. vi. 15, 'Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.' He hath bought you to this very end, that you may be no longer under the slavery of sin, but under his blessed government and the sceptre of his Spirit: Titus ii. 14, 'He hath redeemed us from all iniquity.' This was his end, to set us at liberty, and to free us from our sins; therefore, for us to despise the benefit, and to count our bondage a delight, yea, to build up that which he came to destroy; this is as great an affront to Christ as can be. But we are not only his by purchase, but his by covenant: Ezek. xvi. 8, 'I entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine.' This was ratified in baptism, where we dedicated ourselves to the Lord's use and service; and shall we rescind our baptismal vows, and give the sovereignty to another,

after we have resigned ourselves to Christ, and the hands of consecration have passed upon us? When Ananias had dedicated that which was in his power, and kept back part for private use, God struck him dead in the place, Acts v. 5. And if we alienate ourselves, who were Christ's before the consecration, of how much sorer vengeance shall we be guilty? God's complaint was just: Ezek. xvi. 20, 'Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast born unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured.' And if Satan hath a full interest in you by doing his lusts, as he had in them by that rite of worship, is not the wrong done to God the same?

2. It is a sure note of a carnal heart; for it is not only incongruous that a renewed man should let sin reign, but impossible. *De jure* it ought not, *de facto* it shall not be. The exhortation and promise: Rom. vi. 12, with xiv. 12, 'Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies.' There is the exhortation; while you have these mortal bodies, sin will dwell in you, but let it not reign over you. God suffereth it to dwell in us for our exercise, not our ruin. Then the promise, ver. 14, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' Let not, shall not. It is true sin remaineth in the godly, but it reigneth not there. It is *dejectum quodammodo, non ejectum tamen*. Cast down in regard of regency, not cast out in regard of inherency. Like the beasts in Daniel, chap, vii. 12, 'They had their dominion taken away, though their lives prolonged for a season;' some degree of life, but their reign broken. The Israelites could not wholly expel the Canaanites, yet they kept them under. There will be pride, earthliness, unbelief, and sensuality dwelling, moving, working in them; but it hath not its wonted power over them. Christ will not reckon men slaves to sin by their having sin in them, nor yet by their daily failings and infirmities, or by their falling now and then into foul faults by the violence of a temptation, unless they make a constant trade of sin, and be under the dominion of it without control, and set up no course of mortification against it.

3. The reign of sin is so mischievous. Sin, when it once gets the throne, groweth outrageous, and involveth us in many inconveniences ere we can get out again. Therefore they that know the service of sin, as we all do by sad experience, should use all caution that it never bring them into bondage again. The work and wages of sin are very different from God's work and wages. The apostle compareth them when he dissuadeth them from the reign of sin: Rom. vi. 21, 22, 'For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had you then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit to holiness, and the end everlasting life.' You have had full experience of the fruits of sin, of Satan's work; what fruit then? Before you had tasted better things, before you had a contrary principle set up in your hearts; you are ashamed now to think of that course, now you know better things. But what fruit then? Satan's work is drudgery, and his reward death. The devil hath one bad property, which no other master, how cruel soever, hath—to plague and torment them most which have done him most continual and faithful service. Those that have sinned most have most horror, and every degree of service hath a proportionable degree of shame and punishment. He is an unreasonable tyrant in exacting service without rest and intermission. The most cruel oppressors, Turks and infidels, give some rest to their captives; but

sin is unsatisfiable. Men spend all their means and all their time and all their strength in pursuit of it; yet all is little enough. And what is the reward of all but death and destruction? Now judge you to whom should we yield obedience, and who hath most right to be sovereign? He who made us and redeemed us, and preserveth us every day, none but he can claim title to us; he to whom we are debtors by so many vows, so many obligations; or else Satan, our worst enemy, who is posting us on to our own destruction?

4. It is so uncomely, and misbecoming the new estate, wherein we have so many helps and encouragements to resist sin.

[1.] For helps, you have an opposite principle to give check to it, the seed of God, or new nature. Since Christ hath put grace into your hearts to resist sin, it is your duty not to suffer it to be idle and unfruitful: Rom. vi. 11, 12, 'Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.' You want no. ability to encourage; you have an observing witness to give check to it, the Spirit of God, who will help you in this work, Rom. viii. 13. He will be your second; neither we without the Spirit, nor the Spirit without us. There is a life and power goeth along with every gospel truth. Laziness pretendeth want of power; but what is too hard for the Spirit? Then—

395

[2.] For encouragement. In every war are two notable encouragements—goodness of the quarrel, and hopes of victory; as David? 1 Sam. xvii. 36. We have these in our conflict and combat with sin. (1.) Our quarrel and our cause is good; it is the quarrel of the Lord of hosts which you fight. We stand with Christ our redeemer, who came, ἵνα λύσῃ, that he might destroy the works of the devil. He hath begun the battle; we do but labour to keep under that enemy which Christ hath begun to slay and destroy. Sin is not only an enemy to us, but to him. It is against him, and hindereth his glory in the world, and the subjection of his creatures and servants. Were it not for sin, what a glorious potentate would Christ be, even in the judgment of the world? (2.) Hope of the victory. Our strife will end, and it will end well. Those that are really, earnestly striving against sin, are sure to conquer: Rom. vi. 14, 'Let not sin reign,' &c. And it shall not; if there be but a likelihood of victory, we are encouraged to fight. Here a Christian may triumph before the victory. *Non aeque glorietur accinctus, ac discinctus*. 1 Kings xx. 11, 'Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.' There will come a good and happy issue in the end, even a conquest of sin. For the present we overcome it in part; it shall not finally and totally overcome us in this world; and shortly all strife will be over: Rom. xvi. 20, 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.' It is but a little while, and we shall receive the crown, and triumph over all our enemies.

Thirdly, Why the saints should deprecate this evil.

1. Because there is sin still in us all. It is a bosom enemy, that is born and bred with us; and therefore it will soon get the advantage of grace, if it be not watched and resisted; as nettles and weeds that are kindly to- the soil, will soon choke flowers and better herbs that are planted by care, and grow not of their own accord, when they are neglected, and continually rooted out. We cannot get rid of this cursed inmate till this outer tabernacle be dissolved, and this house of clay crumbled into dust. Our old nature is so inclinable to this slavery, that if God subtract his grace, what shall we do?

2. It is not only in us, but always working and striving for the mastery; it is not as other things, which, as they grow in age, are more quiet and tame; but, Rom. vii. 8, 'Sin wrought in me all manner of concupiscence; the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.' It is not a sleepy, but a working, stirring principle. If it were a dull and inactive habit, the danger were not so great; but ft is always exercising and putting forth itself, and seeking to gain an interest in our affections, and a command over all our actions; and therefore, unless we do our part to keep it under, we shall soon revert to our old slavery. Sin must be kept under as a slave, or else it will be above as a tyrant, and domineer.

Once more, the more it acts, the more strength it gets; as all habits are increased by action: for when we have once yielded, we are ready to yield again. Therefore any one sin let alone, yea, that which we least suspect, may bring us into subjection and captivity to the law of sin, Rom. vii. 23. It doth not only make us flexible and yielding to temptations, but it doth urge and impel us thereunto.

396

Again, this bondage is daily increasing, and more hard to be broken; for by multiplied acts a custom creepeth upon us, which is another nature; and that which might be remedied at first groweth more difficult. Diseases looked to at first are more easy to be cured, whereas otherwise they grow desperate; so sins before hardened into a custom, before they bring us under the power of any creature or comfort which we affect, 2 Cor. vi. 12; for then afterwards it cometh to a complete dominion and slavery, so that if a man would, he cannot help it. It behoveth, then, every child of God to do his part, that sin may not reign; for where care is not taken, it certainly will reign.

Use 1. To reprove the security and carelessness of many. David suspected himself, else he would never have made this prayer to God: Lord keep me; 'Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' And we should all do so that would be safe: Prov. xxviii. 14, 'Happy is the man that feareth alway; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.' A constant watchfulness and holy jealousy and self-suspicion will be no burden to you, but a blessing. Sin deceiveth us into hardness of heart for want of taking heed. Many that are secure do not consider their danger, and therefore they are not so careful to watch over themselves, nor so humble as to implore the divine assistance, because they do not consider how soon they may be transported by a naughty heart, and brought under the power and reign of sin. Surely were we as sensible of the danger of the inward man as we are of the outward, we would resist the first motions, and not nourish and foster a temptation as we do. The saints do not tarry till the dead blow cometh, but resist the first strokes of sin; they do not tarry till it pines to death, but resist the first inclinations. An evil inclination, if

it be cherished and gratified, gets ground; the longer we let it alone, the harder will our conflict be, for sin secureth its interest by degrees.

2. It showeth the fearful estate of them that lie under the dominion of sin. But who will own it?

[1.] It is certain that all men in their natural estate are in this condition. Sin doth reign where there is no principle of grace set up against it. The throne is always filled; man's heart cannot lie empty and void. If grace doth not reign, sin reigneth. Natural men are under the power of darkness, Acts xxviii. 18, and Col. i. 13; living in a peaceable subjection to sin; till Christ come to trouble it, all is quiet; wind and tide go together.

[2.] It appeareth by your course. Many will say, 'There is not a just man on earth, that doeth good and sinneth not;' you are sinners as well as we. Ans. There is a difference; though there be not a good man upon earth, that sinneth not, Eccles. vii. 20, yet there is a difference. Some have not the spot of God's children, Deut. xxxii. 5. There is a difference between sins: Lev. xiii. 24-26. God gave the priest under the law direction how to put a difference between leprous persons. So still there is a great deal of difference between numbness and death, and between dimness of sight and blindness, want of sense and want of life, between stumbling into a ditch and throwing ourselves headlong into an ocean. And so there is a difference between infirmities and iniquities, a failing out of ignorance and weakness, or some powerful temptation, and a running headlong into all ungodliness. God's children have their failings, but a burning desire to be freed from them, though others wallow in their sin without any care of a remedy. In one there is a failing in point of duty, in the other a rebellion. Take Judas and Peter; both sinned against their Master; the one denied, the other betrayed him; the one denied him out of fear, the other betrayed him out of covetousness and greediness of gain; the one plotted his death, the other was surprised on a sudden. There is a great deal of difference between purpose and a surprise; the one wept bitterly, the other is given up to a raging despair. David did not make a trade of adultery, and bathe himself in filthy lusts. Noah was drunk, but not knowing the power of the juice of the grape. They dare not lie in this estate, but seek to get out by repentance.

397

[3.] Some things may beget caution, and move you to suspect yourselves; that is, when your souls readily comply with the temptation, you are at sin's beck. If it saith, Go, you go; if it saith, Come, you come. It is of great concernment to know what goes to the determining a man's condition, to know at whose beck he is, whether he is at the flesh's or spirit's beck. Ps. ciii. 20, the godly are described that they hearken unto the voice of his word; so the wicked are those that hearken to the voice of sin. If sin but make a motion, it is a match presently. If ambition bid Absalom rise up against his father, then he will trouble the whole kingdom, it will hurry him to run his father down; if envy bid Cain kill his brother Abel, he will not stick at it; if covetousness bid Achan take a bribe of that which was devoted to the flames, and must be offered as a burnt-offering to God, yet Achan obeys his covetousness; if adultery bids Joseph's mistress tempt her servant, presently she yields. So when a sinner yields, and is led away like a fool to the correction of the stocks. Meadow ground

may in a great flood be drowned, but marsh ground is overflown by every return of the tide; so they cannot cease to sin, every temptation carries them away. When men are impatient of reproof, when they have a privy sore they cannot endure should be touched, if a man speak to them anything to help them on to interpret their condition. Herod must not have his Herodias touched, though he heard John the Baptist gladly in many things. Or when men set up a toleration and court of faculties in their hearts, and they will have a dispensation: if God will be contented with obedience in some things, they will dispense with other things, pardon for some sins, but not break them off; have an indulgence that they may continue in them, or in vain practices. This shows the reign of sin.

SERMON CXLIX.

Deliver me from the oppression of man; so will I keep thy precepts.—VER. 134.

IN the former verse, the man of God had begged grace with respect to internal enemies, to the bosom enemy the flesh, that no sin might have dominion over him; now he beggeth deliverance from external enemies. The saints are not only exercised with their own corruptions, but the malice of wicked men. We have to do both with sin and sinners, with temptations and persecutions; and therefore he desireth first to be kept from sin, and after that from danger and trouble; first from the dominion of sin, and then from the oppression of sinners. Both are a trouble to us; they were a trouble to David; and God can and will in time give us deliverance from both, *deliver me from the oppression of man*, &c.

In the text we have—

1. A prayer for mercy.

2. A resolution, vow, and promise of duty. The one is inferred out of the other, *so will I keep thy precepts*.

First, A prayer for mercy, 'Deliver me from the oppression of man.' In the Hebrew it is, from the oppression of Adam, the name of the first father, for the posterity. This term is put either by way of distinction, aggravation, or diminution.

1. Man by way of distinction. There is the oppression and tyranny of the devil and sin; but the Psalmist doth not mean that now. *Hominum non daemonum*, saith Hugo.

2. Man by way of aggravation. *Homo homini lupus*; no creatures so ravenous and destructive to one another as man. It is a shame that one man should oppress another. Beasts do not usually devour those of the same kind, but usually a man's enemies are those of his own household, Mat.

x. 36. The nearer we are in bonds of alliance, the greater the hatred. We are of the same stock, and reason should tell every one of us that we should do as we would be done to. Nay, we are of the same religion. *Eodem sanguine Christi glutinati.* We are cemented together by the blood of Christ, which obliges to more brotherly kindness; and if we differ in a few things, to be sure we have cords of alliance and relations enough to love one another more than we do. But for all this there is the oppression of man.

3. Man by way of diminution. And to lessen the fear of this evil, this term 'Adam' is given them, to show their weakness in comparison of God. Thou art God, but they that are so ready and for ward to oppress and injure us are but men; thou canst easily over rule their power and break the yoke. I think this consideration chiefest, because of other places: Ps. x. 18, 'Thou wilt judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.' The oppressors are but men of the earth, a piece of red clay, earth in his composition, earth in his dissolution, frail men, that must within a while be laid in the dust. But it is more emphatically expressed, Isa. li. 12, 13, 'Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, which hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is now the rage of the oppressor?' When thou hast the immortal and almighty God to be thy protector and saviour, shouldest thou be afraid of a weak mortal man, that is but Adam, a little enlivened dust? Within a little while he and all his fury is over and gone.

399

Secondly, The promise of duty, 'I will keep thy precepts.' Which is a constant observation of all God's commandments, if God would interpose for his rescue. But did David do well to suspend his obedience upon so uncertain a condition? I answer—No; we must not understand it so as if he did indent with God upon those terms and no otherwise; or as if before he had not kept them; and would then begin. No; he would keep them, however, and had kept them; only this would be a new engagement to press him to keep them more constantly, more accurately. Look throughout this psalm, and you shall find David still at his duty whatever his condition be: ver. 51, 'The proud have had me greatly in derision; yet have I not declined from thy law.' There he is scorned, but not discouraged. Ver. 61, 'The hands of the wicked have robbed me; yet have I not forgotten thy law.' There plundered, wasted, stripped of all, yet not discouraged. Ver. 69, 'The proud have forged a lie against me; but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.' There falsely accused, but not discouraged. Ver. 83, 'I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.' There dried up and shrunk into nothing, yet not discouraged. Ver. 87, 'They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.' Ver. 141, 'I am small and despised; yet I do not forget thy precepts.' So that his meaning was, not that he would serve God no longer unless he would deliver him; but the meaning is, he should have a new obligation and encouragement: this will engage me afresh. He doth aforehand interpose a promise that he would walk with God more closely. From the words thus opened, we have three points:—

1. Deliverance from oppression is a blessing to be sought from the hands of God in prayer.

2. When God delivereth us from the oppression of man, we should be quickened and encouraged in his service.

3. When we are praying for deliverance, we may interpose a promise of obedience.

First, For the first point, that deliverance from oppression is a blessing to be sought from the hands of God in prayer. I shall show it first by answering the question why, and then show you how.

1. Why? The point may be strengthened by these reasons:—

[1.] We have liberty to ask temporal things. Many think it too carnal to pray for health, food and raiment, long life, temporal deliverance. What God hath promised we may lawfully pray for; for a prayer is but a promise put in suit. Now these blessings are adopted into the covenant, as being useful to us in our passage; and therefore we may ask them. What Christ has taught us to pray for, that we may pray for; for he said, 'After this manner pray ye,' Mat. vi. 9; and one request is, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Protection and maintenance we ask, as well as pardon and grace. It conduceth to the honour of God that we should ask these things of him, that we may testify our dependence, and acknowledge his inspection and government over the affairs of the world: Ps. ix. 7, 'He hath prepared his throne for judgment.' Courts of justice among men are not always open to hear the plaintiff, but the Lord holdeth court continually; we may come to the Lord every day. No man's petition and complaint is delayed for an hour. He hath prepared his throne for this end and purpose, to hear the complaints of his people when they are oppressed; therefore we may pray for temporal things.

400

[2.] Our spiritual welfare is concerned in such temporal deliverances, that we may serve God without impediment, and without distraction. (1.) The oppression of man is an impediment; it taketh us off from many opportunities of service and bringing honour to God; and though God will dispense with us at such a time, yet it is uncomfortable; as God dispensed with David when he was hunted up and down the wilderness: Ps. lxiii., lxxxiv., xlii. As Christ biddeth them pray, Mat. xxiv. 20, 'Pray that your flight be not in the winter, or on the sabbath-day.' Though it was lawful, it was grievous; as grievous to the body to have their flight in winter, and grievous to the soul to have it on a sabbath-day, that might call to mind their pleasant opportunities of conversing with God by prayer. When God denieth liberty and opportunity of enjoying and performing the exercises of religion, we are excused from positive duties. But yet it is a great mercy to have our liberty restored, to serve God in peace without distraction, to have a little breathing-time: Acts xix. 31, 'Then had the churches rest.' The oppressions and persecutions of men are among the temptations, and may weaken obedience to God; and if not altogether drive us from his service, yet clog our spirits and hinder our cheerfulness and readiness in it: Eccles. vii. 7, 'Oppression will make a wise man mad.'

It will strangely shake and discompose our spirits, especially as it may be circumstantiated; that is, when we have base indignities put upon us, as when exposed to all manner of insolency and contempt: Ps. cxxiii. 4, 'Have mercy upon us, for we are filled with contempt.' Our friends afraid to pity us, Eccles. iv. 1. Take it at best, it is no small discouragement and trial to a godly man. Therefore it being so that oppression is ever reckoned among the temptations, we may pray not to enter into temptation; as Theophylact observeth well on the place, the rather because one way by which God helpeth his people is by taking away the temptation, as well as ministering a supply of grace: Ps. cxxv. 4, 'The rod of the wicked shall not always rest upon the lot of the righteous;' 1 Cor. x. 13, 'But will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.'

[3.] The glory of God is concerned. His people will honour him more if one, especially an eminent one, be delivered from the oppression of man: Ps. cxlii. 7, 'Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about, for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.' They will be flocking about him, and inquiring what experiences of God and his goodness he hath found: 2 Cor. i. 11, 'Helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us, by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.' Much more when the whole church is delivered: Ps. li. 18, 19, 'Do good in thy good pleasure to Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem: thou shalt be pleased with the sacrifice 'of righteousness,' &c. Every heart will be thinking of honour and praise to God. And besides the honour done to God by his people, God will more discover himself to the world, his justice will be more evidenced: Ps. ix. 16, 'The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth.' The world is led by sense; he will not be taken to be a friend to persecutors and oppressors. In short, it is not for the honour of God that his people should be left under oppression, as if he sought not, and cared not for their welfare. You shall see the afflicted condition of the church is called 'the reproach of the heathen,' Ezek. xxxvi. 30; and Ezek. xxxiv. 29, 'Thou shalt not bear the reproach of the heathen any more.' The heathen would cast this in their teeth, as if their God had no respect to them, or were not able to help them.

401

[4.] Prayer engageth us to constancy. God's deliverance will be better for us than our own; that is, than those sinful shifts and ways of escape that we can find out. What we ask of God must be had in God's way. It bindeth us to seek no other way of escape than we can commend to God's blessing in prayer. It is said of the saints, Heb. xi. 35, 'That they were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might receive a better resurrection.' Would any refuse deliverance when it is tendered to them? Yes, upon such spiteful conditions: they were commanded to do something contrary to the laws of God; therefore they would have God's deliverance, not their own. Every one of them was offered release in the midst of their torments and tortures, if they would yield to the eating of swine's flesh, or that which was forbidden by God.

[5.] Seeking deliverance at the hands of God doth ease the heart of a great deal of trouble, and deliver it from those inordinate affections and afflicting and tormenting passions which otherwise

the oppression of man might raise in us; as fear, grief, sorrow, anger, envy, and despair; fear and dread to suffer more, grief and sorrow for what we suffer already, anger and envy against those oppressors by whom we suffer, and despair and impatience because of the continuance of our molestations and sufferings. All these are mischiefs to the soul, and all these are cured by prayer.

(1.) Fear, because of the mightiness of them that oppress, or threaten to oppress. The fear of man we are told is a snare: Prov. xxix. 25, 'The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.' We are full of distracting and perplexing thoughts, and if we cherish them they will weaken our trust in God and dependence upon his promises; for fear of man and trust in God are there opposed. Nay, the mischief will not stop there; for they that trust not God can never be true to him: it will destroy our trust in God, and then we shall run to carnal shifts, and so fear men more than God, do things displeasing to God for fear of being oppressed by men; so that you may be soon sensible of the mischief of carnal fear. But how shall we ease our hearts of this burden by prayer? Partly because then we use our fear aright when it only driveth us to seek his protection; that is the commendable use of fear: 2 Chron. xx. 3, 'Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord.' When Jacob feared Esau, he set himself to wrestle with God, Gen. xxxii.

402

And partly because prayer discovereth a higher object of fear: Eccles. v. 8,. 'There is a higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they.' And so the fear of God driveth out the fear of man, as a great nail driveth out the less. In God's strength we may defy enemies: Ps. xxvii. 1, 'The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear?' The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?' We can set God against the creature, and this will quell our fears of them. When we set ourselves against them, our interest against theirs, we may see cause to fear; but set God against them and engage him, and you have no cause to fear. Then—

(2.) For grief and sorrow. It cloggeth the heart, and stayeth the wheels, so that we drive on heavily in the spiritual life. Worldly sorrow worketh death, 2 Cor. vii. 10. It brings on deadness and hardness of heart, and quencheth all our vigour: Prov. xv. 13, 'By sorrow of heart the spirit is broken.' A dead and heavy heart doth little to the purpose for God. Now how shall we get rid of this? The cure is by prayer; for vent giveth ease to all our passions: Phil. iv. 6, 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' As when wind is gotten into the caverns of the earth, it causeth terrible convulsions and earthquakes till it get a vent; so the mind is eased when we can pour out our care into the bosom of God, and wait till deliverance cometh from above. Prayer showeth there is some life in our affairs, that our right for the present is not dead, but sleeps; there is a God in heaven, that heareth our groans, and is sensible of our sorrows, and then we may say, Ps. xlii. 5, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him,' &c. Prayer is the old refuge of the saints, and the blessed means to pluck up their spirits. Whilst there is a God in heaven, we are not at an utter loss. So ver. 9, 'I will say unto God, my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppressor?' David first

reasoned with him self, yet the distemper continued; but when he comes to reason the case with God in prayer, then he gets ease.

(3.) The violent passions of anger, envy, and revenge against oppressors, these are all naught, and do a world of mischief. Anger discomposeth us, and transports the soul into uncomely motions against God and men, makes us fret and malcontent; it tempts us to atheism, Ps. lxxiii., maketh us weary of well-doing, Ps. xxxvii., tempts us to imitation of their wicked course. The devil worketh much upon spleen and stomach and discontent, and we are apt to run into these disorders. Now how shall we do to get rid of these distempers? By prayer, in which we get a sight and prospect of the other world, and then these things will seem nothing to us; acquaint ourselves with God, and the process of his providence, and so we shall see an end of things, Ps. lxxiii. 17; then all is quiet. And as for revenge, too, that is an effect of the former; when we plead before God, we see the justice of what is unjust, and hard dealing from men to be justly inflicted by God; and so the heart is calmed: 'The Lord bid him curse,' 2 Sam. xvi. 11. There is reason enough for this dispensation in the upper tribunal, whereunto when we appeal we should render no man evil for evil, Rom. xii. 17. We ought not, we need not, it is God's work: Deut. xxxii. 35, 'Vengeance and recompense are mine.' Nay, our very praying is a committing ourselves to him that judgeth righteously, 1 Peter ii. 23. In prayer we vent our zeal, and that hindereth us from venting our carnal passions. It is a resignation of our person and cause to him under unjust sufferings, not out of malice, desiring judgment and vengeance on persecutors; that is to make God the executioner of our lusts, to establish that which we would prevent in prayer. But saints in prayer labour only to show their faith and meekness, and to leave things to the righteous judge, to do what is for his own glory, and their good.

403

(4.) For the other evil, impatience and despair, it is a very great evil, and contrary to faith and hope and dependence, which the Christian religion doth mainly establish; and maketh way for the worst evils, either total apostasy from God, or atheism, or self-destruction. Now this is very incident to as when oppressions lie long upon us: 2 Kings vi. 33, 'This evil is from the Lord: why should I wait on the Lord any longer?' So Jer. ii. 25, 'But thou saidst, There is no hope.' Desperately! 'No; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go;' I will take my own course; there is no hope; it is in vain to wait upon the Lord any longer. And if things do not grow to that height, yet the children of God grow weary and faint in their minds, Heb. xii. 3. Now we keep afoot some hope while we have a heart to call upon God. The suit is still depending in the court of heaven when it seems to be over on earth; and we see there is cause to wait for God's answer. He that shall come, will come, Hab. ii. 3. God may tarry long, but will never come too late. Thus why.

2. But how is this to be asked?

[1.] This is not to be asked in the first place, as our main blessing: Mat. vi. 33, 'First seek the kingdom of God.' If we seek our ease and temporal felicity only, that prayer is like a brutish cry: Hosea vii. 14, 'They howled upon their beds for corn and wine.' A dog will howl when he feels

anything inconvenient. You will never be freed from murmuring and quarrelling at God's dispensations, and questioning his love, if this be the first thing that you seek, and so your prayers will become your snare. Besides the great dishonour to God, it argues the great disorder of your affections, that you can be content to have anything apart from God: Ps. cv. 4, 'Seek ye the Lord and his strength; seek his face evermore.' In all conditions that must be our great request, that we may have the favour of God.

[2.] It must be asked with submission. It is not absolutely promised, nor intrinsically and indispensably necessary to our happiness, but if the Lord see it fit for his own glory and our good. We cannot take it ill if a friend refuse to lend us a sum of money which he knoweth we will lay out to our loss and detriment. God seeth it fit sometimes, for his own glory and our good, to continue us under oppression, rather than take us out of it. There are two acts of providence—relieving and comforting the oppressed, and punishing the oppressors. Sometimes God doth the one without the other, sometimes both together. Sometimes God will only comfort the oppressed; we cry to him in our afflictions, and God will not break the yoke, but give us a supply of strength to bear it: Ps. cxxxviii. 3, 'In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and hast strengthened me with strength in my soul.' He giveth you strength to bear the burden, if you continue in your integrity. Sometimes God doth punish the oppressor, yet that is no relief and reparation to you; you must bear it, for you are to stand to God's will, and to wait his leisure to free you from it.

404

[3.] Your end must be that God may be glorified, and that you may serve him more cheerfully. So it is in the text, 'Deliver me from the oppression of man,' then shall 'I keep thy precepts;' Ps. ix. 13, 14, 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death; that I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Sion: and I will rejoice in thy salvation.' So David beggeth salvation in order to praise. Temporal mercy should not be loved for itself, nor sought for itself; but as we may glorify God by it; that is to be our end. Lord, I seek not my own interest, but thine. If you have a carnal end, you miss: James iv. 3, 'Because you ask to consume it upon your lusts,' that we may please the flesh as sweetly and quietly as we did before, live in the height of pomp and splendour, gratify our lusts without disturbance, or see our revenge; or if a mere natural end, the mere conveniency of the outward man, we bespeak our own denial.

[4.] We must pray in faith that God can and is ready to deliver from the oppression of man, and will do so in due time, when it is good for us.

(1.) God can deliver us. Though our oppressors be never so mighty and strong, God can break their power, or change their hearts, or determine their interests, because the omnisciency of God is a great deep. It is a great relief to the soul to consider the several ways that God hath to right us, either by changing the hearts of the persecutors and oppressors: Acts ix. 31, 'Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and the comforts of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.' They had nothing to do but to build up

one another. When was that? When Paul was converted. He was an active instrument against the church, and God turned his heart; then had the churches rest. Or else the Lord may do it by determining their interests that they shall show favour to his people though their hearts be not changed: Prov. xvi. 7, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him.' Enemies, while enemies, may be at peace with us. Please men, and you cannot say God is your friend; but please God, and he maketh your enemies at peace with you. There is much in the secret chain of providence: Dan. i. 9, 'Now the Lord brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.' What was that favour? To wink at him for doing that which was contrary to the law of their religion. Or else he can break the yoke by some apparent ruining judgments, by which he will defeat all their advantages, either by power or law, rescuing his people out of their hands: Isa. xlix. 24, 25, 'Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, The captains of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: he will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and will save thy children.' Whether they plead might or right, when God goeth that way to work, nothing shall let, no power shall be able to detain what God will have delivered and restored. Or it may be by some secret ways God will bring on some judgment: Job xx. 26, 'A fire not blown shall consume him;' that is, the oppressor; a curse not invented by those he hath wronged, or any man else, but sent immediately by God. It shall come nobody knoweth how. Therefore we should not be discouraged with unlikelihoods when we go to God, who hath many ways which poor short-sighted creatures cannot foresee.

(2.) He is ready. The love which the Lord hath for his afflicted people will not suffer his justice to be long at quiet. That God is ready to help and deliver, three things will evidence:—

(1st.) It is his nature to pity and show mercy to the oppressed, and to revenge the oppressor. He pitieth the afflictions of them that suffer most justly, and far beneath their desert, from his own hand: Judges x. 16, 'And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord, and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel;' and 2 Kings xiv. 26, 'For the Lord saw the exceeding bitter affliction of Israel.' How much more will he pity them that are unworthily oppressed! Isa. lxiii. 9, 'In all their afflictions he was afflicted;' Acts vii. 34, 'I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and have heard their groaning,' &c. And the Lord's pitiful nature doth incline him to deliver his people: 'And when the oppressed cry, I will hear them; for I am gracious,' Exod. xxii. 21-27.

(2dly.) It is his usual practice and custom: Ps. ciii. 6, 'The Lord executeth judgment and righteousness for all that are oppressed.' If for all, surely for his people. He sits in heaven on purpose to rectify the disorders of men. So Ps. xxxiv. 19, 'Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.' God hath a plaister for every wound; God's people plunge themselves into trouble, and his mercy delivereth them out of it.

(3dly.) It is his office as judge of the world: Ps. xciv. 2, ‘Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth; render a reward to the proud: shall not the judge of the earth do right?’ Look upon him only in that notion, according to our natural conceptions, as the supreme cause and judge of all things. Again, his office as protector of his people; he is in covenant with them, he is their sun and shield, he is the refuge of the oppressed, his people’s refuge in time of trouble, Ps. ix. 9; when they have none else to fly to, he will be their refuge.

(3.) He will do it when it is good and necessary; for God hath made promises and repeated promises of deliverance, and surely these are not in vain. If God had spoken but once, we had no reason to doubt; but he telleth us over and over again we should cast our care upon him, and refer all things to him without despondency and distraction of mind: Ps. ix. 18, ‘For the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.’

Use. Instruction to teach us what to do when we are oppressed.

1. Patience. It is the lot of God’s children to be often troubled by the world, and hardly used. Satan is the ruler of the darkness of this world, the blind, carnal, malicious, superstitious part of the world; and they cannot away with those that would overturn Satan’s kingdom. The good are fewest, and therefore we must look to be oppressed; if there be any breathing-time it is a mercy: 2 Tim. iii. 12, ‘Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;’ Gal. iv. 29, ‘For as he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now,’ and will be so; we should want our way-mark without it.

406

2. Let us be prepared to commend our cause to God: Ps. x. 17, 18, ‘Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear; to judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.’ God prepares the hearts of the humble. How so? The trouble continueth till we are sensible of the misery of the sin, of the cause: Hosea v. 15, ‘I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offences, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early.’ It is a long time before men can be sensible of the hand of God upon them. Slight spirits are not grieved, but lull themselves asleep, Jer. v. 3. If they have a natural sense of the judgment, they have no sense of sin as the cause; then they fly to human help to be eased of the trouble: Jer. iv. 14, ‘Wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?’ When past human help, then seek the favour of God to take up the controversy, 2 Chron. vii. 14; when driven to an earnest attendance upon God, and all probabilities spent; we have no help but what heaven and a promise can afford, and upon these terms continue our importunity, Luke xviii. 7-18. It is a long time ere men will lay it to heart, to see his hand and seek to him for relief.

3. When you have prayed, then wait. It is a good sign when we are enlarged in prayer, and encouraged to wait. Enlarged to pray; for when God hath a mind to work, he sets the Spirit of prayer a-work. God will not pour out his Spirit in vain; the Spirit knoweth the deep things of God: Ps. l.

15, ‘Call upon me in a time of trouble, and I will deliver thee.’ So when we are encouraged to wait. How can our prayers be heard when we regard them not ourselves, and expect no issue? How should God hear when we pray out of course, and do not think our prayers worth the regarding? Ps. lxxxv. 8, ‘I will hearken what God the Lord will speak,’ &c.; Ps. xl. 1, ‘I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined unto me and heard my cry;’ Hab. ii. 1, ‘I will watch to see what he will say.’ Look for an answer. God doth not usually disappoint a waiting people.

Secondly, When God delivereth us from the oppression of man, we should be quickened and encouraged in his service.

1. Because every mercy inferreth an answerable duty: 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, ‘But Hezekiah rendered not according to the benefit done unto him.’ There must be rendering according to receiving.

2. This is the fittest return, partly because it is real, not verbal. The Lord cares not for words; he knows the secret springs of the heart, Isa. xxxviii. 9; and see Ps. l. 23. It is good to be speaking good of God’s name. This is one way of glorifying, but ordering the conversation aright is that which is most pleasing to him. And partly too because our clogs of fear and sorrow and other impediments are taken away: Ps. cxix. 32, ‘I will run the ways of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart.’ This was God’s end, to deliver us out of the hands of our enemies, that we may serve him without fear, Luke i. 74, 75. Those wretches that said, Jer. vii. 10, ‘We are delivered to do all these abominations,’ to return to the practices of their vile courses afresh, did pervert God’s end in their deliverance. What use shall we make of such a point in our deep sorrows?

407

Ans. 1. We are not altogether without this benefit: 2 Chron. vii. 12, ‘The Lord said, I have heard thy prayer.’ Many times God maketh his love conspicuous to his people in a low condition; they are oppressed sore, but not grinded to powder; it is a blessing we are not quite destroyed. Exod. i. 12, The Israelites, the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied; and the Egyptians were grieved for the children of Israel, that they were not extinguished. God dealeth with us as then he did with them, 2 Sam. xii. 7. But I will grant them some deliverance.

2. We are now under the sad effects of our former unthankfulness, and by remembering our duty we may see our sin, Hosea iv. 3, 4. Ingratitude and walking unanswerably to received mercy is the great and crying sin of God’s people; therefore we should humble ourselves that we did so little good in former times of liberty, that God had so little glory and service from us. Now God by his present providence showeth us the difference: Deut. xxviii. 47, 48, ‘Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore thou shalt serve thine enemies,’ &c.; 2 Chron. xii. 8, ‘Nevertheless they shall be his servants, that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.’ First we must be humbled for the abuse of former mercies before we seek new.

3. That we may know what to have in our eye, when we are asking for mercies. The end is first in intention, though last in execution. Do not pray to serve thy lusts more freely, nor think how to execute revenge, be quits with those that hate us, nor how we shall be provided for; but what glory and service we may bring to God: Ps. lxxv. 2, 'When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly.' These mercies must not be abused to licentiousness, or to nourish our selves in sin or stupid security; but in duty and service.

4. It teacheth us how to make our promises, and oblige ourselves to God. When you come to promise duty and obedience to God, be sure to be sincere and holy; make due provision that it may be so by mortifying the roots of such distempers as will betray us. When a people in a low condition have a real inclination to praise and glorify God by their mercies as soon as they shall receive them, it is an argument God will hear and grant.

Thirdly, But when we are praying for deliverance, we should inter pose promises of obedience, as David doth here, 'Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.' (1.) To show there is the *ratio dati et accepti*, to show the law of giving and receiving is natural to us; it is an ingrafted principle in men's minds. When we think of God's giving, we should think of returning something. An intercourse between God and us is maintained by mercies and duties: not that God needeth, or that we can oblige him, but this qualifieth us. Intercourse is lost when we would receive all and return nothing. (2.) A solemn promise is necessary to excite and quicken our dulness, or a bond upon us, or a bridle to our inconstancy. We cannot unbind ourselves again from our strict obligation to obedience.

408

Use. Well, then, let us make good the vows of our distress; they must be paid, or else God is mocked: Eccles. v. 4, 'When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed;' Job xxii. 27, 'Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee; and thou shalt pay thy vows.'

SERMON CL.

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.—VER. 135.

THIS verse is wholly precatory. Most of the verses of this psalm have a prayer with an argument, but here both the branches are petitory. Observe in the words—

1. The blessings prayed for.

2. The order of these petitions.

3. The connection that is between them.

1. The blessings he prayeth for are two—(1.) For God's favour; (2.) For his direction in God's ways; spiritual consolation and increase of sanctification. David could not live out of God's favour nor without his direction; therefore he prays heartily for both.

2. The order of these petitions—first, 'Make thy face to shine;' and then, 'Teach me thy statutes.' God's favour is the fountain of all goodness to his children and servants; and until we have that we can have nothing: there we must begin. They that have not the favour of God are left to their own sway, and their own hearts and counsels; but those whom he loves know his secrets and are guided by his Spirit.

3. The connection. He prays not for one, but for both; for God giveth both together, consolation and direction, and we must seek both together; for we cannot expect God should favour us while we walk in a wrong way and contrary to his will.

Let me speak of the first petition. Where I might observe—

1. The matter of the petition, *make thy face to shine*.

2. The person, *upon me*.

3. The character by which he describeth himself, *thy servant*.

1. As to the matter, 'Make thy face to shine.' It is a metaphor taken from the sun. When the sun shines, and sheds abroad his light and heat and influence, then the creatures are cheered and revived; but when that is obscured, they droop and languish. What the sun is to the outward world, that is God to the saints. Or else here is a metaphor taken from men, that look pleasantly upon those in whom they delight; and so the Lord gives a smile of his gracious countenance upon his people: indeed it alludeth to both; for the allusion to the light and influence of the sun is clear in the word 'shine;' and the allusion to the pleasant countenance of a man upon his child is included in. the word 'face.' The phrase may be understood by what is said, Prov. xvi. 15, 'In the light of the king's countenance is life, and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.' That place will illustrate this we have in hand. Look, what the smiling and pleasing aspect of the king is to those that value and stand in need of his favour, that is the favour of God to the saints. The same form of speech is used in other places; as in the form of the priest's blessing: Num. vi. 25, 'The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;' and in that prayer, Ps. lxvii. 1, 'God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us, Selah.' Well, then, the thing begged is a sense of God's love.

409

2. For whom doth David beg this? For himself, 'Cause thy face to shine upon me;' David, a man after God's own heart. But did he need to put up such a request to God? (1.) Possibly God might seem to neglect him, or to look upon him with an angry countenance, because of sin; and

therefore he begs some demonstration of his favour and good-will. David had his times of darkness and discomfort as well as others, therefore earnestly beggeth for one smile of God's face. (2.) If you look not upon him as under desertion at this time, the words then must be thus interpreted: he begs the continuance and increase of his comfort and sense of God's love. God's manifestations of himself to his people in this world are given out in a different degree, and with great diversity. Our assurance or sense of his love consists not *in puncto*, an indivisible point; it hath a latitude, it may be more and it may be less, and God's children think they can never have enough of it; therefore David saith, 'Lord, cause thy face to shine.' If it did shine already, the petition intimates the continuance and increase of it.

3. He characterised himself by the notion of God's servant; as Ps. xxxi. 16, 'Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; save me, for thy mercies' sake.' We must study to approve ourselves to be the Lord's servants by our obedience. If we would have his face shine upon us, we must be careful to yield obedience unto him.

The points are four:—

1. The sense of God's favour may be withdrawn for a time from his choicest servants.

2. The children of God, that are sensible of this, cannot be satisfied with this estate, but they will be praying for some beams of love to be darted out upon their souls.

3. They that are sensible of the want or loss of God's favour have liberty with hope and encouragement to sue out this blessing, as David did: 'Lord, make thy face to shine upon thy servant.'

4. God's children, when they beg comfort, they also beg grace to serve him acceptably.

First, The sense of God's favour may be withdrawn for a time from his choicest servants. David puts up this petition in point of comfort. There is a twofold desertion—in appearance and in reality.

1. In appearance only, through the misgivings of our own hearts. We may think God is gone, and hides his face, when there is no such matter, as through inadvertency we may seek what we have in our hands. Thus a child of God thinks he is cast out of the presence of God when all the while he hath a full right and place in his heart. Thus David, Ps. xxxi. 22. We think God hath forgotten us, neglects us, casts us off, hath no respect for us, when in the meantime the Lord is framing an answer of grace for us. One chief cause is misinterpreting God's providence, and our manifold afflictions. The Lord sometimes frowns upon his children, as Joseph upon his brethren, when his affections were very strong; so the Lord covers himself with frowns and anger, the visible appearance of it speaks no otherwise.

410

2. It may be really when he is angry for sin: Isa. lvii. 17, 'For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him; I hid me and was wroth.' As the fathers of our flesh show their anger

by whipping and scourging the bodies of their children, so the Father of our spirits by lashing the soul and spirits, by causing them to feel the effects of his angry indignation. Or else withdrawing the spirit of comfort, suspending all the acts and fruits of his love, so that they have not that joyful sense of communion with God as they were wont to have. Now the reasons why God's people may want the light of his countenance are these:—

[1.] God out of sovereignty will exercise us with changes here in the world, even in the inward man; there we have our ebbs and flows, that we may know earth is not heaven. He hath an eternity wherein to reveal his love, and to communicate himself to his people; therefore he will take a liberty as to temporal dispensations: Isa. liv. 8, 'In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment; but with ever lasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.' He hath an everlasting love and kindness for us, therefore here in the world he will exercise us with some uncertainties; as David concealed his love towards his son Absalom, when yet his bowels yearned towards him. Here he takes liberty to do it, because he will make it up in heaven. All your changes shall then be recompensed by an uninterrupted comfort.

[2.] To conform us to Jesus Christ. We should not know the bitter agonies our Redeemer sustained for us unless we had some experience of it ourselves. He tasted of this cup, Mat. xxvii. 46. And though it be a bitter cup, yet it must go round; we must all pledge him in it. Conceit will not inform us so much as experience.

[3.] His justice requires it, when we surfeit of our comforts, and play the wantons with them, that he should withdraw them. We ourselves breed the mist and clouds which hide from us the shining of God's favour. We raise up those mountains of transgression that are as a wall of separation between us and God; whence that expression, Isa. lix. 2, 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you.' As the sun dissolves and dispels mists and clouds by his bright beams, so God of his free grace dissolveth these clouds: Isa. xliv. 22, 'I have blotted out thy iniquities as a cloud, and thy transgressions as a thick cloud.' Now there are two sins especially which cause God to hide himself—(1.) Too free a liberty in carnal pleasures and delights; (2.) Spiritual laziness.

411

(1.) Too free a liberty in carnal pleasures and delights. When we live according to the flesh, we smart for it, these mar our taste; and when our affections run out to other comforts, we forfeit those which are better, Ps. xxx. 6, 7; when we begin to sleep upon a carnal pillow, to compose ourselves to rest, and lie down and dream golden dreams of earthly felicity. Carnal confidence and carnal complacency make God a stranger to us. This carnal complacency hinders a sense of God's love two ways—*meritorie et effective*, Not only meritoriously, as it provokes God to withdraw when we set up an idol in our hearts, but also effectively; as carnal delights bring on a brawn and deadness upon the heart, so that we cannot have a sense of God's love, for that requires a pure, delicate spirit. Our taste must be purged, refined, sensible of spiritual good and evil. Now this will never be except the soul be purged from carnal complacency; for while there is so strong a relish of the flesh-pots

of Egypt, we are not fit to taste the hidden manna; but always the more dead the heart is to worldly things, the more lively to spiritual sense ever: Jude 19, 'Sensual, not having the spirit,' *i.e*., spiritual joys, feelings, operations. When Solomon withheld not his heart from any joy, God left him. When he was trying the pleasures of the creature, and went a-whoring from God, God left him.

(2.) Spiritual laziness is another cause why God hides his face from his people, Cant. v. 6, compared with ver. 2, 3. The spouse neglected to open to Christ upon light and frivolous pretences, and then her beloved had withdrawn himself. If we lie down on the bed of security, and grow lazy and negligent, then Christ withdraws.

[4.] It is necessary and useful for us sometimes that God should hide his face. Cloudy and rainy days conduce to the fruitfulness of the earth, as well as those that are fair and shining; and the winter hath its use as well as the summer. We are apt to have cheap thoughts of spiritual comforts, Job xv. 11, apt to run riot, and to grow neglectful of God and be proud, 2 Cor. xii. 7. Paul had his buffetings to keep down his pride. We have changes even in our inward man to keep us in the better frame, the more watchful, diligent, and waiting upon God.

Use. Well, if it be so, all the use I shall make is to put this question—Is this your case, yea or no? There is nothing that conduceth to the safety and comfort of the spiritual life so much as observing God's comings and goings, that we may suit our carriage accordingly. Our Lord saith, Mat. ix. 15, 'Can the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?' Is God present, or is he gone? When God is gone, riot to lay it to heart argues great stupidness. You are worse than that idolater, Judges xviii. 24. He thought he had reason enough for his laments and moans when they had taken away his images, his gods. So if God be gone, shall we digest and put up with such a loss, and never mind to lay it to heart? Job complains of this, chap. xxix. 3, that the candle of the Lord did not shine upon his head as it did of old. Surely they that have any respect to God, any tenderness left in their hearts, will be sensible of God's going. On the other side, if we get anything of God, his grace and favour to our hearts, it should be matter of joy and consolation to us: Rom. v. 11, 'We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.' Jesus Christ hath made the atonement, but we have received the atonement when we get anything of the blood of Christ upon our own consciences, when we have any sense of reconciliation. A little sunshine enliveneth the poor creatures, the birds fall a singing that were melancholy and sad before in cloudy weather, they are cheered and comforted when the sun shines. How should we observe the least glimpse of God's favour if he but show himself through the lattice! Cant. ii. There is nothing keeps grace lively, and freeth us from a dead and stupid formality, so much as this. But when men are careless, and do not observe God's accesses and recesses, hardness of heart increaseth upon us presently, and loseth that worship and reverence and invocation and praise that is due from us to him. Therefore our eye should still wait upon the Lord, and as the eyes of servants are on their mistresses, Ps. cxxiii. 3, so should our eye be still on God's hands, and observe what he gives out in every duty, or what of God we observe in this or that ordinance.

412

Secondly, The children of God, that are sensible of this, cannot be satisfied with this estate; but will be praying and always seeking the evidences of his favour and reconciliation: Ps. lxxx. 3, 7, 19, three times it is repeated, 'Turn us again, O Lord of hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.' Their great happiness is to be in favour with God. They can dispense with other comforts, and can, want them with a quiet mind; let God do his pleasure there, but they cannot dispense with this, with the want Of his favour and manifested good-will to them. This is the life of their lives, the fountain of their comforts; this is the heaven they have upon earth, without which they cannot joy in themselves: 'Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.' What are the reasons of this?

1. Because of the value of this privilege; the favour of God is the greatest blessing. It may appear in sundry respects. Take but that consideration: Ps. lxiii. 3, 'Thy loving-kindness is better than life.' The favour of God is the life of our souls, and his displeasure is our death. A child of God values his happiness by God's friendship, not by his worldly prosperity; and is miserable by God's absence, and by the causes thereof, his sin and offence done to God. Nay, his lovingkindness is not only life, but better than life. A man may be weary of life itself, but never of the love of God. Many have complained of life as a burden, and wished for the day of death, but none have complained of the love of God as a burden. All the world without this cannot make a man happy. What will it profit us if the whole world smile upon us, and God frown and be angry with us? All the candles in the world cannot make it day; nay, all the stars shining together cannot dispel the darkness of the night nor make it day, unless the sun shines; so whatever comforts we have of a higher or lower nature, they cannot make it day with a gracious heart, unless God's face shine upon us; for he can blast all in an instant. A prisoner is never the more secure, though his fellows and companions applaud him, and tell him his cause is good, and that he shall escape, when he that is judge condemns him. Though we have the good word of all the world, yet if the Lord speak not peace to our souls, and shine not upon our consciences, what will the good word of the world do? 2 Cor. x. 18, 'He is approved whom the Lord commendeth.' A sense of God's love in Christ is the sweetest thing that ever we felt, and is able to sweeten the bitterest cup that ever believer drank of: Rom. v. 3, 'We glory in tribulation.' It will be a blessed thing when we cannot only bear tribulations, but rejoice in them; but how come we to rejoice in them? Why, because 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us;' so he goes on. If we would know the value of things, the best way is to know what is our greatest comfort and our greatest trouble 'in distress; for when we are drunk with worldly prosperity and happiness, we are incompetent judges of the worth of things; but when God rebukes a man for sin, what is our greatest trouble then? that we may take heed of providing sorrow to ourselves another time; then we find sin and transgression the greatest burden when any notable affliction is upon us, Job xxxvi. 9; and what will be your greatest comfort then? for then your comforts are put to the proof. One evidence of an interest in Christ, a little sense of the love of God, how precious is it! Ps. xciv. 19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.' His thoughts were entangled and interwoven one with another, as branches of a crooked tree; for so the word signifies there. When his thoughts were thus intricate

and perplexed, then ‘thy comforts delight my soul.’ Oh! then, what should we labour for, but to be most clear in this, that God loves us. This will be our greatest comfort and rejoicing in all conditions. It is good for us in prosperity, then our comforts are sweet; and in adversity and deep affliction, to see God is not angry with us. Though we feel some smart of his afflicting hand, yet his heart is with us.

2. They deal with God as worldly men do with sensible things; for as others live by sense, so they by faith. Now worldly men are cheered with the good-will of men, and troubled with the displeasure of men upon whom they depend. The down-look of Ahasuerus confounded Haman, and put him to great trouble: ‘He was afraid,’ Esther vii. 8. Absalom professes it were better for him to be banished than to live in Jerusalem and not see the king’s face, 2 Sam. xiv. 32. Surely it is death to God’s children to want his face and favour upon whom they depend. Their business lies mainly with God, and their dependence and hope and comfort is in God; they live by faith. Poor worldlings walk by sense, therefore their souls run out upon other comforts, in the smiling face of some great potentate, or some friend of the world: this is their life, peace, and joy. But they that live by faith see him that is invisible, and value their happiness by his favour, and misery by his displeasure.

3. The children of God have tasted the sweetness of it, therefore they know it by experience. The best demonstration of anything is from sense. Description cannot give me such a demonstration as when I taste and feel it myself: 1 Peter ii. 3, ‘If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.’ They have an experimental feeling of that which others know only by guess and hearsay. Carnal men know no other good but that of the creature. The spouse did so languish after her beloved, being sick of love; when her desires were disappointed, it made her faint, Cant. v. 6. They that have not seen and known him, know not what to make of those spiritual and lively affections that carry us out after the favour of God with such earnestness and importunity; but they that have tasted and know what their beloved is, their hearts are more excited and stirred up towards him: John iv. 10, ‘If thou knewest the gift of God,’ &c. You would more admire the favour of God if you knew it, especially by experience; you would find it is a better good than ever you have yet tasted.

414

Use. Is this our temper and frame of our hearts? Can we live contentedly and satisfiedly without the light of his countenance? A child of God may be without the light of his countenance, but cannot live contentedly without it. Are we troubled about it, ever seeking after it? Surely this is the disposition of the children of God, they are ever seeking after the favour of God. I shall press to this by this argument.

1. God bespeaks it from you: Ps. xxvii. 8, ‘Thou saidst, Seek ye my face.’ There is a dialogue between God and a gracious heart. The Lord saith, ‘Seek;’ he saith it in his word, and speaks by the injection of holy thoughts, by the inspiration of his grace; and the renewed heart, like a quick echo, takes hold of this, ‘Lord, thy face will I seek,’ Ps. cvi. 4. You should ever be seeking after God in his ordinances, seek his favour and face.

2. The new nature inclines and carries the soul to God; it came from God, and carries the soul to God again. The spirit of the world doth wholly incline us to the world: they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; and the Spirit of God doth incline us to God, and therefore the people of God will value his favour above all things else. David speaks in his own name, and in the name of all that were like-minded with himself; he speaks of all the children of God in opposition to the many, the brutish ones, that were for sensual satisfaction: Ps. iv. 6, 'Many say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.' He doth not say, upon me, but upon us, as the common language of all the saints. The favour of God is so dear and precious to the saints, that they can compare with the affections of carnal men, take them at the greatest advantage. He doth not consider their worldly things in their decrease, but he considers them when they are increased; and he considers them in the very time when they are increased, in the vintage and harvest time. The shouting of vintage and joy of harvest are proverbial; and the comforts of this life, when new and fresh, most invite delight. They that place their happiness in these things cannot have so much joy as they that have a sense of their interest in God. Now, shall we be wholly strangers to this temper and disposition of soul.

3. If we be backward to seek after the favour of God, the Lord whips his people to it by his providence; for sometimes their spiritual disposition may be marred: Hosea v. 15, 'I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face. In their affliction they will seek me early.' The Lord withdraws his gracious presence for this reason, not that we may seek ease or freedom from trouble, but that we may seek his face, and the applying of his grace to our consciences.

4. God is not wholly gone, neither is the desertion total, when there is such a disposition in the heart. He hath left something behind him which draws you after him. The estimation of God's favour keeps his place warm till he come again; it keeps room in the soul: Ps. lxxxviii. 13, 14, 'Unto thee have I cried; in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee: Lord, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?' But when they can digest such a loss with patience, it is an indifferent thing whether they have any sense of God's love, yea or no.

5. We find it to be a sad thing to lose any worldly comfort, and shall we lose the favour of God too, and never lay it to heart, and live contentedly without it? It is a sign we despise that which the saints value, and which is the principal blessing; you will not have cheap thoughts of the consolation of God, Job xv. 11.

6. Unless we seek God's favour, all our labour is lost in other duties: 2 Chron. vii. 14, 'If my people, that are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven,' &c. This is put in among other conditions, and without this the promise is not made good to us. Many seek to the Lord in their distresses, but it is only for redress of temporal evils, or obtaining necessary temporal supplies; but do not seek his face: then their prayers are but like howlings, but like the moans of beasts, Hosea vii. 14. They

do not seek reconciliation and communion with God, but only ease and riddance of present trouble. Those are not holy prayers.

7. It is the distinguishing point that will separate the precious from the vile, to have a tender sense of God's favour: Ps. xxiv. 6, 'This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob.' There are many thoughts of interpreters about that place, I find; though they differ in it, yet they all agree in this sense, that they are the true Israelites, the true Jacob's posterity, that cannot brook God's absence, that seek his face, that will not let him go, but strive with him till they get the blessing. These are not Israel in the letter, but Israel in the spirit. Jacob said, 'I will not let, thee go unless thou bless me,' Gen. xxxii. 26. Such diligent seekers 'of God should we be, never to give over till we find him. Or, as Moses said, 'Lord, if thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence;' we will not stir a foot without thy favour and presence.

Thirdly, They that are sensible of the want or loss of the favour of God have liberty to sue for it with hope and encouragement to find it. For so doth David, 'Make thy face to shine.' Whence comes this liberty?

1. Because of God's promise, because of the mercy of God pawned to us in his promises. He hath told us, none shall seek his face in vain, Isa. xlviii. 19; Prov. viii. 17; Ps. xxii. 11, 20. One that seriously and diligently is seeking after God, before he hath done his search, he shall have some opportunity to bless and praise the Lord; some experience of grace shall be given to him, if he conscionably, diligently, and seriously seek it.

2. Because of the mediation of Jesus Christ, you may come in his name and seek the favour of God: Ps. xxxvi. 7, 'How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.' Interpreters upon that place conceive the shadow of God's wings does not allude to an ordinary similitude of a hen that, when vultures and kites are abroad, covers her little ones, gathers her chickens under her wings: no; but they think the allusion to be to the outstretched wings of the cherubims; and this is the ground of our trust and dependence upon God. Let the sons of men put their trust under the shadow of his wings, there to find God reconciled in Christ; for the throne of grace was a figure of that propitiation. He is called the propitiation, God propitiated and reconciled in Christ is the throne of grace interpreted. However that be, it is clear, Ps. lxxx. 1, 'Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.' When they would have God hear, they give him the title of one that sits upon the mercy-seat, reconciled by Christ. Though the cloud of sin doth hide God's favour from thee, he can make it shine again; and here is our ground, the merciful invitation of God's promise, and then God propitiated in Christ.

416

Use. Oh! then, let us turn unto the Lord in prayer, and in the use of all other means, humbling ourselves and seeking his favour.

1. Waiting for it with all needfulness: Ps. cxxx. 6, ‘My soul doth wait for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning;’ and he repeats it again, ‘I say, more than they that watch for the morning.’ Look, as the weary sentinel that is wet and stiff with cold and the dews of the night, or as the porters that watched in the temple, the Levites, were waiting for the daylight, so more than they that watch for the morning was he waiting for some glimpse of God’s favour. Though he do not presently ease us of our smart or gratify our desires, yet we are to wait upon God. In time we shall have a good answer. God’s delays are not denials. Day will come at length, though the weary sentinel or watchman counts it first long; so God will come at length; he will not be at our beck. We have deserved nothing, but must wait for him in the diligent use of the means; as Benhadad’s servants watched for the word ‘brother,’ or anything of kindness to drop from the king of Israel.

2. Work for it: for I press you not to a devout sloth. All good things are hard to come by; it is worth all the labour we lay out upon it. There is no having peace with God, any sense of his love, without diligent attendance in the use of all appointed means: 2 Peter iii. 14, ‘Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless;’ and 2 Peter i. 10, ‘Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.’ That comfort is to be suspected that costs nothing, but, like Jonah’s gourd, grows up in a night, that comes upon us we know not how.

Fourthly, God’s children, when they beg comfort, also beg grace to serve him acceptably; for ‘teaching God’s statutes ‘is not meant barely a giving us a speculative knowledge of God’s will: for so David here, ‘Make thy face to shine,’ and, ‘Teach me thy statutes.’ And why do they so?

1. Out of gratitude. They are ingenuous, and would return all duty and thankfulness to God, as well as receive mercy from him: therefore they are always mingling resolutions of duty with expectations of mercy; and when they carry away comforts from him are thinking of suitable returns. And while they take Christ for righteousness, they devote and give up themselves to his use and service. The nature of man is so disposed, that when we ask anything, we promise, especially if a superior: Hosea xiv. 2, ‘Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips.’ The children of God resolve upon duty and service when they ask favour. So Ps. ix. 13, 14, ‘Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider my trouble; that I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion.’ We are thinking of honouring and praising God at that time when we seek his favour.

417

2. The children of God do know that this is the cause of God’s aversion from them, that his statutes are not observed; and therefore, when they beg a greater experience of God’s special favour, they also beg direction to keep his statutes. They cannot maintain and keep up a sense of the love of God unless they be punctual in their duty. He knows nothing of religion that knows not that the comfort of a Christian depends upon sanctification as well as justification; and the greater sense of obedience the fuller sense of the love of God; and the degrees of manifesting his favour are according to the degrees of our profiting in obedience, for these go along still. Jesus Christ is king of righteousness and king of peace. He is Melchisedec, king of Salem; he pours out the oil of grace

that he may pour out the oil of gladness, Heb. vii. 2. But especially see one place, John xiv. 21, ‘He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.’ Christ was then most sweetly comforting his people, but it was not his mind that they should be emboldened thereby to cast off duty. No; he says, the only way to assure them that they were not delusions, and to clear their right to these comforts, was this, ‘He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.’ That is the way to get confirmation and evidence of the love of God.

3. This is a notable effect and evidence of God’s favour, to guide you in his ways; therefore it is a branch of the former, for whom the Lord loveth he teacheth and guides: Rom. viii. 14, ‘As many as are the children of God, they are led by the Spirit.’ Others are left to their own heart’s counsels. And Ps. xxv. 14, ‘The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.’ The communication of secrets is a note of friendship. Now the secret of the Lord, the knowledge of his covenant, and what belongs thereto, it is to those that fear God. There is the qualification.

4. He showeth that he does not desire a greater proof of God’s love. He would chiefly experience the good-will of God to him in being taught the mind of God. The most slight that which David prizeth. But if our hearts were as they should be, we would prefer this before all other good things, sanctification, to be taught of God. For—

[1.] It is a better evidence of God’s favour than worldly comforts. Pardon freeth us from punishment, sanctification from sin and pollution; sin is worse than misery, and holiness is to be preferred before impunity. Christ in the work of redemption considered the Father’s interest and honour as well as your salvation. The taking away of worldly comforts doth not infringe our blessedness; yea, when it is accompanied with this benefit, it maketh way for the increase of it: Ps. xciv. 12, ‘Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.’ All the comforts of the world are not worth one dram of grace. The loss of them may be supplied with grace, and man be happy, comfortable, and blessed for all that; but the loss of grace cannot be supplied with temporal things. We cannot say, Blessed is the man that hath lost grace for the world’s sake. Again, all the riches and honours heaped upon a man cannot make him better, they may easily make him worse; but grace can never make us worse, but always better, more amiable in the eyes of God, and fitter for communion with him. These may be given to those whom God hateth, Ps. xvii. 14; but this is the favour of his people. Grace is never given but to those whom he entirely loveth. These may be given in wrath, but sanctifying grace never in wrath. The more we have of these things, the more wanton and vain, Deut. xxxii. 15. They are often used as an occasion to the flesh, Gal. v. 13. prove fuel to our lusts, increase our snares, temptations, difficulties in heaven’s way, Luke xviii. 25. Our table becometh a snare, Ps. lxix. 22. But the saving graces of the Spirit make all easy, and help us towards our own happiness.

[2.] Profiting in obedience or sanctification is a greater effect of God's favour. Sanctification is a greater privilege than justification, Perfect and complete holiness and conformity to God is the great thing which God designed, as the glory of God is holiness, Exod. xv, 11. Moral perfections exceed natural; and of all moral perfections holiness is the greatest. It is better to be wise than strong, to be holy than wise. Beasts have strength, man hath reason, but holy angels, a holy God. Sanctification is a real perfection, but justification is but a relative. It rendereth us amiable in the eyes of God. God hateth sin more than misery. Sin is against God's very nature. God can inflict punishment, but he cannot infuse sin. God's interest and honour is to be preferred before our comfort and personal benefit. In sanctification, besides our personal benefit, which is the perfection of our natures, God's honour and interest is concerned in our subjection to him. Justification is a pledge, but sanctification is not only a pledge but a beginning; it is *removens prohibens*. We love him for pardoning, but he delighteth in holiness: he delighteth in us rather as sanctified than pardoned. We love much because much is for given, Luke vii. 47. But God delighteth in the pure and upright: Prov. xi. 20, 'Such as are upright in their way are his delight.'

Use 1. For reproof of three sorts:—

1. Of those that would have ease and comfort, but care not for duty; would have the love of God to pacify their consciences, but never mind this, to have their hearts directed in God's ways: Hosea x. 11, 'Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, that would tread out the corn but not break the clods.' It yielded food, Deut. xxv. 4. They would be feasted with privileges, yet abhor service, when they prize comfort. To these we may argue not only *ab incongruo*—how disingenuous it is to separate duty and comfort; to be so ready to expect all from God, and so unwilling to do anything for him. It is contrary to the disposition of God's children, Titus ii. 11, 12, and Rom. xii. 1;—but *ab impossibili*. Will God ever delight in you till you be conformed to his image? Christ came not to make a change in God, but in us; not to make God less holy, but us more holy. It is not agreeable to the reasonable nature to conceive that God should be indifferent to good and bad, or a friend to those that break his laws. Would you think well of that magistrate that should let men rob and steal and beat their fellow-subjects, and not only connive at them but receive them into his bosom? You that have but a drop of the divine nature cannot delight in the company of sinners, 2 Peter ii. 8.

419

2. Those that would have the favour of God, but expect it should be showed to them in temporal things. Alas! these things are promiscuously dispensed to all; can be no evidence of his special love. God is behindhand with none of his creatures, Eccles. ix. 1, 2; sometimes evil things to good men, and good things to evil men. Josiah died in wars as well as Ahab. Is Abraham rich? so is Nabal. Is Joseph honoured by Pharaoh? so is Doeg by Saul. Hath Demetrius a good report of all men? 3 John 12, so have false teachers, Luke vi. 26. Hath Caleb health and strength? Josh. xiv. 11, so have wicked ones: 'No bands in their death;' Ps. lxxiii. 4, 'Their strength is firm. Was Moses beautiful? Acts vii. 20, so was Absalom, 2 Sam. xiv. 25. Did God give learning and wisdom to

Moses and Daniel? &c., Dan. i. 17, so to the Egyptians, Acts vii. 22. Long life to Ishmael, Gen. xxv. 17, as well as to Isaac, Gen. xxxv. 20.

3. The children of God that murmur and repine at their sufferings when others, ignorant of the mind of God and the strictness of his ways, fare better, Ps. xvii. 14. It is often seen that 'he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow,' Eccles. i. 18. Drones and sots have their ampler revenues, but we should not be thereby discouraged. It is their portion: Prov. iii. 31, 32, 'Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways; for the froward are an abomination unto the Lord, and his secret is with the righteous.' They are hateful to God while they flourish. It is a greater evidence of God's favour and friendship to understand his counsel in the word, and to be acquainted with the mysteries of godliness, than to enjoy all the power and greatness in the world; the knowledge of a despised, hated truth, than to flourish in opposition against the ways of God, through ignorance, obstinacy, and prejudice.

Use 2. Is direction to us:—

1. For strict walking. If we would have a comfortable sense of God's love, we must resolve upon a strict course of holy walking: Gal. vi. 16, 'And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy upon the Israel of God;' and Ps. lxxxv. 8, and Eph. iv. 30.

2. If we would walk strictly, we must go to God for continual direction: Ps. lxxxvi. 11, 'Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name;' Ps. cxliii. 10, 'Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; thy spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness.' Especially when blinded with interest, or apt to be carried away with temptations.

420

3. God's teaching is not only directive, but persuasive; it prevents sin, Ps. cxix. 133; quickens to duty, Ps. cxix. 33-35. Teach and keep, and make me to go; for that is the difference between literal instruction, which we have from man, and spiritual instruction, which we have from God. God's teaching is drawing, John vi. 44, 45.

SERMON CLI.

Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.—VER. 136.

MOST of the sentences of this psalm are independent, and do not easily fall under the rules of method; so that we need not take pains in clearing up the context; the verse needs it not, the time permits it not: only you may observe this, that often in this psalm David had expressed his great joy, and now he maketh mention of his exceeding grief. There is a time to rejoice and a time to mourn; as times vary, so do duties; we have affections for every condition. Indeed, in this valley

of tears mourning is seldom out of season, either with respect to sin or misery, for ourselves or others. David, that did sometimes mourn for his own sins, and watered his couch with tears, Ps. vi. 6, he took also his time to mourn and bewail other men's sins: 'Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.'

In the words observe David's grief is set out by—

1. Constancy and greatness of it, *rivers of tears run down mine, eyes*.

2. The goodness of the cause or reason of it, *because they keep not thy law*.

'Rivers of tears.' He compares his tears to a stream and river always running. The same expression is used Lam. ii. 18, 'Let tears run down like a river day and night; let not the apples of thine eyes cease.' When affections are vehemently exercised, the scripture is wont to use such kind of expressions. The will of a godly man is above his performance; it is wont to do much more than the body can furnish him with abilities to express. He had such a large affection that he could weep rivers. 'Because they.' Some refer it to eyes, the immediate antecedent; they are usually the inlets of sin; we are first taken by the eye, and then by the heart: 'She saw the fruit that it was good, and then did eat of it.' But I rather suppose it is to be referred to men. The Hebrews many times do not express a general antecedent. More particularly his enemies, Saul and his courtiers; for so he saith, ver. 139, 'My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy word;' and again, ver. 158, David saith, 'I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved because they keep not thy word.' I have brought these places, because parallel with the text; and principally that you may not think David was troubled because of any injuries done to himself, but because of offences done to God. 'Keep not thy law.' Keeping of the law is to observe it diligently; not only to maintain it, but to retain it in our eye and practice. It might be matter of grief to David that they of whom he specially speaketh, being persons of power and place, did not maintain the law, and keep it from encroachment and violation, but suffered abuses to pass unpunished; but he speaketh here of retaining the law in their hearts and practice. For it is an expression equivalent with that which is used in ver. 139, 'Because they have forgotten thy word.' The point which I shall observe is this—

421

Doct. That it is the duty and property of a godly man to mourn bitterly, even for other men's sins.

Here we have David's instance; and it may be suited with the practice of all the saints. Jeremiah: see Jer. xiii. 17, 'But if ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears.' There you have described the right temper of a good prophet, first to entreat earnestly for them, and in case of refusal to weep bitterly for their obstinacy. Mark, it was not an ordinary sorrow he speaks of there, but a bitter weeping, 'Mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears.' Not a slight, vanishing sigh, not a counterfeited sorrow; soul and eyes were both engaged; and this in secret places, where the privacy contributeth much

to the measure and sincerity of it. Now this is a fit instance of a minister of the gospel.' We cannot always prevail when we plead with you, and shall not be responsible for it. God never required it at the hands of any minister to work grace and to save souls, but to do their endeavours. But, alas! we do not learn of Jeremiah to go and mourn over their ignorance, carelessness, and obstinacy of those committed to our charge. The next example that I shall produce is that of Lot in Sodom, 2 Peter ii. 7, 8, 'Who vexed himself, and was vexed from day to day, in seeing and hearing their unlawful deeds.' Not with Sodom's injuries, but with Sodom's sins. It was mat ter of constant grief to his soul; the commonness did not take away the odiousness. My next instance shall be our Lord himself; we read very much of his compassion: I shall produce but two instances of it. One is in Mark iii. 5, 'Christ looked upon them with anger, and was grieved for the hardness of their hearts.' They gave him cause of offence, but it doth not only exercise his anger but grief. In our Saviour's anger there was more of compassion than passion. He was grieved to see men harden themselves to their own destruction. So when he came near to Jerusalem, a city not very friendly to him, yet it is said, Luke xix. 41, 'When he came near and beheld the city, he wept over it, and said, If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes.' Our Lord Jesus was made up of compassion; he weepeth not only for his friends but his enemies. As a righteous God he inflicted the judgment, but as man he wept for the offences. First he shed his tears, and then his blood. O foolish, careless city, that will not regard terms and offers of peace in this her day! He bewailed them that knew not why they should be bewailed; they rejoiced, and he mourned: Christ's eyes are the wetter because theirs were so dry. And now he is in heaven, how doth his free grace go a mourning after sinners in the entreaties of the gospel! But that I may vindicate this point more fully, I shall give—

422

1. Some observations concerning mourning for the sins of others.

2. Give you the reasons of it.

The observations are these five:—

1. That it is an absolute duty to preach this doctrine, not only some high and raised effect of grace. When we produce these instances and examples of the word, David, Lot, Jeremiah, and Christ, many think these are rare and extraordinary instances, elevated beyond the ordinary line and pitch of Christian practice and perfection. No; it is a matter of duty lying upon all Christians. When God goes to mark out his people for preservation, who are those that are marked? The mourners: Ezek. ix. 4, 'Go through the midst of the city, and set a mark upon the foreheads of them that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof.' None are marked out for mercy but the mourners. The great difference between men and men in the world is the mourners in Zion and the sinners in Zion; so that it lieth upon all, if we would have God's mark upon us. And the apostle reproveth the Corinthians for the want of this mourning: 1 Cor. v. 7, 'Ye are puffed up, when ye should rather have mourned.' Possibly many of the converted Corinthians disliked the foulness of the fact, but they did not mourn and solemnly lay it to heart; therefore the apostle layeth

a charge upon them. In all the examples that have been produced, that of Jesus Christ only is extraordinary; and yet we are bound to have the same mind in us that was in Jesus. We must have the same mind, though we cannot have the same measure of affection. Christ had the spirit without measure, but we must have our proportion. If David can speak of floods, certainly we should at least be able to speak of drops. Somewhat of David's and Christ's spirit. Nay, the example of Christ in this very thing is propounded by the apostle: Rom. xv. 3, 'For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.' The apostle speaketh there of bearing one another's burdens. Christ would bear the burden of all the world. He was moved with a zeal for the dishonour done to God, and compassion to men; and so undertook the burden upon him, not to please himself, or seek the ease and safety of the natural life. Well, then, it is not some raised effect of grace, but a necessary duty which concerns all; a frame of heart which all the children of God have. If you love God, and love your neighbour, if you believe heaven and hell, and have any sense of the truth of the promises or threatenings, you will be thus affected in some measure to mourn and grieve for the sins of others.

2. This duty doth chiefly concern public persons, though it lies upon all Christians, magistrates and ministers and officers of the church, because of their public and universal influence. Public persons must have public affections as well as public relations. You shall see in that type the church of the Jews is represented in their officers, Zech. iii. 1. When the people were corrupted, and in a calamitous condition, Joshua the high priest is brought in standing before the Lord in filthy garments, the priest is accused by Satan. Certainly public persons are more responsible to God than others, and more concerned than others in the sins committed in the land, or places where they have a charge. Among private persons, a householder is more responsible than a private member of the family, if one under his charge fall into a notorious sin. You are responsible for your children and servants, and so are we for your souls. Under the law, Exod. xxii. 10, God said if a man did deliver unto his neighbour an ox, or an ass, or a sheep, or any beast to keep, and it did die, or was hurt, or was driven away, no man seeing it, or it did miscarry through his negligence, he was to make it good, because it was delivered into his hand. So I may say here, in quoting this law, Hath God a care of oxen? God hath committed souls to us, he hath put them into the hands of magistrates and ministers to keep them. Now because we do not discharge our duty, he will require their blood at our hands, Ezek. xxxiii. 7-9. Because of our trust and charge, we are bound to have more public affections: Joel ii. 17, 'Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar.' Ministers should be exemplar for spiritual feeling and tenderness and humiliation. Under the law the measures of the sanctuary were double to other measures. I apply it to this very thing. Our portion must be greater, because of the burden that lies upon us. Paul speaketh as one sensible of the weightiness of his charge, in 2 Cor. xi. 29, 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?' Paul trembled to see a weak Christian in the hands of Satan; and when they had taken offence, and begun to stumble, this was his trouble and grief. Mourning and burning is put

for the violence of any affection. So Jeremiah the prophet, ‘My soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.’

3. That tears are not absolutely necessary for the expression of this grief and tenderness. David saith, ‘Rivers of tears.’ Why? For grief doth not always keep the road and highway; and many times when water goes out, wind comes in. Many are puffed up with sensitive trouble, and put more upon tears than they do upon the frame of the heart which should engage us to this. All constitutions are not: alike moist; a tender heart may be matched with a dry brain. When men are careful to get things reformed, and are affected with the calamity of the church more than their own private loss, this is that which God requires. However, let me tell you, if we find tears for other things, we should find tears for these duties, when we come to remember our own sins, and the sins of others. God did not make the affections in vain. A man that hath a thorough sanctified soul will have affections exercised in some measure proportionable; and therefore, if we can shed tears abundantly upon other occasions, we should remember this water should be reserved for sanctuary uses. David when he is spoken of, is represented as one having a moist eye upon all occasions; yet Lot had a tender heart, being offended with public disorders. It is said, 2 Peter ii. 8, ‘His righteous soul was vexed.’ Great devotionists are usually very tender. Good men are much given to tears, and these sensitive stirrings of affection are a great help to religion; and therefore should not wholly be neglected. But if there be a serious displacency against sin, a deep laying to heart God’s dishonour, though they cannot command tears, the duty is discharged. Humiliation lieth more in heart grief and trouble, than the sensitive and passionate expression of it. And yet upon religious occasions we should express ourselves as passionately as we can, and not content ourselves with a few cold words and dull thoughts; but our liveliest affections should be exercised about the weightiest things: James iv. 9, ‘Be afflicted and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to heaviness.’ When we are deprecating the wrath of God, humbling ourselves under the offences done to his infinite majesty by ourselves or others, there should be more tenderness, and we should do it in the most lively affectionate manner that possibly we can.

4. The greatest sinners, when they are once converted to God, have the greatest compassion afterwards towards other sinners. Why? They know the heart of a sinning man, they have had most experience of the power and prejudice of corruption, and also sensibly tasted of the love of God, and his goodness in Christ Jesus; and so their hearts are entendered thereby to pity others, and they more earnestly desire others should partake with them of the same grace. As Israel were pressed to pity strangers, because they themselves were once strangers in Egypt, they knew what it was to be neglected and despised in a strange land; so they that are acquainted with the temptations of Satan, with the bitter fruits of sin, with the prejudices that men lie under before they come to take to the ways of God, they have greater compassion towards the souls of others than others have. This is observed to be fulfilled in the apostle Paul, whose zeal lay otherwise more in the active than in the contemplative way; for in his writings we find him mostly doctrinal and rational, yet when he speaketh of sinners, he doth it always with grief and bowels: Phil. iii. 18, ‘I tell you weeping.’

And still he presseth Christians to a greater tenderness, to be more in grief for than censure of their brother's faults:. Gal. vi. 1, 'If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted;' and Titus ii. 3, when he presseth to gentleness to all men, 'For we ourselves,' saith he, 'were sometimes foolish and disobedient, deceived and deceiving, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another; but after the love and kindness of God appeared,' &c. This melted his heart, to consider what he was, and what God had made him by grace. Whereas sullen men, of a severe temper, of a constant, rigid innocency, are wont to be more harsh and carried out with greater indignation than sorrow. Sin and they have not been so much acquainted. Others, that know how cunning this strumpet is to insinuate and entice the soul, pity those that are deceived with its enticing blandishments. Certainly men that profess religion, and do not observe their own hearts, or else have lived in a more equitable course of honesty, without any sensible change, are not touched with such tenderness. But they that once come to remember how obstinate they were in prejudices against the ways of God, how securely they walked in a way of sin, without any sense of God's displeasure, or serious thoughts of the bitter fruit of it, now God hath plucked them as brands out of the burning, they would fain save others also that are heirs of the same promise. The high priests under the law were taken from among men, Heb. v. 2, that they might have more compassion; so the Lord multiplies these instances of grace, that they might have more compassion towards others. They that have felt the terrors of the Lord, and know the wounds and bruises of a troubled conscience, are more affective in persuading, more compassionate in mourning for others, 2 Cor. v. 7.

425

5. There must be not only a constant disposition to mourn over the sins of others, but upon some more than ordinary occasions it must with much seriousness be exercised and set a-work. It is said of Lot, 2 Peter ii. 8, 'He vexed his righteous soul' in seeing their filthiness with his eyes and hearing their blasphemies with his ears, these were continual torments to him; he could go nowhere but he heard or saw something that was matter of grief to him. That is a sad prognostic of an approaching judgment when a country is so bad that it is made, as it were, a prison to a godly man. Daily a Christian hath his occasions of sorrow. How can we walk the streets with dry eyes when we here shall see a reeling drunkard, there hear a profane swearer rending and tearing the sacred name of God in pieces, a filthy speaker, theatres and the devil's temples crowded with such a multitude of people, that men may learn more how to please the flesh and hate godliness, and feast their ears with filthy talk? To see people so mad against God, and ready to cast off the yoke of Christ everywhere, this occasions matter of grief and mourning before the Lord. But besides this, there must be solemn exercises, when our eyes must gush out with tears, and we must open the flood-gates. We must wish, as Jer. ix. 1, 'Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!' There are certain times when this is necessary, as times of great sin, and of judgment felt or feared.

[1.] Of great sin, for then things begin to draw to a judgment. As for instance—

(1.) When outward gross sins are frequently committed, such as are against the light of nature: Hosea iv. 1, 2, 'The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, no mercy, no knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood,' &c. God's severity is last mentioned wherein men bewray their high presumption in profaning the name of God and violating his commands without any the least appearance of profit and advantage—lying and falsehood, a sin inconsistent with human society. God, who is the God of truth and the patron of it, cannot endure it. So the lives, goods, chastity of men to be abused, this God cannot bear with: 'Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.' God doth not contend usually for lesser faults or ordinary infirmities, but gross sins, by way of omission or commission.

(2.) These sins are the more odious, and do provoke God when universal: Isa. i. 5, 6, 'The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot, even to the head, there is no soundness in it,' &c. Though there be a few secret mourners, yet when the contagion becometh general, and riseth to a head, the Lord will take no notice of them as to the keeping off a common judgment: Ezek. ix. 4, 5, 'And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the fore heads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in my hearing, Go ye after them through the city, and smite; let not your eyes spare, neither have ye pity;' and Ezek. xiv. 14, 'Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God;' and Jer. xv. 1, 'Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.' Yet the sentence against Sodom was revocable if but ten righteous persons could be found in it, Gen. xviii. 32. Nay, a larger offer concerning Jerusalem, larger than that which God made to Sodom; if but a man: Jer. v. 1, 'Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.' Though Jerusalem were a city larger and more populous than Sodom and other cities. When the whole body of a people grows monstrous in sin. If a ruling party be sound, though the body be corrupt and vicious, that iniquity be not established by a law, or countenanced by them; or if the ruling party be corrupt and vicious, yet if the body of the people, or a considerable number, be serious and holy, and mourn in secret for the sins of the times, God may spare a land. But when all flesh have corrupted their ways, then the flood comes.

426

(3.) When resolute and incorrigible. Resolute; we have, and we will: Jer. xliv. 16, 17, 'As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee; but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers.' And incorrigible: Jer. v. 3, 'They have refused to receive correction, they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return.'

(4.) When bold in sinning: Isa. iii. 9, ‘The show of their countenance doth witness against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not.’ When men commit sin without shame or fear, break over all banks of love, moderation, or civility.

[2.] In respect of judgments felt or feared. When the day of the Lord is near, or already begun, when the smoke foreshoweth the fire is a-coming, and the decree ready to break forth, these are mourning times.

Secondly, The reasons why this is the duty and property of God’s children; they do it out of obedience, it is their duty; and they do it out of an innate disposition, it is their property.

1. It is their duty because God hath commanded it. Now all God’s commands are equal, and full of reason; and there is a great deal of reason why God should lay this kind of duty upon the creature.

[1.] That it may be an allay to zeal. That is an excellent and well-tempered zeal when grief is mixed with anger: as it is said of Christ, he looked about with anger, and was grieved at the hardness of their hearts; when we are angry at the sin, and mourn for the person, and mourn over him. Zeal against the sin, that shows our love to God; and our commiseration of the person, that shows our love to man. Samuel spared not Saul in his sin, yet mourned for him. And all the prophets of God you shall find, when they were threatening the people for their sins, were grieved lest their threatening should be accomplished. False zeal hath malice and mischief; it mourns not for the person, because it coveteth his shame and destruction. Now it is the great wisdom of God he would have this temper mixed. There must be anger for the offence done to God, and a grief that our brother hath offended. The world is apt to cry out upon the children of God, as persons peevish and rancorous; but this is a rare vindication, when they see you as apt to mourn as to chide, that all your expostulations with them come rather from conscience than interest; it is an excellent allay and praise to public zeal.

427

[2.] God would have us mourn for the sins of others, to engage us to seek redress and reformation. We should soon neglect the duty that we owe to the age and place where and when we live, were it not for this, that the want of it would be burdensome to us, and the abounding of iniquity will cost us bitter tears upon God’s command, and upon zealous endeavours to get a public reformation. Ezra first mourns bitterly, then reforms zealously: Ezra ix. 6, 7, ‘I plucked off the hair of my head, and rent my garment, and said, O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, O God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens,’ &c. Zealous actions, which few practise in their own case; yet sins of others, you see, work an afflictive grief and shame in those that fear God. These were the actions of Ezra when he was bewailing the sins of others, and this made him so resolute and active in the reformation that is described in the next chapter. Their love begets sorrow, and their sorrow care. Who would not seek to redress the evil which is burdensome to him? Many times the world is angry, because we are so clamorous for reformation and repentance. You have liberty enough, say they, and may serve God

in your own way, and go to heaven quietly; why should you trouble yourself about others? But can a man that grieveth for the abominations of the times be silent till they be redressed? A Christian is troubled about the salvation of others, to see so many thousands of souls carried to hell by droves, and hurried to their own destruction. Can pity and remorse behold this, without care and endeavours with God and man to get it remedied? Certainly, the children of God are not impertinently active and pragmatical. Public reformation is not only a relief to their souls, but to their bowels. They are troubled, therefore thirst and long to see it redressed: 2 Cor. vii. 11, 'Godly sorrow,' saith Paul, what carefulness it wrought in you!' He speaketh of their public church sorrow. Till they mourned, they neglected the discipline of the church, and let incest go without censure. O my brethren! until we mourn for public disorders, we shall not mourn over one another. We think it is enough to keep ourselves free, and to make a little conscience of our own ways. Always private sorrow will beget public care. If thou hast wept sore in secret places, thou wilt be earnest with God and man to remove the occasion of thy grief.

[3.] The Lord requireth this to keep our hearts the more tender and upright; it is an act God useth to make us more careful of our own souls, to be troubled at the sins of others, at sin in a third person. It keepeth us at a great distance from a temptation. This is like quenching of fire in a neighbour's house; before it comes near us, thou runnest with thy bucket. There is no way to keep us free from the infection, so much as mourning. The soul will never agree to do that which grieved itself to see another do. 'And as it keepeth us upright, so also humble, fearful of divine judgment, tender lest we ourselves offend, and draw down the wrath of God. He that shruggeth when he seeth a snake creeping upon another, will much more be afraid when he cometh near to himself. In our own sins we have advantage of conscience scourging the soul with remorse and shame. In bewailing the sins of others, we have only the reasons of duty and obedience. They that fight abroad out of love to valour and exploits, will certainly fight out of love to their own safety at home. So God would have us more abroad, more against the sins of others, that our hearts may be more set against those sins with which we ourselves are apt to be foiled.

2. This is their disposition as well as their duty; it must be so, and it cannot be otherwise with the children of God, for several reasons.

[1.] From the tenderness of God's glory, which is more dear to them than all their own interests. A Christian hath a great affection to the glory of God, is very tender of that; he cannot endure it should be violated, for his heart will even break within him. Can a man see an injury done to a person whom he loves, and not be troubled? Jesus wept for Lazarus, because he loved him, and they say, 'Behold how he loved him,' John xi. 36. They that love God can they hear his great name rent with so many blasphemies? so many affronts put upon his grace, the laws of God trampled under foot, and not lay it to heart? God's glory is more dear to them than their own lives. They had neither had any standing in nature nor grace had it not been for the glory of God. God made all things for himself; therefore when the name of God is violated, his authority despised, his laws

broken and set at nought, and no more regarded or esteemed than a ballad or a song, they cannot but express their tenderness and great affection to God by mourning for this. Carnal men are hot in their own cause, cold in God's. God's children are quite otherwise, cold in their own cause, and hot in God's. Therefore they are deeply sensible when God's honour is weakened. Moses was the meekest man upon earth, yet he brake the tables. How doth this agree? The injuries that were done to himself he could look upon with a meek, quiet spirit, easily put them up; but when he saw the people bring dishonour to the name of God, then he hath a high and deep affection. They cry out, Josh. vii. 9, 'Lord, what wilt thou do for thy great name?' So Ps. cxv. 1, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy name give glory.' They go to God, not to advance our faction and interest: 'We are brought very low; yet the wrath of man shall praise thee.' Thy name is dear and precious; they are sorry to see any profane it. God hath abundantly provided for their respect, he hath bid all men love them, when he bid us love one another. So that in effect all the respects of the world are devolved upon one person. And they would have all men love God and honour God.

429

[2.] It comes from their compassion and pity and love to men. Oh! it grieves them to see so many that do not grieve for themselves; and their eyes are wet because yours are always dry. 'I tell you weeping,' saith Paul, Phil. iii. 18. Compassion over the miserable estate of such teachers, and those that are led by them; they and whole droves run after fancies that endanger their souls. False teachers and their proselytes should not only fall under our indignation, but our pity. They are monsters in nature that want bowels, much more in grace. Religion doth not harden the heart, but mollifies it. Jesus Christ was made up of compassion, and all Christians partake of Christ's spirit: Phil. i. 8, 'God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.' Pray mark, Paul had got some of Christ's bowels, and let me tell you they were tender ones. Com passion towards others, and weeping over their sins, is somewhat like the love of Jesus Christ. He would take our burden upon himself when he was not interested. So the spirit of Christ worketh in all his members, he hath distributed his bowels among them; and therefore they cannot but long for the salvation of others; yea, their heart is broken and mollified with Christ's compassion to them, and therefore long for fellows in the same grace. Though they have received personal and private injuries, yet they pity their case, and mourn for them. It is matter of humiliation and lamentation: 2 Cor. xii. 21, 'When I come again I fear my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, which they have committed.' It is matter of grief to see so many thousands perish, or in a perishing condition.

[3.] This disposition cometh from the antipathy and zealous displeasure that is in their hearts against sin. They know what sin is, the greatest enemy that God and Christ and their own souls have in the world. It was sin that made angels become devils; it was sin that blew up the sparks of hell-fire; it was sin that opposed God, that crucified Christ; it is sin that grieves the Spirit of God; and therefore they mourn when sin gets proselytes. A man cannot endure to see a toad or viper near him; your hearts rise when you see them creep upon another; so do the hearts of the children of

God rise, that their enemy and God's should find such respect and entertainment in the world. It is said of the church of Ephesus: Rev. ii. 2, 'That she could not bear those which were wicked.' And David saith, Ps. ci. 3, 'I hate the works of them that turn aside.' They know this will grieve the Spirit of God, that this will press him as a cart is pressed with sheaves; and shall God be pressed and burdened, and they not troubled? It cannot be. They that love the Lord will hate evil, Ps. xcvii. 10, both in themselves and others.

[4.] This disposition comes out of a sagacity of faith, and serious foresight of the effects of sin. They know what sin will come to, and what is the danger of it; therefore, when they see sin increasing, 'Rivers of water run down their eyes.' Wicked men tremble only at the judgment of God, but good men tremble at his word; and therefore they mourn when others fall into danger of the threatening. When Ezra plucked his beard, and was in such a zealous indignation against the sins of the people, bewailing them before the Lord, Ezra ix. 4, 'Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel.' At fasts others are slight and obdurate; they look on threatening as a little mock thunder; they are not sensible of the danger. I may set forth this by that allusion, 2 Kings viii. 11, the prophet Elisha wept when he saw Hazael, that he looked wishly on his face till he blushed: 'The man of God wept, and Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil thou wilt do unto the children of Israel; their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child: and Hazael said, But what! is thy servant a dog?' &c. So when the children of God look upon sin, they know by the complexion of it what will be the dreadful effects. This will be bitterness in the issue, in time this will produce pestilences, famine, fire, sword, and all other mischiefs and judgments, and expressions of the angry indignation of the Lord. They foresee a storm when the clouds are but a-gathering, therefore they tremble when they see them. This is the sagacity of faith. Now carnal men, on the other side, look upon the threatenings of scripture but as words of course, used as in way of policy, that God only would awe and scare them, but doth not purpose to condemn them. But faith is sagacious. Look, as to the promises, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' So as to the threatenings, the same evidence of things not seen. The apostle doth not only instance when he had given the general description of the objects of hope for the recompense of reward, but he instances in the threatenings, 'Noah, being moved with fear, prepared an ark,' &c. They know, however men slight the word of God, one day it will be found true; and therefore, when they see men add sin to sin, they are troubled. The word is as sure as execution, and works upon them accordingly. They have all things in a near view; the nearer the objects of our faith are in our view, the more they stir up our affections. Dangers and death, when in hand and in present expectation, work far otherwise than they do when they are considered at a distance. So when the effects of sin are looked upon as near at hand, when faith makes them present, then they stir up these affections in the soul.

430

[5.] A fifth clause is from their public spirit and tender respect to the common good. When they wisely foresee approaching dangers, they are moved with the love and care of their country, and

this melteth them. They know sin is of a destroying nature, that 'one sinner destroyeth much good,' Eccles. ix. 18. One sinner may do his country a great deal of mischief, an open bold-faced sinner—Achan troubled the whole camp, Josh. vii. 11, 12—much more when a multitude of sinners are increased; therefore they sigh and mourn. Godly men are the truest friends to their native soil; they are the chariots and horse men of Israel. Those that plead with God stand in the gap, keep off judgments, and have the most public spirit; therefore the least they can do is to sigh for it and to plead with wicked men; as Tertullian, *Si non vis tibi parcere, parce Carthagini*—if thou wilt go on with thy soul-destroying course, and wilt not spare thyself, yet spare Carthage. This will be bitterness in the issue. The children of God are always of a public spirit. David fasted for his enemies, Ps. xxxv. Abraham prayed to God for Sodom, a neighbour country. The godly Israelites were good friends to Babylon in their captivity: Jer. xxix. 11, 'Seek the peace of the city, whither I have caused you to be carried captive, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace: 'if nothing but their interest and share in the common rest and quietness. Passengers are concerned in the welfare of the vessel wherein they are embarked. Babylon fared the better for the Jews' prayers. Now more especially are their hearts carried out with a respect to their native soil and dearest comforts; therefore this melteth them to see the land defiled with sins and ready for judgments.

431

SERMON CLII.

Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.—VER. 136.

USE 1. For reproof of two sorts of persons:—

1. Those that do not lay to heart their own sins. Usually men make their affections to prescribe to their judgment, and cavil at the fervorous exercises of religion, because unpleasant to flesh and blood; to humble ourselves before the Lord with a pressing sorrow, seriously and indeed to rend our hearts and not our garments. In this wanton and delicate age, men are apt to think I speak of a theme obsolete and out of date, as calculated for former times, when men were more tender hearted. If we could awaken some of the old godly professors out of their graves, as the prophet calleth up Rachel to weep in Raman for her children, Jer. xxxi. 15, then we might hope to prevail. Alas! to plead now for mourning over the sins of others, when men think it a crime to mourn for their own, this is like to be lost labour. Were this the humour only of ungodly wretches, it might be borne with silence and patience; but those that would be taken for Christians of the highest form are altogether prejudiced against such doctrines as this. Men would be honeyed and oiled with grace, and distaste the whole some discipline of repentance as too severe. They cry out, We are legal. How may the poor ministers of the gospel go to God, and say, as Moses did, Exod. vi. 12, 'The children of Israel

have not hearkened unto me, how then shall Pharaoh hear me?' The professors of religion will not brook such doctrine, and how shall we hope to prevail with the poor, blind, carnal world? To scoff at doctrines of repentance and humiliation was once a badge of profaneness; many now adopt it into their religion. But be not deceived; the gospel doth not take away the conscience of sin. It may take away the fear of hell and damnation upon right terms. The heart of flesh is a promise, and the spirit of grace is a promise, or mourning apart is a promise. You that say that justified persons must no more mourn for sin, you may as well say they shall no longer have a heart of flesh or a spirit of grace and supplications, that they shall no longer have a tender conscience. Be not deceived; there must be some time to weep for your own sins, as Peter went out and wept bitterly. Sorrow must have its turn in the Christian life. I would press it upon you by this argument: You cannot be sorrowful for others' sins unless you be first sorrowful for your own sins. Grief must begin at home, there where you have the advantage of conscience and inward remorse. It is hypocrisy to pitch upon other men's sins and neglect your own; as some will zealously declaim against public disorders, yet neglect their own hearts; as the crafty lapwing will go up and down fluttering and crying to draw the fowler from her own nest. We have a nest of sin of our own, and we are loath it should be rifled and exposed to public view.

432

2. It reproveth them that in times of public defection never take care to mourn over God's dishonour. We complain and murmur under our judgments, but do not weep over our sins, every person and family apart. Whether it be out of negligence and carnal security, or out of distaste and displeasure against the conduct of present affairs, we seem to have lost our public affections, and can only wonder at the children of God in former times, since they were so broken and tender. To many that would now go for professors, this doctrine seemeth a riddle, a mere strain of wit and fancy, like a precept wire-drawn, or elevated beyond its pitch and tenor. But in the fear of God consider what hath been spoken. There are many abuses in our reflections upon the sins of others. Wicked men are quite otherwise disposed: they do not only do evil themselves, but take pleasure in those that do so, Rom. i. 32; would be glad that sin were more common, that it might be less odious, and then there would be none to put them to the blush: Prov. ii. 14, it is said 'they rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked.' So the prophet speaks of some corrupt men in the priesthood: 'They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity,' Hosea iv. 8. God had appointed those that served at the altar should live of the altar, have a proportion of those offerings; now they flattered them in their sins, so they might have meat, and get a portion of the sacrifices. Many that would be accounted ministers care not for the sins of the people, but think the less serious men are in religion the better they can work them to their private advantages, and have more respect among them. Then there are some that scoff at the mourners in Zion; they count it melancholy and mopishness to be so often and seriously humbling themselves before the Lord. The world deals perversely with the people of God; they provoke their sorrow, and then upbraid them with it. You should bear them company, mourn with them, pine in consort with those doves of the valleys. Better be a mourner than a mocker and scoffer. Others there are that yet can

433

make a shift to hold out some profession of religion, yet can delight in the company of profane, carnal persons. Would a man willingly put himself upon occasions of grief? Are you like Lot, whose soul was vexed day by day? Do but consider how much your temper differs from theirs. David saith, Ps. cxix. 115, 'Depart from me, ye evil-doers.' Others there are that by censures and bitter invectives seek to make the sinner, rather than the sin, more odious. This is to exercise malice and pride, not Christian affection. We should not censure, but mourn. Tears flow from charity, censures from pride; and by this means you lose a duty for a sin, which is a sad exchange. Others again are apt to laugh at them, and to make sport with the sins of others, but do not mourn. This is a vile abuse, and yet we are many times guilty of it. Men laugh at drunkenness, and make the slips of others matter of boasting and vain talk. This should rather set our hearts a-bleeding and mourning. He were a monster, rather than a man, that could see a man take a fall, even to the breaking of his back or neck, and turn it into a jest; or a man wound himself, and he make a sport of it. And shall we be more kind to the bodies than to the souls of men? Oh! consider the danger of these practices. As much as in him lieth he hath put himself into hell, and wilt thou laugh at it?

Use 2. Trial. Are we so tenderly affected? I know every one is not of a like tender constitution, and cannot weep rivers of tears; but tell me—or rather, tell God—I cite thy conscience to make answer to God when thou didst ever go aside into thy closet, or some secret place, to lay to heart the dishonour done to God, or the affronts put upon his grace? Do not tell me thou hast declaimed against the sin of the times, that thou hast not cried tip a confederacy with them that cry up a confederacy against God. There may be somewhat of faction and interest and obstinacy in those things; but when hast thou mourned, and wept sore in secret places? Do not tell me that thou hast joined in public fasts: hasty and transient sighs do not wound the heart. Hast thou ever done it in secret? or hast thou often done it? It may be thou hast resented injuries, and spread them before God; and so there is a spirit of self-love and revenge that breathes into thy prayers. Men will be hot in their own cause; but what hast thou done in this duty? It is a plain question, and therefore I hope it will have the more force upon the conscience. True zeal for injuries done to God would ease itself by tears rather than anger. True penitents will not satisfy themselves only with public humiliation, to which law, custom, and example may draw them; but will make conscience of this duty in their families, yea, in secret, where no eye seeth them but God's; mourn apart, Zech. xii. 12-14, and bring home public provocations to their own doors, Jer. xi. 17.

Use 3. To exhort you to get this practice, and to get this disposition of the saints.

There is a great deal of need to practise it now, whether we look upon the sins or dangers of the nation; the sins, such horrid blasphemies and reproaches cast upon God's servants, his ways, truths, doctrines according to godliness. I think, in the wisest judgment that a man can make, never was there such a dangerous κρίσις and temper of any nation as of ours at this time. Never were sins boiled up to such a height and consistency as now, such snarling at reformation, that was hopefully

begun. Now sin walketh in the streets with a bold face, drunkenness, swearing, and profaneness seem to triumph; and with the more pretence, because the stricter sort have so much dishonoured God and religion. Church affairs are much out of order. And for our dangers, we hear again of wars and rumours of wars, and God knoweth what may be the issue and effect of them: Acts xiii. 41, 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man should tell you of it.' The danger of a nation doth not lie in out ward probabilities so much as in the threatenings of the word. He alludeth to the horrible devastation of Judea by the Chaldeans, and applieth it to the despising of the gospel. Would any believe that the temple and city should be destroyed, and the people of God carried captive, that not one should remain? yet this came. In the time of Noah, when they abounded in all things, who would have thought of a flood? Many would say, as that nobleman, If the windows of heaven were opened, how could this be? Who would have believed the horrible dissolution by the Romans? or thirty years agone that which is now fallen out in Germany? Never think that our armies and forces are so strong as to withstand the threatenings of the gospel; for our horrible contempt, God may blow upon all these props in an instant. Therefore weep and mourn for the pride and rebellion of the daughter of your people. So for our private place. What sins are there among us! Some have withstood the ways of God; though they have had convictions, yet held out against them. Some are profane, many defects in all orders. Paul was mightily troubled because the church of Corinth was so much out of order; he bewailed it with many tears: 2 Cor. ii. 4, 'Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears.' So may I speak, and you think of these things: It is time to mourn. By way of motive, consider—

1. This is the best way to enter our protestation and dissent against the iniquity of the times. When we cannot help a thing, it is good to retract it, and commit it by tears to God; for then it shall not be laid to our charge. When the Corinthians mourned for incest committed among them, and sorrowed with a godly sorrow, 2 Cor. vii. 13, 'Ye are verily clear in this matter,' many of them did not only not approve, but abhor that foul act before; but they were not clear till they mourned, and purged the church from the imputation. So you are not clear till you have done this duty.

2. God may take occasion to punish you from their sins. We are all fuel fit for the burning. God's dispensation is not unrighteous as to you, but that may be the occasion: Zech. x. 3, 'My anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats.' So Prov. xxviii. 2, 'For the transgression of a people; many are the rulers thereof.' The people's sins may make great changes and alterations of government.

3. You are one body with them. Nations are one political body, churches one political body. In God's plea about Sodom with Abraham, ten righteous persons have an influence to save or ruin it. The sins of one generation may be the cause of another. It is said God turned not from the fierceness

of his anger that was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. Manasseh was dead thirty or forty years before. Manasseh had repented, and Josiah was a great reformer, none like him. You see God may punish their sins many years after; nay, in the process of vengeance the whole lump is involved, as being one body. So all Israel were troubled for one Achan. Do not tax God's dispensation of severity and rigour, for it is the condescension and art of divine mercy by this means to prevent public ruin; and you are involved in their portion, that every man in his place may study the prevention of sin and ruin. So churches are one lesser body; one root of bitterness defileth many, Heb. xii. 15; not only by the contagion of the sin, but also by imputation of guilt. So at Corinth: 1 Cor. v. 6, 'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.' So also in households and families, which are one lesser body.

4. Many of their sins may be thine. It is a good prayer, though it be a harsh expression, to desire God to be delivered from other men's sins: *Ab alieno libera me Domine.* They have sinned the more because thou hast been wanting as a magistrate, as a minister, as a neighbour, a fellow-member, as a private Christian. As a magistrate: a negligent prince all the sin is put upon him. Eli was a high priest, and was a judge in that case; and therefore, though he were innocent, God saith he would cut off his house for the iniquity of his sons: 1 Sam. iii. 17, 'Because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.' When magistrates suffer all things to run at random in religion, instead of God's ministers, they prove the devil's agents; though they be holy for their persons, yet there is a great guilt lieth upon them. So for ministers: we are to watch as those that must give an account, Heb. xiii. 17; 'I will require him at thy hands,' &c. He may be a good man, yet not a good minister, when he is not so diligent in inspection, so faithful to his trust, as he should be; so frequent in exhortation, prayer, mourning, care of the flock: much hurt cometh by our connivance. So for private Christians, they are bound to watch over one another. It may be you do not look after them, Heb. iii. 13. You suffer hardness to grow upon them, and would not warn them. Ye are witnesses from God to the people of Israel. You may be guilty of much evil example, and unwary carriage: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness that is by faith;' and Ezek. xvi. 51, 52, 'Thou hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done. Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame, for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.' You either justify or condemn the world. So that in effect they may be your sins: you are sensual, vain. We easily catch a disease from one another, but do not get health. Nature is more susceptible of evil than of grace.

5. By seeing of their sins conscience may awaken, and thou mayest remember thy own; as Pharaoh's butler said, 'I remember my faults this day.' Their lives are but a glass of the deformity

436

of our natures. There are many Judases, many Cains in thy nature. I was in times past as bad as any, as bold with sin, and as notorious a sinner. Every sin therefore should be a fresh bleeding wound in our own souls. They are but the picture of thy natural face: Titus iii. 3, 'We in times past were foolish, disobedient, deceiving, and being deceived.' Thou seest them given up to vain pleasure; remember how it was with thee before conversion, and let this humble thee.

6. If all this do not work, consider the holy angels, that are no way interested, but as it conduceth to God's glory; that do not communicate with us in nature and blood, how they rejoice at the welfare of man. As when the world was made: Job xxxviii. 7, 'When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' So when Christ came, and assumed human nature at his birth: Luke ii. 14, 'Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.' And when the creature repenteth: Luke xv. 7, 'I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.' So should we mourn over them to God, who are our flesh, our neighbours, united in the bonds of duty and neighbourhood, it may be church relation.

7. I might tell of the fruits of mourning. The greater party of mourners, the more hope of preservation. We have complained of drought, we have dry bottles: judgments are kept off as long as there is a sighing party; you are preserved, Ezek. ix. 4, as Lot out of Sodom. But if the righteous God see not this fit, and a godly man may be swept away, as two dry sticks burn a green one, yet you shall laugh when others mourn. In heaven there will be joy enough; this is the valley of tears. Wicked men, though now they are dry wood, yet they are fit fuel for hell. Consider of these things. It is a difficult work to soften the heart, and you have need of all the help that may be.

[1.] Consider the compassion of Christ to thee. If he had not mourned and sighed in the garden, and sweat drops of blood, where had thy soul been? Thou wert in thy blood when free grace went a-sighing after thee in the ministry of the word: Ezek. xvi. 6, 'I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.' These are intending considerations: 1 Tim. i. 13, 'Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy,' ἠλεήθην. If I had not been all to[17] be-bowelled, and all to[18] be-mercied, I had been a brand fit for the burning.

[2.] Take heed of sensuality: Hosea iv. 12, 'My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them; for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a-whoring from under their God.' It taketh away the heart, the tenderness and softness; no one thing doth more brawn the spirit. To be given to uncleanness, past feeling: Eph. iv. 18, 'Having the

17 Here *all to* signifies *altogether*, as in Judges ix. 53.—ED.

18 Here *all to* signifies *altogether*, as in Judges ix. 53.—ED.

understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.'

[3.] Beg the assistance of God's Spirit; he can smite the rock and make waters gush out. That thou mayest not be discouraged, look upon precedents in scripture, the tender hearts of God's people there. The Spirit of God wrought them to this frame: 'Cry, O arm of the Lord; put on strength as in the ancient days.' God hath promised it: Zech. xii. 10, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son,' &c.; and then it follows, 'And the land shall mourn, every family apart,' &c.

437

SERMON CLIII.

Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments.—VER. 137.

THIS psalm is spent in commendation of the word of God. The man of God sometimes commends it for its efficacy, sometimes for its sureness and certainty, and at other times for its sweetness. In this octonary or portion, the word of God is commended for its righteousness. David was sore troubled for the wickedness of his enemies, yea, tempted greatly to impatience and distrust, by looking upon their prosperous estate; for if you consult with the context, you shall find this was spoken in a time of defection, when rivers of tears ran down his eyes because men kept not the law of God. When carnal men pass their time in joy and the godly in tears, it is good then to meditate of God's righteousness. So does David. When they were making void God's law, he was in deep sorrow and tears. It is good so to do, that we may humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and compose our soul to patience and a quiet submission, and with hope to wait upon God in the midst of wrongs and injuries. Simo Caltu telleth us that the emperor Mauritius used these words when he saw all his children slain before his face, and himself ready to be slain after them by Phocas. The historian tells us, ἐπὶ πάντων ἐπεκαλεῖτο, δίκαιος εἶ κύριε καὶ εὐθεῖς αἱ κρίσεις σου—that he did in the presence of all meekly submit to this great and heavy calamity, crying out, 'Righteous art thou, Lord, and upright are thy judgments.'

In the words the man of God reasons *ab efficiente ad effectum, a legislatore ad leges*—from the property of God to the laws that he hath given us. God being essentially righteous and perfectly righteous, yea, righteousness itself, nothing contrary to justice can proceed from him; no iniquity from equity itself, nor injustice from justice itself. God's law, all his dispensations that proceed from him, are as himself is. Therefore in the text you have two things:—

1. What God is: *Thou art righteous, O Lord.*

2. What his word and works are: *Upright are thy judgments*.

The word *misphatim*, judgments, implies both—both the rule and his providential dispensations according to that rule. In God's word there is a judicial sentence concerning our thoughts, words, and works; therefore his law is called judgments. It is the judgment of the great God concerning the actions of men, and then the effect thereof when his sentence takes place.

The points are three:—

1. That God is a righteous God.

2. That this righteous and holy God hath given a rule of equity and justice to his creature.

3. That all the dispensations that proceed from him according to that rule are all exactly righteous.

First, That God is a righteous God.

Here I shall show—

1. What is the righteousness of God.

2. Prove that God is righteous.

First, What it is. Amongst men there is a general and a particular justice. The general justice is that whereby we carry ourselves conformable to the rule of religion, 1 Peter ii. 24, called there living unto righteousness; and the particular justice is that whereby we give every man his due: so it is taken, Titus ii. 12, 'That we should live soberly, righteously, and godlily.' Godliness is that grace which inclines us to give God his portion, and sobriety is that grace which helps us to govern ourselves, and righteousness that grace whereby we give our neighbour his due.

1. Justice is sometimes put for the whole rectitude and perfection of the divine nature; when God acts becoming such a pure, holy, and infinite being; and so God cannot do anything that is against the perfection of his nature; he cannot deny himself, 2 Tim. ii. 13. He will not give his glory to another, Isa. xlii. 8. He cannot be indifferent to good and evil; he will not damn and punish an innocent creature; there is a condescency in all his actions to the perfection of his nature.

2. There is a particular justice with respect to his dealings with the creature, especially man. And before I come to open that, I must tell you that God must be considered under a twofold relation—(1.) As absolute Lord; (2.) As governor and judge of the world.

[1.] As absolute Lord; and so his justice is nothing but the absolute and free motion of his own will concerning the estate of all creatures. In this respect God is wholly arbitrary, and hath no other rule but his own will; he doth not will things because they are just, but therefore they are just because God wills them. For—

(1.) He hath a right of making and framing anything as he willeth in any manner as it pleaseth him, as a potter hath power over his clay to form what vessel he pleaseth, either of honour or dishonour, Rom. ix. 21; and Jer. xviii. 6, 'As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.' He hath not only might and power, but full right to dispose of the creature according to his own pleasure. As he sustaineth the person of a Lord, he doth what is agreeable to his free and sovereign will. As the good man of the house pleaded, Mat. xx. 15, 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?' so God as absolute lord and sovereign may do as he pleaseth. Nothing before it had a being had a right to dispose of itself. Neither did God make it what it was by the necessity of nature, nor by the command, counsel, or will of any superior, or the direction of any coadjutor; neither is there any to whom he should render an account of his work, but merely produceth things by the act of his own will, as absolute and sovereign Lord of all his own actions: 'He works all things according to the counsel of his own will,' Eph. i. 11; and Rev. iv. 11, 'Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' As his wisdom saw fit, so he hath placed creatures in several ranks of being. The fish cannot complain that it was made without feet or hands, nor the ass that it was made for burden, that it is not fierce and mettlesome as the horse, which was made for battle. And we men, whatever was given us by creation, it was not a matter of right, but the mere effect of God's good-will and pleasure. He might have made us stocks and stones, and not living creatures; and among living creatures plants only, with the life of vegetation and growth. Or if he had given us a sensitive life, he might have placed us in the lowest rank; he might have made us toads and vipers, or horse and mule, without understanding, and not men. And among men, all the blessings and privileges to which we were born might have been withheld without any injustice.

439

(2.) He hath a right of using and disposing of them so made according to his own pleasure, to appoint them to be high or low, miserable and afflicted, or prosperous and happy, as it shall be for his glory: Rom. xi. 36, 'All things are of him, and from him, and to him, to whom be glory.' As God made the creatures for himself, so he governs them ultimately, terminatively for himself. There is no cause of murmuring and repining when he will use us as he pleaseth for his own glory, Isa. xlv. 9, 10. We cannot say, Why doest thou thus? It is enough to silence all tempests in our souls, God did it: Ps. xxxix. 9, 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.' Now this is true in the dispensations of grace as well as in the blessings of this life. To some God gives grace, to others not; some are elected to mercy, others left to perish in their own sins; one is taken, and another left, Mat. xxiv. 40, 41. There were two thieves upon the cross together with Christ; God saves the one, passes by the other. He may do with his own as he pleaseth. He being sovereign is obliged by no debt of law, or the command of any superior power; and therefore 'hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth,' Rom. ix. 18. Election is an act of sovereignty and dominion. God might have left all in misery, as he left the fallen angels; none of them that sinned are recovered out of their misery; and are we of a more noble consideration than the angels, than those spirits? One of them could have done God more service than many men could

do; therefore, as he left all those angels in their sinful condition, so it is a mercy that, when he might have destroyed all mankind, he would save any. God could have given Judas a soft heart as well as Peter, but he does not. He will be master of his own gifts. Only this clears his justice: none are denied grace, but those that deserve it should be so; none by God are compelled to sin, none are punished without sin; but in all his gifts, and in what he doth as supreme Lord, his will is his reason.

[2.] God may be considered as governor and judge, and so he gave a law to the creatures; and his governing justice consists in giving all their due according to his law. This is to be distinguished from the former; for God, that is arbitrary in his gifts, is not arbitrary in his judgments. Observe that he is arbitrary in his gifts; he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, but in his judgments he proceedeth with men according to their works, according to a law or outward rule. Of this governing justice the scripture often speaks: Deut. xxxii. 4, 'He is a righteous God, and all his ways are judgment.' So Ps. vii. 9, 'He will judge the world in righteousness, and will minister judgment to the people.' Now this governing justice of God is twofold—either legislative or judicial.

(1.) God's legislative justice. This determines man's duty, and binds him to the performance thereof, and also decrees and sets down the rewards and punishments that shall be due upon man's obedience or disobedience. God made man rational, or a voluntary agent, capable of good and evil, with desires of the good and fears of the evil; and therefore God, as universal king, that he might rule him according to his nature, hath made for him a law that revealeth good and evil, with promises to move him by desire and hope of the good, and with threatenings to drive him by a necessary fear of the evil. So Deut. xxx. 15, 'See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.' It is true of the law of Moses, and it is true of the gospel of Christ Jesus; he deals with us this way (that I may not make a distinction between the law and the gospel). What is the law of the gospel? Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Now this law is the rule of man's duty and God's dealings with all those that have received it.

(2.) There is his judicial justice, called also distributive; and this is that whereby he renders unto men according to their works, whether they do good or evil, without any respect to persons: 1 Peter i. 17, 'Without respect of persons, he judgeth according to every man's work.' The persons that may be respected in judgment is some external thing, that hath no affinity with the cause in hand. Now when God comes to judge of the breach of his law, or the keeping of his law, he hath no respect of persons, high or low, rich or poor, professing or not professing Christianity; he deals with them as they have walked according to his law. His judicial or distributive justice is declared at large by the apostle, Rom. ii. 5-9. There God's executing judgment according to his law is described, and you find it twofold—remunerative or vindictive.

(1st.) His remunerative or rewarding justice. It is just with God to reward our obedience, and to give men what his promise hath made due to them. It is true we cannot expect reward from God in strict righteousness, or by the exact laws of commutative justice and strict righteousness in this

fallen estate, as if there were an inward condignity of our works to that which God gives. Oh no! that is disclaimed by the saints: Ps. ciii. 3, 'Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;' Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' From any exuberancy of merit we cannot expect a reward from God; but we may and ought to encourage ourselves from his righteousness, even that it is not an unrighteous thing with God to give us heaven and happiness when we have served him faithfully, and patiently continued in well-doing. You know the apostle distinguished that there is a reward according to debt, and a reward according to grace, Rom. iv. 4. Though it be righteous with God to give the reward, yet he gives it not out of debt, or for any condignity of worth; but he gives it out of grace. And so all the comforts we have from obedience are said to come from the righteousness of God; even the pardon of sin, which is one of the freest acts of God, and wherein he discovers most of his mercy: 1 John i. 9, 'He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' It is not, faithful and gracious, but just. And so for the eternal reward in 2 Thes. i. 6, 7, δίκαιον, 'It is a just or righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you.' Ay! you think it is just with God to punish evil; but is it a righteous thing that he should reward our obedience? Bead on: 'And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven,' &c. God in righteousness is bound by his own promise to give this reward: Heb. vi. 10, 'God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love.' How is God's righteousness engaged? Partly by Christ, Christ having given satisfaction equivalent to the offence and wrong to his majesty, and having interposed an everlasting merit, it is just with God to forgive the sin, as it is just for the creditor to forgive the debt when he hath received satisfaction from the surety. And it is just because God is bound by his own promise; he hath promised a crown of life to them at the end of their trial, James i. 12; and it is part of his justice to make good his word; by promise God hath made himself a debtor. So 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give me at that day.' Bernard glosseth sweetly upon that place, *Paulus expectat coronam justitiae, justitiae Dei, non suae; justum est ut reddat quod debet, debet autem quod pollicitus est.* It is just with God to pay what he oweth, and God oweth what he hath promised; and so it is a crown of righteousness which God the righteous Judge will give us at that day. Once more, it is just with God not to forget your labour of love, because it agrees with his general justice, or the rectitude of his nature; it falls in with his law. As God is a holy, perfect being, he cannot be indifferent to good and evil; it concerns him to see, *ut bonis bene sit; et malis, male*; that it be well with them that do well, and ill with them that do ill. But how upon terms it should go well with them, that must be interpreted according to either covenant; either according to the exactness of the law, and so no flesh can be justified in his sight, or according to the moderation of the gospel, where the soul sincerely frames itself to do the will of God: and it is not an unrighteous thing with God to give you according to your labour of love, and zeal for his glory.

441

(2dly.) There is his vindictive justice on all sinners. God punisheth none but sinners, and only for sin, and that ever according to the measure of the sin; as it is more or less, so they have more

or less punishment: Rom. ii. 9, ‘Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.’ God will render vengeance to the Gentiles, that had the light of nature to teach them God, to show them the invisible things of his godhead and power; but chiefly upon those that have been bred up in his ordinances, and mostly upon them that have rejected the terms of grace offered them in the gospel; for so it is said, 2 Thes. i. 8, ‘He will render vengeance upon all them that obey not the gospel;’ and John iii. 18, 19, ‘He that believeth not is condemned already.’ The law is passed upon him; but ‘this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.’ Their sin is inexcusable that will not lay hold upon the offers of grace. They have no cause to murmur, or impute their damnation to God’s secret purpose; in their own consciences they may read the justness of their condemnation. Well, then, this is God’s justice; it is that property by which God acts agreeable to his nature as sovereign lord; and agreeable to his covenant as governor and judge of the world, either his covenant of works or grace.

442

Secondly, To prove that God is just. I shall prove it by four things:—

1. From the perfection of the divine nature. The perfection of the divine will is such that he necessarily loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity. As the perfection of God’s understanding includes all intellectual virtues, so the perfection of his will all moral virtues. There can be no virtuous act of the will, either in men or angels, that doth not agree to God in a far more excellent manner and measure; and therefore if there be such a quality as justice and righteousness in angels and men, if holy angels and just men made perfect, certainly there is a just God. This rectitude in men and angels is accidental, and separable from their being. Angels may be angels, yet not just, as appears in the devils; but in God it is essential; as his essence is necessarily, so his integrity must needs be so. In short, God must be just and holy, because he necessarily loves himself, and hates every thing that is contrary to himself: Ps. xi. 7, ‘The righteous God loveth righteousness, and his countenance beholdeth the upright.’ If they be just, he loves their justice, because he loves himself; if unjust, he hates their injustice, because they are contrary to himself.

2. He could not else govern the world, or judge men according to their offences. Next his nature, God’s office shows him just, that infers his justice as he is governor and judge of the world; so we shall see, Gen. xviii. 15, ‘The judge of all the earth, shall not he do right?’ It must needs be so that the judge of the earth will do right: Rom. v. 6, ‘Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world?’ It is impossible to imagine that he can be the supreme judge who is not just. Among men appeals are allowed, because men are fallible, and apt to pervert equity and judgment; and this is their relief that they can appeal higher. But now, Eccles. v. 8, ‘If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice, marvel not at the matter; for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they.’ God is the great arbiter of all affairs in the world, where all appeals rest, can go no higher than the will of God; therefore he must needs be just.

3. This was God's great end in giving Jesus Christ, that he might be known to be a just God; therefore he stood so punctually upon satisfaction, that the sinner must die or the surety. No surety so fit to keep up the honour of his law and honour of his justice in the consciences of men as the Son of God, Rom. iii. 24-26. God had a mind to be gracious to the creature, but without any disparagement to his justice. Now how should this be? All the wise men in the world that had any sense of the nature and being of God busied themselves in this inquiry, How God could be merciful to the creature, and yet just; but all their devices were vain and frivolous, until God himself found out a ransom and remedy for us, as it is in Job xxxiii. 24. Here was the difficulty; God would preserve the notions which the creature had of his being and justice inviolable; he would be known as one that would stand to his law which he had made for the government of the world. Now, there was no way to keep up the credit of it but these two—strict execution or sufficient satisfaction. The execution would have destroyed all the inferior world, the reasonable creatures at least; and the love and wisdom and mercy of God would not permit that the world should be destroyed so soon as it was made, and man left remediless in everlasting misery. Well, then, strict execution would not do it; therefore satisfaction must be the remedy; and such satisfaction as might be sufficient to procure the ends of the law, to keep up the honour of God's justice in the consciences of men. Now this was done by Jesus Christ, whom God had set forth to declare his righteousness, that he might exercise his mercy without prejudice to his justice. If this ransom had not been found, we should either have slighted God, and not stood in awe of him, or else we had been for ever left under the curse, and under doubtfulness and scruple, wherewith we should have appeased him; but the Lord found out such a means to our hands, that he might declare he was a righteous God.

443

4. I prove it from the divine nature infused into us. As many as are made partakers of God's grace are more just than others, they hate sin and sinners; so we read, Eph. iv. 24, 'That the new man was created after God in righteousness and true holiness.' After God, that is, after the image and pattern of God. Now, if the new creature be made after such a pattern, then certainly God was righteous. We find by experience, the more god-like and virtuous any are the more just they are, more apt to give every one his due, to live without wrong to any, and the more their hearts' are set against that which is base and unworthy. Therefore certainly God is righteous, for he hath put such a quality as the copy of his nature into the hearts of men.

Object. If God be so just, why then does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those that desire to be faithful with God so afflicted and calamitous? This is a wind that hath shaken the tallest cedars in Lebanon. The choicest saints of God have been exceedingly hurried and tossed to and fro in their thoughts by this objection against the righteousness of God: Jer. xii. 1, 'Righteous art thou, O Lord; yet let me plead with thee.' He holds fast this principle, but yet, Lord, saith he, I am not satisfied; 'Let me talk to thee of thy judgments,' that I may be better informed; 'why doth the way of the wicked prosper?' So David: Ps. lxxiii. 1, 'Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart;' but yet the wicked thrive and prosper, and there is no bands in their death. So Hab.

i. 13, ‘Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil,’ &c. Lord, saith he, I know thou art a holy God; but why can thy providence then look upon them in the world that deal treacherously and perversely? The clearest-sighted saints may be so bemisted many times that they are not able to reconcile God’s dispensations with his nature and attributes, and so quarrel with and reproach and impeach his providence. Yea, the heathens, that knew little of sin and righteousness, were troubled at the afflictions of the good and the flourishing of the wicked, and questioned the being of a God upon this account; and therefore there are two heathens which have written two worthy treatises to vindicate the providence of God. Seneca hath written one treatise, *Cur male bonis, et bene malis*, to show why the good may be afflicted, though there be a God; and Plutarch hath written another treatise, *De sera numinis vindicta*, why the wicked may be spared, and suffered to flourish in the world, though there be a God to take notice of human affairs. These heathens had a sense of this difficulty, for it is an obvious objection.

I answer—In general God’s dispensations are just, though we see not the reason of them. The saints hold their principle: Lord, I confess thou art righteous, Jer. xii. 1; Hab. i. 13. The justice of God must be acknowledged in all his dealings with us and others, though it appear not to our reason, which indeed cannot discern well; and therefore is unmeet to judge of such high matters as these are: Ps. xxxvi. 6, ‘Thy righteousness is like the great mountains, thy judgments are a great deep.’ The judgments of God are such a deep as we cannot easily fathom the bottom of; and therefore, though we do not see the justice of it, we must believe it, and prefer faith above sense. The Lord may deal otherwise in many things with us than we can express, and see the reason of his doing; and yet he is always just and holy in his proceedings, and it is the duty of his people to believe it: Ps. xcvii. 2, ‘Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.’ Augustine’s words are a good comment upon that passage. The judgments of God, saith he, are sometimes secret, but always just, *saepe occulta, nunquam injusta*. We know not what to make of it; clouds and darkness are round about it. Ay! but though they are unsearchable and secret, they are managed with great judgment and rectitude.

But more particularly to come to speak to the things mentioned in the objection. As to the flourishing of the wicked, four things to that:—

1. God’s word doth sufficiently declare his displeasure against them, though his providence doth not. There is *sententia lata, sed dilata*: Eccles. viii. 11, ‘Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.’ Mark, there is a sentence pronounced against evil men, but the Lord doth not put the sentence in execution. The sentence is, passed against them, both *sententia legis*, the sentence of the law; and so it is said he is condemned already, John iii. 18. Nay, there is *sententia judicis*, the sentence which the judge passeth upon a sinner; for he ratifieth the sentence of the law; what is bound upon earth is bound in heaven. Well, the warrant for execution is signed, yet the execution is suspended for just and

wise reasons. Sin is not less odious to God because wicked men do not presently feel the punishment of it. There are many righteous ends why execution should be delayed, partly with respect to the Mediator, into whose hands the government of the world is put: Exod. xxxiii. 2, 3, ‘I will send an angel before thee; I will not go up with thee, lest I consume thee by the way,’ compared with Exod. xxiii. 20-23, ‘Behold I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared: beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him. But if indeed thou obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and an adversary to thy adversaries; for my angel shall go before thee;’ that was Christ, whom they tempted in the wilderness: 1 Cor. x. 9, ‘Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted him, and were destroyed of serpents.’ Partly that the elect might not be cut off in their unregenerate condition, that the wheat may not be plucked up with the tares, which they might be; if sentence should be speedily executed against every evil-doer, there would be no room left for conversion. Therefore God is not slack, as men count slackness; but only waits, that all those that belong to the purpose of his grace might come to repentance, 2 Peter iii. 9. He is long suffering to us-ward, to those that were such as the apostle was, that belonged to the purposes of God’s grace. And it is delayed too, that his wrath may be glorified in the confusion of the reprobate: Rom. ix. 22, ‘He endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction;’ that he may show the glory of his power against them, they are hardened and strengthened in their wickedness by their prosperity. When all the favours of God have been abused, and the riches of his goodness set at naught, they have nothing to say for themselves. And sentence is delayed, that the little good they do in the world may not be hindered. God knows how to use all his creatures; even the wicked have a ministry and service under his providence. The Lord would not destroy their enemies all at once, lest the beasts of the field should increase upon them, Deut. vii. 22. They serve as a hedge of thorns to a garden of roses for his people. A dead rotten post may support a living tree. It may be God will bring some that belong to his grace out of their loins. Hierome saith, Many times an evil shrub may bear sweet fruit. And God hath righteous ends too, that his people may be humbled, and that their perverse humours may be broken; for so saith the Lord: Isa. x. 12, ‘When the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria.’ When he hath sufficiently humbled and purged his people, then he will do it. And whenever this temptation comes, when you see sentence delayed, go to the sanctuary, as David did: Ps. lxxiii. 17, ‘Then you will understand their end.’ There you will see sentence is not speedily executed, but it is surely executed. As a chimney long foul will be fired at length: Ps. lv. 19, ‘Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God,’ when they are high and prosperous: ‘but God will hear and afflict them, even he that abideth of old;’ he whose essence and providence hath been always the same, he will in due time execute his righteous judgment; and the longer he stays, the more heavy; the longer he is about drawing of his bow, the deeper will his arrows pierce; they are but ‘treasuring up wrath to themselves against the day of wrath,’ Rom. ii. 5. As in Jehoiadah’s chest, the longer it

was ere it was opened, the more treasure there was in the chest; so they are treasuring up wrath, &c. The fire that hath been long kindling burns the more grievous at last.

2. There are other punishments besides outward afflictions. In visible judgments are most fearful, blindness of mind, hardness of heart, terrors of conscience. *Tertullian ad Marg.—Cogitemus ipsum magis mundum carcerem esse, exisse eos de carcere, quam in carcerem introisse intelligemus. Majores tenebras habet mundus, quae hominum corda excaecant: graviores catenas induit mundus, quae animas hominum obstringunt*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. *Nihil infelicius felicitate peccantium.* No such misery as to be condemned to this kind of happiness, no blindness like a blind understanding, no chains like an obstinate will, no torments like terrors of conscience, under which a man lives for his further punishment, that he may be his own tormentor. Cain had rather die a thousand deaths than be let loose as a vagabond here upon earth, and be delivered over to the hell of his own conscience. Those that are under torments of conscience will call upon the mountains and rocks to cover them.

3. The third consideration is this, providence must not be viewed by halves, but in its whole frame and connection. Do but wait a little, and you shall see God will show himself a righteous God. When we view the dealings of God by pieces, we are apt to break out into those complaints: Ps. lxxiii. 11, 12, 'Doth the Lord see? how doth God know? is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world, they increase in riches,' &c. Ay t but stay a while, and you will see, 'There is a God that judgeth in the earth,' Ps. lviii. 11. I remember the poet Claudian, who had a little tincture of Christianity, though a heathen, as appears by his words, when he saw drones and unworthy men greater than the worthy, and vex the pious, *laetos diu florere nocentes vexarique pios*, doubted *num inesset rector*, &c., whether there were any governor of the world, any judge that took notice of things here below, *et incerto florent mortalia casu*, and thought all things were delivered over to blind chance; but, saith he at length, *abstulit hunc tandem Ruffini poena—absolvit Deos, tolluntur in altum, ut lapsu graviore ruant.* The gods were absolved, for they are lifted up on high, that their fall may be the greater. Men give another judgment of the work of God when it is brought to perfection than what they do when they see the beginning of it. Alas! at first, when we see the beginnings of God, we are apt to say, There is no profit to serve the Lord. Ay! but at length, Verily there is a reward for the righteous. And therefore let us not be rash and hasty, until God hath put his last hand to his work. They are impatient spectators that will not tarry till the last scene of the tragedy, till the Lord brings forth his last work. Our hastiness and impatience will betray us into many foul thoughts of God and his providence.

4. That the solemn triumph of God's justice will be at the last day. If God should punish no sin here, no man would believe a God; if he should punish all here, no man would be afraid of a future judgment. Now is the day of his patience, and all taste the effects of his common goodness: Acts xvii. 31, 'He hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world;' that is the great day of assizes for all the world, when the great judge shall appear in his royalty. Now God only keeps a petty

sessions; now and then he seizeth upon the hairy scalp of a sinner; but the general assizes is then. In the day of trial it is not fit we should live by sense, but by faith; but hereafter in the day of recompenses all shall be open and clear: Rom. ii. 5, 'Thou treasurest up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of Christ.' There is a day that will reveal the justice and righteousness of God, a black day to the wicked it will be, and to God's people a day of redemption. Now his justice is manifested on a few here, then on all. Now God's children have their sentence of absolution from sin in private, *in foro conscientiae*, their justification and assurance of eternal life; and wicked men have their woful doom in the stings and horrors of their own conscience, they are self-condemned, Titus iii. 11; but then sentence will pass publicly. The equity of God's dealings is not now so fully seen, but then the causes will be opened; when the secrets of all hearts shall be manifested, then we shall see how justly God accepted one to salvation, and rejected another to damnation. God's justice is seen by the present government of the world, but not so clearly. Here justice is mixed with mercy to the godly in their afflictions, and mercy is mixed with justice to the wicked in their temporal blessings; but when the Lord shall stir up all his wrath, then we shall see clearly God is a just God, and will keep punctually to the law he hath made for the government of the world.

SERMON CLIV.

Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments.—VER. 137.

FOR the other part of the objection, that those which desire to be most faithful with God are calamitous and afflicted, as Lazarus lay in poverty and rags while the rich man surfeited in all manner of luxury, I answer—

1. God having an absolute right and dominion over us and our comforts, may give and take them away according to his own plea sure: Job i. 21, 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken;' *abstulit, sed et dedit*; they are his own he gave at first. If he hath lent us anything for his service and our comfort, he may command it again when he pleaseth, and none can commence a suit against his providence. Whatever straits and poverty we are reduced to, we were poorer than ever we can be made by providence. We came into the world naked. If God should strip us of many comforts, we are not so poor as when we were born.

2. God having intended to bestow eternal blessings upon us, will take a liberty in disposing of outward things. Jesus Christ, when he purchased comforts for us, did not purchase only or chiefly earthly comforts and blessings: Eph. i. 3, 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.' He did not purchase worldly blessings as our chief happiness. The world is a common inn for sons and bastards, where God will show his bounty to

448

all, his creatures; our inheritance is elsewhere, in heavenly places; for though all things come alike to all, we cannot murmur and say, God is unjust; nay, though a child of God should be in a worse condition than the wicked are. A child during his nonage is kept under more severe discipline than a slave, which doth more live at large. We distinguish between the care of a father and the indulgence of a mother. The father loves his child; ay! but he breeds him up in a strict way. But mothers are fondly indulgent, and would have them pampered and cockered; so evil habits increase upon them. We, that so quarrel for worldly things, would have God show the fondness and indulgence of a mother, and not the wisdom and care of a father.

3. It is fit, before we go to heaven, that we should be tried; therefore God will so manifest his love to us that there may be room to exercise faith and patience, Heb. vi. 12. Never any came to reap the comfort of God's promises but there was a time to exercise their faith with difficulties, and their patience with delays; and therefore God will try our sincerity when we have no visible encouragements. God would have us live by faith, and not by sense or present appearance only, 2 Cor. v. 8, to see if we can look above the clouds and mists of the lower world, and encourage ourselves, and grow bold upon the hopes and concernments of the world to come. Nature is purblind, but it is the property of faith to see afar off, 2 Peter i. 9. There is the excellency of faith, if we have but an eagle's eye to see afar off. If we had the fruition of the whole blessing, alas! there were no room for faith. And then for patience, we are not only to be conformed to God, but to Christ; not only to God in purity and holiness, but to Christ in patience and submission and self-denial. There are some of our duties which imply perfection, as justice, holiness, purity, and mercy; of these we have a pattern in God: and some of our duties imply subjection and obedience, and of these we have a pattern in Christ. Now all the heirs of promise God hath conformed to the image of his Son, Rom. viii. 29. If we must have all graces, then we must have those graces that are conversant about misery. We should be ignorant of one part of human affairs were it not for these suffering graces; therefore it is agreeable to God's justice that these suffering graces should have their exercise sometimes. Then the Lord will try our sincerity, whether we follow Christ for the loaves, John vi. 26, out of external encouragements, or out of affection for internal reasons, upon pure obedience. God's holiness consists in loving himself, but man's holiness consists in loving God; therefore his holiness need to be tried whether it be a sincere love to God: Ps. xliv. 17, 'All this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.' There is a trial of love! A man of strength seeks a fit adversary to deal withal. It is no trial to a man of strength and courage that he can bear down a child. If we would try our strength, fortitude, sincerity, and courage, we had need be exposed to difficulty sometimes; as the skill of a pilot is seen in a storm and tempest, and a valiant soldier's in a battle. *Verberat nos? lacerat nos Jehovah? patimur; non est saevitia, certamen est.*—Sen. Doth the Lord scourge us? doth he break us, and tear us in all our concernments in pieces? Bear it; it is not cruelty, it is a trial. Religion must cost us something, else it is worth nothing. It will give you no comfort till it be tried, and therefore there is a necessity that we should be tried.

4. Afflictions have their profit and use, and conduce to our good, Heb. xii. 11. It yields grace and comfort to us; it is the fruit of righteousness, and the peaceable fruit of righteousness; that is, that righteousness which brings peace. Outward troubles occasion an increase of inward blessings. Outward things are but shadows of better. If God deny the shadow and give us the substance, have we cause to murmur? If God do deny the picture, but give the thing itself, hath that man cause to complain? If we have not abundance, yet if we grow rich in faith, rich in grace, James ii. 5, we have no cause to repine against God. Though we flow not in ease and plenty, yet if we have a full tide of spiritual consolation; if we have no respect in the world, yet if we have the favour of God, we have no reason to complain. Levi had no portion among his brethren, but God was his portion. So it is here; good men have comfort and support, at least in all their troubles; they may be accounted miserable, but they are not so; especially if we consider that a great part of their goodness lies in their mortification and contempt of the world. So that to a man that is as God would have him to be, that which is a misery to others is none to him, for his affections are weaned. Therefore, if we have an increase of grace and spiritual comfort, we have no reason to quarrel against God's providence.

5. Good men are but in part good, and it is fit their carnal part should be chastised, that while there are remainders of sin there should be some trouble, that God should burn and cut here that he might spare hereafter, that we should be judged of God, and not condemned with the world, 1 Cor. xi. 32. It is better that we should have our troubles than all our consolations here, and nothing but hell and misery in the world to come.

Use 1. Information. If God be righteous, then all that comes from him is righteous. His word and his works. *Modus operandi sequitur modum essendi.* 'Righteous art thou, Lord;' and then, 'Upright are thy judgments.' God acts according to his being. It is true a man may be just, and yet all that proceeds from him may not always be just. Why? He is not essentially just; but God being essentially just, all that he does or says is just also. A man's actions are one thing, and his rule another. A carpenter that hath a line without him, may sometimes chop beside his line; but a man whose hand is his own line can never chop amiss. So a man's rule is without him; his righteousness is one thing, his nature another; he may swerve, and be just.[19] But God's act is his rule, his righteousness is himself; therefore whatever he does is just and righteous. Men may be deceived, but God deceiveth none, and is deceived by none.

1. His word, and every part of his word, is just; it is in all things right, commanding those things which natural justice exacteth, and forbidding those things which have a natural sinfulness and

19 Qu. 'unjust'?—ED.

turpitude in them. God is just, and all his judgments are just. The way he hath set down for the justifying of sinners and receiving them are just and righteous, Rom. iii. 26; and the way he hath set down for the sanctifying of men, to guide men in holiness, it is a just law: Rom. vii. 12, 'The commandment is holy, just, and good,' becoming such a pure nature to give, and having nothing of exorbitancy or irregularity.

2. The way God hath prescribed for saving such as follow this way of sanctification is just. The righteous judge will give a crown of righteousness in that day, 2 Tim. iv. 8. And the way for punishing, such eternally as 'do despise eternal mercies is just: they have. received a just recompense of reward, especially those that neglect so great salvation, Heb. ii. 3. God's law flows from his righteous nature, and it is a copy of his righteousness; therefore it becometh those that confess God to be righteous to acknowledge his laws such, and to live according to them.

3. His works. God hath his judgments for those that do not accept the way of righteousness prescribed by him: Ps. cxlv. 17, 'The Lord is just in all his ways, and holy in all his works.' We are too busy in interpreting wrongs to others, but when it lights upon us we do not acknowledge it: Neh. ix. 33, 'Thou art just in all that is brought upon us,' &c. Nay, if thy hand be never so smart upon us, Lord, thou art righteous in all. The only way to suppress murmuring and silence disputes, and rebuke the waves and winds of discontent that toss the soul to and fro, is to remember all God's ways are just and true. God taketh it ill when we question any of his works: 'Are not my ways equal? saith the Lord,' Ezek. xviii. 25. When we thus acknowledge the dispensations of God to ourselves, we may with profit observe them to others, that we may applaud his proceedings: Rev. xv. 3, 'Great and marvellous are thy works, just and true are thy ways, O king of saints.' So Rev. xix. 2, 'For true and righteous are his judgments, for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornications.' There is no hurt done, but they are confirmed in his promises, and the rule set down in the scripture, not afflicted but on just ground. It is good to observe this in all his dispensations.

Use 2. If God be a righteous God, and all his judgments right, this is terror to wicked men, that securely wallow in the pleasures of sin, without remorse and trouble. Go on in the way of your own hearts, give satisfaction to your senses, please your eye, withhold not your heart from any comfort you delight in; but remember, for all these things God will bring thee to judgment. As cold water stays the working of the boiling pot, so these sober thoughts of God's justice and judgment may abate the fervours of youthful lusts. When you are pampering the flesh, letting loose the reins to all wanton desires, Go on in them; there is a righteous God. Men harden themselves by two things—by God's patience for the present, and thoughts of his mercy for the future.

1. By God's patience for the present. When God doth not strike, but withholds his hand: Ps. l. 21, 22, 'These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; but I will reprove thee, and set them in

451

order be fore thine eyes.' Christians, patience and forbearance is not absolute remission and forgiveness. God may give you a long day, and yet reckon with you at last: Rom. ix. 22, 'He endureth with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.' Mark, there is suffering, long-suffering, and much long-suffering; and yet vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. God suffered Cain to live as a man reprieved; so you may be reprieved. He deals with ungodly men, as David with Joab and Shimei; he would not acquit them, yet forbare them, and gave order to Solomon to put them to death; your doom may yet be dreadful. Christians, bethink yourselves; there is a sentence in force, and there is but a slender thread of a frail life between you and execution, but a step between you and death; and will you add sin to sin; and heap up more wrath and condemnation to yourselves? Alas! you are but in the state of condemned male factors, and will you roar and revel as some desperate wretches in the gaol between condemnation and execution? There is but cold comfort in this, to be rescued and to be afterwards executed; and therefore remember God may forbear those whom he will not pardon. Ay! and his anger is most sharp after patience is abused, and most speedy when you begin to reckon the worst is over: Luke xii. 20, 'Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.'

2. Men please themselves that they shall do well enough because God is merciful; and so they fancy a God all of honey and sweetness. God is just as well as merciful. Ay! but his justice may be a friend. Can you claim that justice? 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' When we with remorse and humble penitence go and confess them before the Lord, then justice is our friend. It is not your friend until you be in Christ: Rom. viii. 1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' Why, but am not I in Christ? am not I baptized in his name? Then I say again, there are none in Christ but those that come in in the new covenant way, for him hath God set forth through faith in his blood, Rom. iii. 2, 3. If we hope we believe in Christ; if we do, then let me say one thing more: There are none come in the new covenant way that do allow themselves in any known sin; and therefore the justice of God still remains upon you. I prove this latter thus: He that transgresses in one point is guilty of all; therefore so speak and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty, James ii. 10-12. There are some that have judgment without mercy, and others that shall be judged by the law of liberty. He that allows himself to break with God in any one thing, shall not be judged by the law of liberty, but shall have judgment without mercy. Therefore take heed; you will have double condemnation if you love darkness rather than light; that is, if you allow yourselves in sinful courses, and turn your back upon the grace and mercy God offers in Christ.

3. Here is for the comfort of the godly; God is just; but to you also he will be merciful; all his dispensations to you are justice and mercy mingled: Ps. cxvi. 5, 'Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.' Not all mercy and no justice, nor all justice and no mercy; but so just that we may not offend, so merciful that we may yet hope in him: Ps. xxv. 8, 'Good and upright is

the Lord; therefore will he teach sinners in the way.' He is good, therefore will he direct you; he is righteous, therefore we must take his direction. Nay, justice and mercy are both for you. You must not apprehend as if mercy were for you and justice against you. No, no; the justice of God is made your friend; that attribute which is most terrible in God is the pawn and pledge of thy salvation.

The grand inquiry of all the great rabbis and sophists of all the world was this, How justice should be made a friend? It cannot be put out of our mind but that God is just and an avenger of the sinner; but he is faithful and just, 1 John i. 9; just in justifying those that believe in Christ. You have a double claim and holdfast on God; you may come to either court, before the throne of his grace and tribunal of his justice; for there Christ interposed, and satisfied the justice of God. Here the great scruple of nature is solved; that is, how the justice of God should be made our friend. Nay, when you are fainting and discouraged with the scorns and neglect of the world, Heb. vi. 10, the just God will reward 'your work and labour of love which ye have showed toward his name.' It may be vain in the world, but not vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 59. Therefore be cheerful in your service. Men are not paymasters, but God. It is a noble spirit to look for it hereafter, a base spirit to look after it here: 'They have their reward,' saith Christ.

And then against wrongs and injuries we meet with here, the just God, who, as he will do us no wrong himself, so he will not suffer others to do us wrong without punishing of them: Ps. ciii. 6. 'The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.' He pities the afflictions of them that suffer unjustly, and will execute judgment for them. Mark, first from his pity, then from his justice. From his pity: Judges x. 16, 'His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel;' and 2 Kings xiv. 26, 'And the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter, and he saved them.' But how much more will he pity those that are unjustly oppressed by men's hands! Acts vii. 33, 34, 'I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people, and I have heard their groaning;' and Isa. lxiii. 9, 'In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and pity he redeemed them.' Therefore, if we look upon the compassions and pities of God, this may comfort us in all wrongs and injuries. Then out of hatred to oppression: Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright.' So again, Ps. xciv. 15, 'Judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it.' Some times they are asunder. Earthly judges may refuse the justice of righteousness, a judge may suspend the act of his own judgment; but they shall not long be severed; God will bring forth his righteous judgment: Zech. viii. 17, f These things I hate, saith the Lord.' And then in regard of his providence, God will not be unmindful of his promise: Ps. ix. 7-9, 'He hath prepared his throne for judgment, and he shall judge the world in righteousness; he shall minister judgment to his people in uprightness.' Courts of justice among men are not always open, they have term-time; but God is always ready to hear plaintiffs. They make complaints amongst men, and they are delayed so much

and so long that they are discouraged. But we have a friend that is always ready to hear: Ps. xlviii. 10, ‘Thy right hand is full of righteousness;’ for defending his people and punishing his enemies.

453

Use 3. To press us to acknowledge this justice of God, that he governeth all things righteously, especially when you are under his mighty hand. The Lord takes it ill when you question any of his providences: Ezek. xviii. 25, ‘Are not my ways equal?’ He will be clear when he judgeth, Ps. li. 4. God will be justified in all that he hath done or shall do for the punishment of sin; and therefore, when the hand of God is upon you, take heed you do not reproach God. When his hand is smart and heavy upon you, remember affliction opens the eyes of the worst men. Nebuchadnezzar, that knew no God but himself, no happiness but in pleasing his own humour, yet when he was whipped and scourged, hear him speak: Dan. iv. 37, ‘Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the king of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.’ Pharaoh: Exod ii. 27, ‘The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.’ These acknowledgments and confessions come from wicked men, as water out of a still, forced by the fire. But if affliction opens the eyes of wicked men, surely when we are under God’s afflicting hand we should give him the glory of his justice, and acknowledge that he is clear in all that he brings upon us. He takes it ill when we murmur and tax his judgment: Micah vii. 9, ‘I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me;’ and Lam. i. 18, ‘The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against his commandment.’ And when we submissively stoop and accept of the punishment of our sin after he hath been provoked, then God will plead for us, Lev. xxvi. 41. When we stoop humbly under God’s correcting hand, and bear it patiently, and say, God is just in all this, then it will succeed well. Observe the justice of God, especially his remarkable judgments upon others. The church is brought in acknowledging of it, Rev. xv. 3, ‘Just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints;’ and Rev. xix. 3, ‘True and righteous are his judgments.’ Not that we should sit crowners upon other men’s souls, and judge their spiritual condition, and misinterpret providence: I look upon it as a great sin of a faction, and perverse humours. But clearly when men’s sins are so great that the judgments of God have overtaken them, we ought to say, ‘Just and true art thou, O Lord, and just in all thy judgments.’

I might show here is much to keep the children of God in awe; the Lord is a righteous God; though they have found mercy and taken sanctuary at his grace, the Lord is impartial in his justice. God, that did not spare the angels when they sinned, nor his Son when he was a sinner by imputation, will not spare you, though you are the dearly beloved of his soul, Prov. xi. 31. The sinful courses of God’s children occasion bitterness enough; they never venture upon sin but with great loss. If Paul give way to a little pride, God will humble him. If any give way to sin, their pilgrimage will be made uncomfortable: God’s hand may be smart and dismal. Eli for negligence and indulgence,

there is the ark of God taken, his two sons slain in battle, his daughter-in-law dies, he himself breaks his neck. Oh! the wonderful tragedies that sin works in the houses of the children of God. And David, when he intermeddled with forbidden fruit, was driven from his palace, his concubines defiled, his own son slain, a great many calamities did light upon him. Therefore the children of God have cause to fear, for the Lord is a just God, and they will find it so; here upon earth he hath reserved liberty to visit their iniquity with rods, and their transgression with scourges. I might press you to imitate God's righteousness: 1 John ii. 29, 'If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of God.' You have a righteous God, and here is the thing you should copy out.

SERMON CLV.

Thy testimonies, which thou hast commanded, are righteous and very faithful.—VER. 138.

IN the former verse the prophet had spoken of the righteousness of God; now God is essentially righteous, and therefore all that proceedeth from him is righteous. A carpenter, that hath a rule without him, and a line to measure his work by, may sometimes hit and sometimes miss; but if you could suppose a carpenter, the motion of whose hand were his rule, he could never chop amiss. So must we conceive of God; his act is his rule, holiness is his essence, not a superadded quality, his righteousness is himself; therefore from this righteous God there proceedeth nothing but righteousness, and from this faithful God nothing but faith. He discovereth his nature both in the acts of his providence and the institutions of his word. We cannot reason so concerning men, that because they are righteous nothing cometh from them but what is righteous; because righteousness is not their nature, but an adventitious quality: therefore good men may make ill laws, for though they be meant for good, they may be deceived; and sometimes wicked men may make good laws, to ingratiate themselves, and for the interest of their affairs; but God being essentially, necessarily good, holy, and righteous, his laws are also good, holy, and true: 'Thy testimonies, which thou hast commanded, are righteous and very faithful.'

In the words observe—

1. That there is a revelation of God's will in his word: *Thy testimonies*.

2. The authority wherewith his revelation is backed: *Which thou hast commanded*.

3. The intrinsic worth and excellency of these testimonies; it is double—they are (1.) *Righteous*; (2.) *Very faithful*.

In the Hebrew, righteousness and faithfulness; that is, very right, and very faithful; the one word is referred to the agenda in religion, the other to the credenda; they are worthy to be obeyed, worthy to be believed. The sum is, God hath his testimonies extant, their authority is inviolable, and their justice and truth immutable.

Some read, *praecepisti justitiam testimoniorum tuorum et fidem valde*—thou hast highly charged and earnestly commanded the righteousness and faithfulness of thy testimonies, as referring to our duty. But most translations agree with ours. Our duty indeed may be inferred; but I shall not make it the formal interpretation of the place. In the texture of the words in the Hebrew these attributes are given to the word itself.

Doct. They that would profit by the word or rule of faith and manners which God hath commanded them to observe, should look upon it as righteous and very faithful.

So did David here and elsewhere: Ps. xix. 9, ‘The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.’ I shall make good the point by these considerations:—

Prop. 1. That our faith and obedience must be well grounded, or else they will have no firmness and stability. The want of a foundation is the cause of many a ruinous building. Men carry on a fair and lofty structure of profession, but when the winds of boisterous temptations are let loose upon them, all is blown down, because they build upon the sand, and not upon the rock. They take up this profession without sound evidence and conviction in their consciences; and so they are not ‘grounded or settled in the faith,’ Col. i. 23; ‘not rooted and grounded in love,’ Eph. iii. 7. They take up religion slightly, not looking into the reasons of it, upon tradition or vulgar esteem, they are not undoubtedly persuaded that it is the very truth of God. The good seed withered that fell upon the stony ground, because there was no depth of earth, Mat. xiii. 5, no considerable strength of soil to feed faith.

Prop. 2. Faith and obedience cannot be well grounded but on such a doctrine as is true and righteous; for who can depend on that which is not true, or who can obey that which is not righteous? Truth is the only sure foundation for faith to build upon, and righteousness for practice. Faith considereth truth: Eph. i. 13, ‘In whom ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.’ And that righteousness is that which bindeth to practice, we may gather from Ps. cxix. 128, ‘Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way.’ The word commandeth nothing but what is just and righteous.

Prop. 3. This true and righteous doctrine must be backed with a strong and powerful authority, not only recommended to us, but strictly and severely enjoined, for two reasons:—

1. Because otherwise it will not be observed and regarded, but be looked upon not as a binding law, but as an arbitrary direction. There is a difference between a law and a rule. A bare rule may only serve to inform our understandings, or to give direction; but a law is a binding rule, a rule with

a strong obligation. The word of God is not his counsel and advice to us only, but his law; that men may examine and regard it with more care and diligence. God hath interposed his authority: Ps. cxix. 4, 'Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently;' and in the text, 'Thy. testimonies, which thou hast commanded.' God hath commanded us to believe all truths revealed, to obey all duties required; and if God commandeth, there is good reason why he should be obeyed.

2. Divine authority is one means to evidence the righteousness and truth of what is to be believed and obeyed. The righteousness; for if God, who is my superior, and hath a full right to govern me according to his own pleasure, doth command me anything, it is best, that I should obey it without reply and contradiction; yea, though I see not the reason of it: Acts xvii. 28, 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being.' All creatures have their being not only from him, but in him; and therefore sometimes God giveth no other account of his law but this, 'I am the Lord:' Lev. xxii. 2, 3, 'Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they profane not my holy name in those things which they hallow unto me: I am the Lord. Say unto them, Whosoever he be of all your seed, among your generations, that goeth unto the holy things, which the children of Israel hallow unto the Lord, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from my presence: I am the Lord.' Therefore it gives rules of practice to be embraced with all the heart, as holy, just, and good. God's authority is founded upon the total dependence of all creatures upon him, and upon his infallible wisdom, truth, and goodness, by which he hath right to prescribe all points of faith to be believed and assented to. upon his own testimony, without contradiction: 1 John v. 9, 'If we receive the testimony of man, the testimony of God is greater.' A man that would not deceive us, we believe him upon his word, though he may be deceived himself; but God doth not deceive, nor can he be deceived: by the holy God nothing can be given but what is holy and good; and thereupon I am to receive it.

Prop. 4. This divine authority, truth, and righteousness, is only to be found in God's testimonies, which he hath commanded, or in God's word.

1. There is a godlike authority speaking there, and commanding that which it becometh none but God to command, who is the universal king and sovereign. For it speaketh to the whole world without respect of persons, to king and beggar, rich and poor, male and female, without reservation of honour or distinction of degrees. The word looketh on them as standing before God on the same level: Job xxxiv. 19, 'He accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regarded the rich more than the poor; for they all are the work of his hands.' And speaketh to them indifferently and equally: Exod. xx. 3, 'Thou shalt have no other gods but me.' Which is not the voice of any limited and bounded power, but of that which is supreme, transcendent, and absolute. And by these laws he bindeth the conscience and the immortal souls of men: Ps. xix. 7, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' Men may give laws to the words and actions, because they can take cognisance of them; but the word giveth laws to the thoughts: Isa. Iv. 7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;' Mat. v. 28, 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath

committed adultery with her already in his heart.' And the internal motions and affections of the heart, how we should love and fear, and joy and mourn: 1 Cor. vii. 30, 'They that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not.' Of these things God can only take notice; the power of man reacheth not to the mind and spirit; they would be ridiculous if they should take upon them to give laws to these. Philosophers might give directions about them, but potentates would not give laws, for it doth not beseem them to inter pose their authority in such cases, where it is impossible they shall know whether they are broke or kept. The scriptures upon their disobedience make men liable not only to temporal, but spiritual and eternal punishments; and accordingly are rewards proportioned in case of obedience. The magistrate's wrath lighteth on the body, but God's upon the soul. All that man can do concerns life, or limb, or liberty, or estate; the inward man is exempted from their power; but God threateneth hardness of heart: Exod. vii. 13, 'He hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them.' A reprobate sense: Rom. i. 28, 'And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient.' A trembling heart: Deut. xxviii. 65, 'The Lord shall give thee a trembling of heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.' On the contrary, obedience hath the promises of a soft heart, and peace that passeth all understanding: Phil. iv. 7, 'The peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus.' Of an increase of grace: Prov. iv. 18, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' God, that punisheth sin with sin, will reward grace with grace. So for eternal rewards, God threateneth, 'The worm that never dieth, and the fire that never shall be quenched,' Mark ix. 44. On the other side, he promiseth 'Rivers of pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore,' Ps. xvi. 11. He that will be believed and obeyed upon terms of salvation, is a God, one that hath power of the world to come. Thus hath God scattered the strictures of his majesty, and given real evidence of interposing hi& authority everywhere throughout the word. I shall only add, that the scriptures, as God's law, may be considered as the rule of man's duty, and God's judgment. In respect of the commands, they bind man to duty, and are the rule of it. In respect of the sanction, that is, promises and threatenings, they are the rule of God's judgment. In the one God showeth his righteousness, in the other, his truth; in the precepts, righteousness; in the promises and threatenings, truth.

2. All that God hath required of us is very righteous and just, becoming God to give, and man to receive. There is a condescency in these precepts both to God's nature and to ours. They are the copy of God's holiness, and so a fit means to bring us not only into a subjection to him, which is just, he being our creator, but into a conformity to him, which is our happiness. To prove the righteousness which is in God's laws, I shall produce several arguments.

[1.] Surely there is a distinction between good and evil, and all acts are not in their own nature indifferent; that was a monstrous conceit of Carpender and others, contrary to the common sense

of men. If this were true, the chasteness of Lucretia should not be more to be prized than the lightness of Lais, nor the virtue of Cato than the dissoluteness of Sardanapalus; and it would be as indifferent for a man to kill his father as his neighbour's dog, to rob in the woods as to hunt a deer or hare, to lie with his father's wife as to contract honest matrimony, to forswear and lie as to be sincere in all our words and proceedings. Now whose heart doth not rise within them at such an apprehension? If this be thought to be only custom and received opinion that begets this abhorrence, I would ask, Whence cometh it that we all desire to be, if not really, yet seemingly honest? The most wicked are offended when they are taken for such as they are; and endeavour, as much as they can, to clothe their actions with the appearance of probity and uprightness. If men were not sensible that vice were blameworthy and virtue commendable, why should such a desire so universally possess the heart of man, were there not a natural sense of good and evil, and an essential difference between the one and the other, which we are sensible of, nature itself valuing and esteeming the one, and blasting the other with severe marks of her improbation and hatred? And I do with the more confidence urge this argument, because there is difficulty in the exercise of virtue, because of the conflict of the sensual appetite; and on the other side, many delights and pleasures accompanying vice, by which it gets an easy entrance into our souls, and dominion over our desires. Why should a thing so much against the bent and hair be accounted worthy of praise, and the contrary, which hath such a compliance with our natural desires, be accounted worthy of blame? And were there only custom and tradition for it, would men so universally conspire to decree honours for that which is contrary to their corrupt nature, and to disapprove what is suitable to it? It cannot be. Would they desire the reputation of virtue, when their desires choose vice, and impel them to it, and hold them under it, if they were not sensible that the one hath a comeliness, and the other a turpitude in it? Thus hypocrites do clearly attest the excellency of uprightness and honesty. Well, then, the testimonies which God hath commanded are very righteous, for they forbid those things which have a natural turpitude and indispensable sinfulness in them; and command those things which are plainly and evidently lovely and praiseworthy: Phil. iv. 8, 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'

458

[2.] It is such a rule and direction as men would choose if they were at their own liberty, provided they were wise, and not brutified by their inordinate passions, evil customs, and discomposure of soul; for all such are incompetent judges. For there is nothing preserveth the rectitude of human nature, and maketh men to live as men, according to the dictates of reason, as the serious observance of this law. Break it a little, and so far a man turneth beast: so that it was well said of one, A saint or a brute. For the law is so written upon man's heart, and so connatural to his reason, that you must extinguish the nature of man before you can raze out all the sentiments of this law: Rom ii. 14, 15, 'For when the Gentiles, which have not the law 'do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written

459

in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another.' As long as we have these hearts that we have, we cannot wholly except against the justice and equity of these laws and rules of commerce between God and his creatures. It is true, all truths are not alike evident, but they that seriously mind the one will be led on to the other, at least will find none contrary to such conclusions, as may be drawn from principles naturally known, and will be encouraged to go on till God reveal more to them. This is so evident, that the wiser any among the heathen are, the nearer they come to this rule, and have framed some thing like it for the regulation of men, though with great mixtures of their own folly. The perfect discovery of man's duty God reserved to himself and his own writings, elsewhere there is but *ficta rectitudo* and *picta justitia,* poor counterfeits in the laws of civil nations and institutions of philosophy; *sapientia eorum abscondit vitia, non abscindit*; there was only a little hiding and disguising of sin that it might not appear too odious. In short, the less knowledge any nation or society of men have of this law, the more brutish and barbarous they have been, and so accounted to be by all that have known what civility and human converse mean; and on the contrary, the more polite and civil, the nearer they come to it. Whom would you judge to be more civil, the Romans or the Scythians? the wise and good man, or the sot and fool? Even among us, the more punctually any keepeth to this law, the more he differeth from others, as much as an angel from a man, or a man from a beast: 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' Prov. xii. 26. It is clear as the sun; whether men will or nill, they must acknowledge it, and do when they are serious; for they approve them while they hate them, wish their latter end like theirs, intrust them more than others, presume more from them than others. Out of all I conclude, that the very frame and constitution of the reasonable and immortal soul and body of man doth dictate the equity and justice of this law, and it doth result from the image of God, wherein man was created.

[3.] That law is just and righteous, the violation of which men judge to be justly punished. I use this argument because under punishment men are serious, for it rubbeth up and reviveth the sense of a divine power. Now, for the violation of this law God hath judged persons, families, nations, and kingdoms, and conscience is sensible of the justice of God's judgments exercised upon them. God is clear when he judgeth, Ps. li. 4; his eminent judgments carry light and conviction with them; and wherefore have his judgments been executed? Rom. i. 18, 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;' Heb. ii. 2, 'Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.' There is a fear after some notorious breach, even in those that are not acquainted with God, a shyness of his presence, ever since Adam run to the bushes; so it is. All which doth seal the righteousness and truth of this law, and how justly God may reckon with us about it.

460

[4.] There is an intrinsical righteousness in all the duties commanded in God's law. Besides the will of the lawgiver, *there is a justice in the things themselves. By what measure will we take justice? We usually understand it to be to give every one his due. So doth the law, it commandeth us to give God his due and man his due. Love is πλήρωμα νόμου, the fulfilling of the law. The law

i& comprised in one word, ‘love;’ to love God, himself, and his neighbour. Is there not justice in all this? The natural relation we have to God calleth for love to him; for he made us, and is the strength of our lives, and the length of our days: Deut. xxx. 20, ‘That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave to him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days.’ Self-love and self-preservation, if that be not a natural principle, nothing is. Our neighbours we are bound to love, because of consanguinity; they are our own flesh and blood, and God hath bidden us do to them as we would to ourselves: Mat. vii. 12, ‘Therefore all things, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.’ There is a universal consanguinity between all mankind, which hath its root in the communion of one and the same nature, and in the dependence and derivation from one common stock. The eminence of the divine nature is the foundation of the honour which we tender to it; and the equality of our nature is the foundation of the justice which we use to one another. So that here are natural, immutable obligations and grounds of right. Go to particulars: How equal is it that we should acknowledge but one God! They are drunk that see double, strangely depraved that see more. That we should not worship him before an idol, which is very apt to taint our minds with a gross opinion of God, as if he were some limited, finite being. It is a great lessening of reverence to see what we worship. Not to take God’s name in vain by a false oath, that breedeth atheism and contempt. That there should be a day to remember the creator of all things; everyday’s work is no day’s work; but there must be a limited time. For reverence to parents, all nations call for it. For murder, adultery, stealing, false accusations, man’s interest will teach him the necessity of those laws that forbid these things. Contentation is a guard to all the rest, it is fit the God of the spirits of all flesh should give a law to the spirit: ‘Thou shalt not covet.’ Yet this is the law of God, to which scripture is subservient; and all the admonition*, reproofs, exhortations, dehortations, examples, directions, histories of the obedience and virtue of some, with their rewards; of the disobedience, apostasy, rebellion of others, with their punishments; all is to enforce this law. The doctrine of Christ, and redemption and reconciliation by him, I bring not under this first head, because that is a favour and privilege; and the justice and equity of gospel precepts will soon appear, when once we have consented to the law that it is good. But of that in the next head.

3. For the truth and faithfulness of God’s testimonies. This may be considered either in revealing or performing, making or making good his promises.

461

[1.] For truth and faithfulness in making such offers and promises of pardon and eternal life in case of obedience, and threatening a curse and everlasting punishment in case of disobedience. Surely there is no doubt in all this, because they are revealed by ‘God, who is the supreme and original truth, and who neither is nor can be deceived; for God’s understanding is the rule and measure of all other truths: nothing is true but what is constant to his knowledge. And he cannot deceive us; that will not agree with the goodness of his nature and love to mankind; therefore he is called ‘God that cannot lie,’ Titus i. 2.

[2.] In making good. God hath given us the most solemn assurance: Heb. vi. 17, 18, ‘God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation.’ He hath demitted himself to the terms of a covenant, given us a seal: Rom. iv. 11, ‘And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith.’ Pledge: 2 Cor. i. 22, ‘Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of his Spirit in our hearts.’ He hath stood upon his truth above all things: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, ‘I will worship towards thy holy temple, and praise thy name, for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth; for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.’ One part of the word verifieth another; in one part you have the promise, in another the accomplishment, the great promise of sending Christ: Heb. x. 5-7, ‘Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt- offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.’ He would not go back, being willing to keep the promise afoot. It was on our part a handwriting against us, in testification of our guilt and need of expiation; but on God’s part an obligation of debt to pay our ransom. Still he accomplisheth promises in the return of prayers; and though the great payment be in the other world, yet here God remembereth us still, accomplishing the intervening promises, and giving proof of his truth. So that they that are acquainted with his name will never distrust him: Ps. ix. 10, ‘They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.’ They that have known his way, and the course of his dealings, will have a confidence in him.

Prop. 5. They that would receive the word as the word of God, must be soundly convinced of, and seriously consider, this righteousness and faithfulness in the testimonies, which he hath commanded; for till then the word worketh not on them: 1 Thes. ii. 13, ‘For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.’ And till then they are but customary Christians, and can never rightly believe nor obey: John iv. 42, ‘Now we believe: not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.’ First their faith depends on the common tradition, or the testimony of the church; afterwards on the sure ground of the word itself, in which they find such clearness and efficacy, that they cannot but yield to God. The authority of man is nothing to it, when our faith is bottomed on a surer ground, the authority of God speaking in his word.

462

1. There must be sound conviction, or belief of this. This is called, ‘The acknowledgment of the truth,’ Titus i. 1, ἐπίγνωσις τῆς ἀληθείας; and Col. ii. 2, ‘The riches of the assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.’ An assurance that God will keep touch with me, that he will not delude me in the terms propounded in the gospel. This full persuasion of the truth of God’s testimonies we must all aim at, and seek

after. The assurance of my interest and my salvation is another thing, and yet that I am not to neglect, but with this I am to begin.

2. There must be serious consideration; for that improveth all truths, and maketh them active and effectual. God's complaint of his people is that they will not consider: Isa. i. 3, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.' They do not lay truths in the view of conscience. Food without mastication and chewing nourisheth not. A thing not considered doth profit as little as if not believed, as a for getting God is a kind of denying of him. Seriously then debate it with yourselves. You must consider the authority of God. Authority is that right which a superior hath to prescribe to such as are under him. Doth God usurp upon you* when he giveth you a law? or hath he left you in the dark, that you do not know whether this be his law, yea or no? Are there no strictures of his majesty in the very economy and frame of it? Can any but a God speak at such a rate? And for his justice, hath he commanded anything to your hurt? No, it is all for thy good: Deut. vi. 24, 'And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always.' And for his truth, men may deceive and be deceived, and though they often speak truth, they do not always so; but God seeth by his own light, not by discourse, but vision. Truth is his nature, from which he can no more swerve than from himself; and what need he court a worm, and flatter us? Thus should we urge our hearts.

Use 1. Let us own and improve the word, as a righteous and faithful word, which God hath commanded for our good.

1. Own the authority of it. It is not an arbitrary thing; the truths revealed imply a command to believe them, the duties required imply a command to obey them: Mat. xvii. 5, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.' God hath commanded us to hear Christ, to believe in his name, to love one another: 1 John iii. 23, 'And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.' As we value his word, and would one day see his face with comfort, we should bind his precepts upon our hearts. Say to thy soul, As thou wilt answer it to God another day, take care of this.

2. Own and improve the righteousness of his testimonies. Man having a total and absolute dependence upon God, God might govern us in what manner it pleased him; for it is just 'that one may do with his own what he will,' Mat. xx. 15. But what hath the Lord required of thee, but to love him and serve him? Not to pluck the stars from the sky, or to guide the chariot of the sun, not such sublimity of knowledge and learning, nor such a quantity and proportion of alms, nor to lance thyself, or offer thy first-born, nor rivers of oil, nor thousands of rams, for a burnt-offering: Micah vi. 8, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' The Lord's commands are not rigid and severe and unreasonable, but sweet and desirable, that we should do wrong to none, do good to all, and maintain communion with him; and is this burthensome? Go try the drunkard's life and the adulterer's life; you will see the temperate, the chaste, have much the sweeter life of

it. Therefore let there not be one disallowing thought of what God hath required. Could we bring you to esteem the word, other things would come on more easily.

3. Own it and improve it as a faithful word, building upon the promises, fearing the threats thereof. The word will not deceive them that are ruled by it. Consider your condition, and what will be the event of things. There is a curiosity in men to know their own des tiny. We may easily know what shall become of us by the word of God; and if men were not more curious to know their end than careful to amend their lives, they need not seek any other oracle: Rom. viii. 13, 'For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' So for the end of any action; if the word of God say it will be bitter in the latter end, though it bring profit and pleasure for a while, believe it against all the wicked men in the world, and say, I do more believe this one text and place of scripture than all that men can do and say. Mind the great duties of the gospel, and venture your souls in Christ's hands upon these terms: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' I have nothing but God's word, yet I will venture my salvation, my all, upon it, upon his bare word. Comfort yourselves in the midst of difficulties with the truth of God's word, when all sense and outward seeming is contrary to the promise. Before a promise be accomplished there will be unlikelihoods. I will instance in Paul's prediction: Acts xxvii. 24-26, 'Lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island,' &c. Yet how many difficulties came to pass! First, no isle appeareth; they are tossed in the Adriatic sea for fourteen days together; they knew not where they were, nor whither they did go. Thus doth God delay the accomplishment of the promise; they know not how nor which way it shall be made good. Another difficulty was, that, meeting with some isle, it fell out in the night-time; they deemed they drew near to some country, but yet feared they should be split upon the rocks, ver. 30; the shipmeu were ready to flee out of the ship, leave Paul and his fellows in danger, upon pretence of casting out anchors out of the fore-stern, and so they were ready to miscarry in the haven. When this difficulty was over, and it was day, they were not able to row to land, because of their long fasting, having eaten little or nothing for fourteen days. Another difficulty was, when they would have thrust the ship ashore it was broken all in pieces, what with high banks and two seas meeting. Another difficulty was, when they were to swim to land, they think of killing the prisoners, and the captain, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and so they escaped all to land. Therefore do not distrust the word; but especially bear up with the hope of eternal life, though remote and in another world, which we never saw: Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them;' Rom. ii. 7, 'To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for life, and glory, and immortality, eternal life.' You will meet with bitter conflicts, heavy troubles, sad desertions; yet remember God's word is a faithful word, and let this cheer and revive you.

Use 2. Express these virtues of the word. We must be righteous and true if the word of God be so, for the impression must answer the seal and stamp: Rom. vi. 17, 'But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doc trine which was delivered you;' 2 Cor. iii. 3, 'Ye are declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart;' Phil. ii. 16, 'Holding fast the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I1 have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.' A Christian is the Bible exemplified; such a conformity there must be there to the law of God; the same light that shineth forth in scripture should shine forth in the lives of the godly; BO it was in Hezekiah: Isa. xxxviii. 3, 'Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.' And of David it is said, 1 Kings iii. 6, 'Thy servant David walked before thee in truth, and righteousness, and uprightness of heart'

1. For righteousness, A Christian's business is to give to every man his due, to do what he is bound to do to God and man; Mat. xxii. 21, to 'render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are Gods.' Whether by the law of nature: 1 Tim. v. 8, 'If any provide not for his own, and especially for them of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' Or by relation, as Boaz did the part of a kinsman to Ruth: Ruth iii. 13, 'Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth.' Or by place or station: Neh. vi. 11, 'And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.' Or by paction or agreement: Col. iv. 1, 'Masters, give to your servants that which is just and equal.' Or according to rules of prudence, equity, charity: Phil. iv. 5, 'Let your moderation,' τὸ ἐπιεικὲς, 'be known unto all men;' whether it be fear or honour that he due: Rom. xiii. 7, 'Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.' Or good-will: ver. 8, 'Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.'

435

2. For truth. You are to adhere to the truth, 'not to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but, speaking the truth in love, ye may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ,' Eph. iv. 14, 15. To speak nothing but truth in your ordinary communication: Eph. iv. 25, 'Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.' To perform what you promise, though to your loss: Ps. xv. 4, 'He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.' Thus should the whole course of our lives express the properties of the word.

Use 3. To show the reason why men are so backward in obedience, so prone to what is evil, so uncomfortable in trouble. We do not believe that the testimony of God is righteous and true, very true, every tittle of it; but we are slow of heart to believe; therefore is the faithfulness and truth of

the word inculcated. Christ saith, ‘Believest thou this?’ John xi. 25. Could we believe the word more, what advantage should we have in the spiritual life! what fear of God! what joy of faith! what readiness of obedience! But we cannot depend upon God’s word, and therefore are easily shaken in mind. Our hearts are like a sea, one wave riseth up after another. We must be fed with sense, and God must do all immediately, or else we are apt to sink under our discouragements.

SERMON CLVI.

My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.—VER. 139.

IN these words you may observe—(1.) Two different persons; (2.) A different carriage mentioned.

1. Two different persons are spoken of, David and his enemies. By enemies is not to be understood those only that were troublesome to himself, but those who were an opposite party to God, who opposed themselves against God and godliness; these without any breach of the law of love may be counted enemies: Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22, ‘Do not I hate them, O Lord,4hat hate thee? And am not I grieved with those that, rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies.’ It is a comfort and satisfaction to the godly to have no enemies to themselves but such as are enemies to God also, such as rise up against God.

There is a different carriage mentioned, and ascribed to these two parties; on the one side, oblivion and forgetfulness of God’s law; on the other side, zeal.

[1.] On the enemies’ part, oblivion and forgetfulness of God’s word. The word of God is not effectual usually, but where it is hid in recent memory. They ‘have forgotten thy word;’ a proper phrase to set forth them in the bosom of the visible church who do not wholly deny and reject the word and rule of scripture, but yet live as though they had forgotten it; they do not observe it, as if God had never spoken any such thing, or given them any such rule. They that reject and contemn such things as thy word enforceth, surely do not remember to do them.

[2.] On David’s part here is mentioned zeal, or a flagrant affection, which is set forth—(1.) By the vehemency of it; (2.) By the cause of it.

(1.) By the vehemency of it, ‘My zeal hath consumed me.’ It was no small zeal that David had, but a consuming zeal. Vehement affections exhaust and consume the vital spirits, and waste the body. The like expression is used, Ps. lxviii. 9, ‘The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.’ Strength of holy affection works many times upon the body as well as the soul, especially zeal, which is a high degree of love, and vents itself by a mixture of grief and anger. What a man loves, he would

have it respected, and is grieved when it is dishonoured and under disrepute. Both have an influence upon this consuming, this wasting of the spirits that is spoken of in the text, because they had lessened and obscured the glory of God, and violated his law; and there was in him a holy care, ardour, and earnest endeavour to rectify this abuse, and awaken them out of their security, and reduce them to their duty.

(2.) Here was the cause of it. Why was David so much wasted, pined, consumed, and troubled? Because they 'have forgotten thy word;' the contempt of God, and the offence of God sat nearest his heart; as if he had said, I should more patiently bear the injury done to myself, but I cannot be coldly affected where thy glory, O Lord, is concerned; since I have had a taste of thy grace, and felt the benefit of thy word, I cannot endure it should be contemned, and it much moves me to see creatures so mad upon their own destruction, and to make so light of thy salvation. Thus was David consumed, not at the sight of his own, but at other men's sins; and not at others in general, but them, his enemies, that they should make void the law of God. Such was his love to the word, that he could not endure the contempt and violation of it; and such was his compassion to the souls of men, that it grieved him exceedingly to see any of the workmanship of God to perish, to be captivated to the world, to be made factors for the devil, and fuel for hell-fire, and to be so violent for their own destruction.

Doct. That great and pure zeal becomes those that have any affection for the word and for the ways of God.

Here is a great zeal; for David saith, 'My zeal hath consumed me;' it preyed upon his spirit. And here is a pure zeal, for he mentions not personal injuries, but disrespect to God's word. When the same men are our enemies and God's enemies, we should be more zealous for God's cause than our own. Now both the greatness and purity of his zeal did arise from his love to the word, as appears from the precedent and subsequent verses. In the precedent verses he had told them, 'Just and upright are thy testimonies, and very faithful,' therefore 'my zeal hath consumed me,' because this word should be slighted and contemned. And it appears also from the following verse, 'Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.' He was troubled to see such a holy and pure word to be trampled under foot, and especially that those seem to disown it (he doth not say they deny it) who had generally professed to live under this rule; that they made light and disregarded the precepts, in which I found so much comfort and delight.

467

In the prosecution of this point I shall—

1. Show what is true zeal.

2. Why all that love the word should have this great and pure zeal. First, What is true zeal? There is a carnal zeal and there is a spiritual zeal.

1. The carnal zeal (to begin with that) is threefold:—

[1.] That which comes from an ill cause, and produceth ill effects. An ill cause, as hatred of men's persons, or envy at their gifts and excellences, or their success and happiness in the world: James iii. 14, 'If ye have bitter envying in your hearts.' It is πικρὸν ζῆλον, if you have bitter zeal in your hearts. There is a kind of bitter zeal, and malignity at their excellency, whether gifts, graces, rank, dignity in the world. And in ver. 16 he tells us this bitter zeal produceth confusion and every evil work. To be consumed and eaten out with envy is little commendable. This is not the zeal of the text. With this zeal were the chief priests filled when they saw that the gospel came into some reputation, and that the people, do what they could, did haunt and frequent it. We read, Acts v. 17, ἐπλήσθησαν ζήλου. We render it, They were filled with indignation; it is in the Greek and in the margin, They were filled with zeal; with this bitter zeal, malignity, envy, indignation, they would bestir themselves to suppress the growing gospel by all the means that possibly they could.

[2.] There is another sort of carnal zeal which hath an ill object, though it may be a good cause from whence it proceeds, such as an ignorant zeal, which proceeds from some love to that which men call religion, but falsely; and so the apostle saith, Rom. x. 2, 'I bear them witness that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge;' and such a zeal had Paul when he was a pharisee. He gives an account of it, Gal. i. 12-14, 'How that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.' Paul was a man that never acted against his conscience, no, not when he was a pharisee; he still acted according to his light; but when he was blinded by pharisaical prejudices, he wasted the church of God, and was exceedingly zealous for a false religion. Thus is such a zeal as possibly might have a tolerable cause, but it had a bad object, a zeal about the dictates of a deluded conscience, and this zeal, *perniciosior est, quo flagrantior*, is the more pernicious the more earnest it is. It hath often raised confusions in the church, when men are led with a blind zeal they think for God; if they be under, then they make divisions; if they get a-top, then they are persecuting and oppressing. This is the zeal of a deluded conscience. In short, zeal must have a right object, otherwise it may be great, but cannot be good, pure, and holy.

468

[3.] Another false zeal is when it hath no ill object, but it exceeds in the measure and degree, and is far beyond the weight of the thing that it is laid out upon. This is a superstitious, a trifling zeal, which runs out to externals, and is altogether employed about lesser things of religion, as the pharisees, Mat. xxiii. 23, that made a great business about a small matter, tithing mint, and anise, and cummin, but neglected weighty duties, faith, judgment, righteousness, and the great things of the kingdom of God. The apostle tells u?, Rom. xiv. 17, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink,' in being of this party and that; many all their care and strength of their souls runs out in matters of less importance, keeping up a party and faction in religion; we should first make conscience of principal matters. Superstitious scrupulosity is always damageful, like those that come into a shop to buy a pennyworth of a commodity, and steal a pound's worth. Oh! they have a great zeal for lesser things when it runs out mightily about outward things, either for that or against

that; and in the meantime they cherish the world, pride, envy, carnal evil affections, that are destructive to and the bane of godliness.

2. There is a spiritual holy zeal which we may describe—(1.) By its cause; (2.) by its object; (3.) by its effects; (4.) by its use as to public reformation; (5.) as to its use as to Christians' private exercises, to carry on the spiritual life with fervour, warmth, and vigour.

[1.] I am to speak of the cause of it. The true cause of holy zeal is love to God and what belongs to God. Zeal is *ferventis amoris gradus*, a higher degree of love; it is the fervour of divine charity. We should mark still what spirit inflames the zeal that we have. Every man is eaten up with one kind of zeal or another. The zeal of the world eats up many, Ps. cxxvii. 2. They bereave their souls of good, and all for a little pelf; they work in the fires, they load themselves with thick clay. The zeal of the flesh inflames many; they are mad upon carnal delights, can let go all considerations so as they may fulfil their lusts; they are consumed with these kind of zeals. Another spirit should be working in us, a zeal for God; and that comes from an entire love to God. When the soul doth heartily and earnestly love God above all, then there is a strong desire of promoting God's glory and interest; there should be that spirit which breathes in our zeal, and with this zeal should we be eaten up and spent. Now they that love God will love all them which belong to God. Friends have all things common, so it is between us and God; the injuries done to him will be as grievous to us as if they were done to ourselves: Ps. lxix. 9, 'For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me;' and the glory that comes to them is as acceptable as if some great benefit had come to us: Acts xv. 3, 'Declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.' Oh! this is great joy to a gracious soul when God's interest thrives in the world. Oh! this is that they would willingly hear spoken of; their hearts are upon it, when God's interest stands or falls, such an earnest desire of the glory of God, which is the highest degree and measure of love to God.

469

[2.] Let us speak of the object of zeal. In three things God's interest lies in the world, viz., his truth, his worship, and his servants. Now it is not enough to have zeal that we do not oppose any of these, but they must be tenderly regarded and looked after, and we must be affected with these things as we would with our own concernments. When wrongs are offered to any of these, either to God's truth, his worship, or his servants, they must go more nearly to our hearts than any personal injuries done to ourselves. What we cannot remedy we must mourn for. All these three concur in Elijah's speech: 1 Kings xix. 10, 'I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts;' there is his zeal. Why? 'For the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant;' there is his truth perverted: 'they have thrown down thy altars;' there is his worship overturned: 'they have slain thy prophets with the sword;' there his servants are wronged. So that zeal mainly is concerned when God suffers loss in any of these things. If his truth be perverted, his worship overturned, his servants be despitefully used, vexed, and grieved, then zeal presently shows itself in opposing these things, or in grieving for them.

(1.) Zeal seeks to preserve the truth of God inviolable. Truth is a precious *depositum*, trust, and charge which God hath committed to the keeping of his people; and without zeal to defend and propagate and maintain it, though with the greatest hazard, it will never be kept, and you will never be faithful to God. We are a kind of feoffees for the present age, and trustees for the future; and the charge of God's truth is put into our hands, and we must see it be transmitted to the world pure and undefiled. Therefore, Jude 3, ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι, 'We must contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.' When others would violate the truth we must contend with them: Jer. ix. 3, 'They are not valiant for the truth.' A Christian needs not only the labour of an ox, that he may be diligent, but the valour of a lion, that he may appear for God in defence of his truth when it is invaded and encroached upon. And especially doth this concern the officers of the church; this zeal they should have for the word: Titus i. 9, ἀντεχόμενον, 'Holding fast the faithful word.' The word signifies to be good at holding and drawing; that is, when others would wrest it out of our hands, we should hold it fast; as a staff that another would take out of our hands, we hold it faster and wrestle with him. So should we wrestle, contend, and hold fast the truth, when others would draw it from us. And Phil. i. 27, 'Striving together for the faith of the gospel.' Oh! we should not let one dust of truth perish. This is to be zealous for the truth, standing to, and striving for the defence thereof, in our way and place. If God had not raised up zealous instruments in every age to plead for his truth, what a sad case would the church have been in? Truth would have been buried under a great heap of prejudices, and Christ's kingdom have been crushed in the very egg, and religion strangled in the cradle. But there is a cloud of witnesses gone before us. In every age God sets up some of all sexes, ages, conditions, that have owned his despised and oppugned truths, and have not counted their lives dear, so as they might give their testimony to the truth of God, Rev. xii. 11, and have more greedily embraced martyrdom than others honours and dignities in the church; as Sulpicius Severus observes, they have with greater desire affected the glory of martyrdom and suffering for the truth, that they might be faithful to God and the souls of men in future ages, and to preserve God's truth inviolate; they have greedily sought this honour to suffer for God. And Ignatius, he could say, Come, saith he, I desire the beasts that are prepared should be let loose for me; it is better to die for Christ than to command the ends of the earth. And Basil, when the Arian emperor threatened those that did oppose his religion should die the death, The wild beasts, let them be let out; would to God it were so, that I had the honour to die for the truth of Christ! This was notably for the increase of Christ's kingdom, and thus the Lord hath inspired his people with a holy love and zeal.

470

(2.) For his worship, that that may not be corrupted, but his institutions kept pure. Zeal is conversant about that too: Exod. xx. 5, 'Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.' In the first commandment, God forbids a false god; in the second, he forbids the false means of worship, as before the false object. Now, because the means of worship are apt to be perverted, the Lord shows how jealous he was for his worship: 'I am a jealous God;' if the institutions of God be perverted, then 'I will visit the iniquity of the fathers

upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.' The children are considered in that commandment, because usually the interest of families is our great snare, when an idol is set up, or a false means of worship. The chiefest false worship is an idol; and the greatest sin is put for all the rest, before an idol, the imagination or invention of men, when that is set up. The Lord speaks of the interest of families, because men are apt to think they shall undo them and their families if they contend in this matter. Now, be you zealous of my worship, for I will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. That the interest of families might not abate our zeal, the Lord takes the family into the curse for the violation, and likewise into the blessing for zeal for his institutions. And so Christ saith, John ii. 17, 'The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.' We should be zealous for God's worship. Ministers should preach zealously, and magistrates govern zealously to purge God's house, and Christians pray zealously; every one of us, as far as the bounds of our calling will permit, should be zealous for God's worship. *Quis comeditur zelo Domus Dei?* saith Austin—who is he that is eaten out with the zeal of God's house? He that desires that no human invention may be blended and mixed with God's worship, and would fain amend what is amiss. This zeal is the only right and acceptable principle of reformation, our great indignation against all false worship whatever. I remember the story of Valentinian, who was afterwards emperor, when according to the duty of his place, being captain of the guard to Julian the apostate and emperor, he was engaged to attend him into the heathen temple of fortune, and the priests were to sprinkle the lustrating and holy water—for that ceremony was common to the heathens with the papists—and a drop of it lighted upon Valentinian, he struck the priest that did it, and said, Thou hast defiled me, thou hast not purged me (he thought his garments to be contaminated, and not his body sanctified), and he tore off his belt, renounced his honour, rather than he would do any thing that should be contrary to his religion; and for this Julian sent him into banishment, and within a year and a few months, the story tells us, that he received the reward of his holy confession and owning of Christ, the Roman empire. For the soldiers, being weary of this pagan emperor, as soon as he died chose Jovinianus (that had been banished, and a fellow sufferer with him), who recalled him and other Christians from their exile, and after having reigned not full eight months, he died, and Valentinian was chosen emperor in his stead.

471

(3.) The third thing we should be zealous for is God's servants; when they are oppressed we should own and cherish them, as good Obadiah did the prophets, who 'hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water,' 1 Kings xviii. 4; and Jonathan owned David though his father was greatly displeased with him, and flung a javelin at him, 1 Sam. xx. 32; and Esther pleads for the Jews when they were doomed to destruction, Esther vii. 3; and Nicodemus pleads for Christ that he might not be condemned unheard: John vii. 50, 51, 'When the council was ready to condemn him, Nicodemus saith to them (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them), Doth our law judge any man before it hear him? And then they went their way.' That stopped the persecution for that time. Certainly they have little zeal for God, that can see good men perish before their eyes,

and have not a word to speak for them. This Nicodemus, that was before infirm and weak, that sneaked unto Christ, that came to him by night, gets courage in the time of need to speak for Christ.

[3.] What are the acts of zeal with respect to these objects?

(1.) It quickens us to our duty, and makes us publicly active for God: Gal. iv. 18, 'It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.' Oh! how remiss and sluggish would we be otherwise in matters of God's kingdom and glory, if we had not a strong degree of love to stir us up to appear for God, in the worst times, and in the way and places that is proper for us! Paul when he saw the whole city given to idolatry, it is said, his 'spirit was stirred in him,' Acts xvii. 16; he could not contain; and again, Acts xviii. 5, Paul 'was pressed in spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.' That heroical act of Phinehas when he saw the laws of God broken, and nobody ready to vindicate the honour of God; he took a javelin in his hand and thrust the offenders through, Num. xxv. 7; and the Lord saith afterwards, ver. 11, 'Phineas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.' He had an extraordinary call to do that; he was high priest, but he went then upon *jus zenorum*.[20] So Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 40, 'He took the prophets of Baal and brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.' There was an extraordinary call; but we are all to be active in spreading and defending the truth, and promoting the purity of God's worship, and welfare of his people, as far as our calling and places permit.

(2.) It maketh us spare no cost, yea, it judgeth that best done for God which costs us most, as David would not serve God with that which cost nothing, 2 Sam. xxiv. 25. That is worth nothing that cost nothing in religion. Jezebel she was zealous for Baal, and maintained four hundred of his priests at her table. In the primitive times they gold all things that they had, and had all things common: and the Israelites they offered so plentifully to the tabernacle, that Moses was fain to forbid them, to put a stop, because there was enough given for the advancement of God's worship, Exod. xxxviii. 8. And therefore certainly they are cold, and have little zeal for God, that love as the Corinthians did, ἀδάπανον εὐαγγέλιον, a gospel without charges, would be at no cost for Christ. This was Paul's case; there the poor saints of Macedonia which had but from hand to mouth, they ministered to him, and maintained him when he was at Corinth, a rich and opulent town. Paul would depart from his right rather than prejudice the gospel. Therefore they that will be at no cost for Christ, maintaining his truth, upholding his worship, relieving his people, have no zeal.

472

(3.) It vents itself by holy grief and anger when any of these are violated. (1.) With holy grief. We should be touched, and that to the quick, with other men's sins, when they neglect their duty, pervert all that is right and honest, and seem not to be concerned with the glory of God, 1 Peter ii. 7, 8. It is said of Lot, 'his righteous soul was vexed' at the wickedness of the Sodomites; and 'he

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20 So in the original edition.—ED.

vexed himself,' not with Sodom's injuries, but with Sodom's impurities; he could not redress the evils, but he mourns for them. So the prophet Jeremiah for the stubbornness of the people: Jer. xiii. 17, 'But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore,' &c. Though they would not hearken, amend, nor any way regard these things, yet it grieved him exceedingly. So you shall see the like of Ezra, chap. x. 6, 'He mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.' The transgression of God's people was very grievous to him. Thus we read of Eli, 1 Sam. iv. 13, 'Eli sat by the wayside watching; for his heart trembled for the ark of God.' The glory of God was dear to him; and when religion is in danger, God dishonoured, it leaves a mighty impression upon the hearts of those that have a zeal and strong love to God. (2.) It vents itself by indignation and holy anger; as Christ whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and showed his divine power therein, John ii. 15. And 'remember them, O God, that defile the priesthood,' Neh. xiii. 29; and Exod. xxxii. 19. Meek Moses, yet his anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hand; and Ezra ix. 3, 'When I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head, and of my beard, and sat down astonied.' Thus deeply are God's children affected with God's public dishonour, though not occasioned by themselves, but occasioned by others, and this is to have a zeal for God.

[4.] The qualifications and concomitants of this holy zeal. I will name three:—

(1.) It must be accompanied with knowledge and discretion; that is to say, there must be a distinct knowledge of the cause that we take up, else we may be factors for the devil's kingdom when we think we are acting for God, and be persecuting the saints when we think we are destroying his enemies. It must be out of the knowledge of the cause of the evil to be renounced and the good to be established. There is a blind zeal: John xvi. 2, 'Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.' The pseudo-Christians, the literal Christians, have a blind zeal against the serious Christians, and if they can excommunicate them and throw them out of the church and kill them, they think this is acceptable service to God. All this is blind zeal. In Rom. x. 2, the apostle saith, 'They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge;' therefore there must be light as well as heat in this fire, else it is not the fire of the altar, but of a common hearth; nay, we must not only know the truth, but also the worth of the cause. The truth of the cause, that must be guided still by wisdom, and we must observe all the seasonable circumstances in discovering ourselves for God, else it will produce strange, evil, and malignant effects, which tend much to the dishonour of God, and prejudice of the gospel. Look, as a blind horse that is full of mettle, but is always stumbling, so they never act commendably and seasonably. The church of God hath had bitter experience in all ages of the sad effects of misguided zeal; when it hath not been seasoned with knowledge and discretion to time things, it hath tended much to the hindrance of Christ's kingdom, and the promotion of Satan's interest in the world. Christ in one place bids us to 'be wise as serpents,' Mat. x. 16; and in another place, not to give that which is holy to dogs, 'nor cast pearls before swine,' Mat. vii. 6; otherwise we unprofitably sacrifice ourselves, and hinder the good which we would promote. It was a grievous thing to Paul, and pressed upon his spirit, to see all Ephesus given to idolatry, and

mightily affected with Diana's worship; yet we read, Acts xix. 10, he was two years at Ephesus before he spake against Diana; he observed his season before he took the liberty and thought himself bound to speak against that false worship. The historian tells us of Andes, a Persian bishop, that was under Varrans, that, having an unguided zeal, got some Christians together to destroy the temple of fire, which the Persians worshipped. Saith Theodoret, Not as he ought to do; and what is the issue? Varrans the emperor, that was formerly favour able to the Christians, when he saw they affected power, and would destroy the worship of the country, what then? He was filled with cruel persecution, he skinned the backs of some of the Christians, and the faces of others, drew splinters through their flesh, used horrible torments, which the historian takes notice of, and it conduced to the total suppression of the Christian religion. Therefore this wildfire when it runs abroad without discretion, and not being seasoned with prudence, it doth a world of harm to the church of God. We must observe the time, circumstances, and when it is most behoveful for the glory of God, the good of the church, and cause we would promote. See Videlius, lib i. cap. 1.

(2.) This zeal also must be mingled with compassion, that as we mind the glory of God, so we may pity deluded souls. When we are zealous against the sin we must have commiseration of the sinner, as knowing the weaknesses and prejudices of education that are incident to human nature. This is, to be sure, most agreeable to Christ's pattern. He wept over Jerusalem that stood in a state of enmity to him, Luke xix. 41; and when he was angry with the unbelief of his countrymen, at the same time he was grieved at the hardness of their hearts, Mark iii. 5. In Christ's anger there was more of compassion than of passion. And Samuel he mourned for Saul when he saw him no more, 1 Sam. xv. 35; and the apostle, when he had zealously declaimed against the false teachers, he falls a-weeping, Phil. iii. 18. When we show love to God there should not be a hatred and ill-will to the persons of men, but we should bewail their obstinacy and blindness. Those that are all for destruction, and ready to call fire from heaven, they know not what spirit they are of; they have a fiery zealotic spirit, but that which doth not become the temper of the gospel.

474

(3.) Zeal must be constant, Gal. iv. 18; the fire on the altar must never go out; we cannot be without it for a moment. There are some that have zeal for a fit, but soon grow weary of it; they are zealous in prosperity, then they are forward and active for God; but when it comes to trouble, they give up all to oppositions. On the contrary, others in their affliction and low estate, they have a warm sense of religion, but when they are all well at ease, they are lost in the delights of the flesh, and drowned in the cares of the world, and their zeal for God is checked. And we see that some in their youth have a good savour and towardliness, and seem to have a very tender conscience, but after their first heats are spent they are very careless, and grow inordinate, and all their zeal for God is gone: Gal. v. 7, 'Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?' David was as zealous when the crown was upon his head as when God humbled him and kept him low. Many think zeal a cumber as they increase in worldly wisdom, and so cast it off. Nay, in gross hypocrites you shall find this, they will be zealous in good company, and as vain and loose in bad. Let any grave servant of God be there, they seem to kindle a great fire, but as soon as they are gone,

they put it out again. Ay! but true zeal should always continue and be of a lasting and of an increasing flame.

[5.] To speak of the private and personal use of zeal, what need we have to keep up a warm frame of heart towards God and heavenly things (hitherto we have considered it as it respects God's public interest); it is also of private use both in resisting of sin, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

(1.) In resisting of sin. A man never doth anything to purpose in purging out sin until he hath a zeal for God: Rev. iii. 19, 'Be zealous therefore, and repent.' Repentance is set on and quickened by zeal. Doth zeal, think you, serve only to rectify the disorders of other men, and not our own? No, certainly; we should begin at home; we should take care that God be exalted in our own hearts, as well as his interest be not infringed in the world. First our Saviour adviseth us to pluck out the beam out of our own eyes, Mat. vii. 5. Unless we be blameless ourselves we can have no confidence or hope to do much good to others. The first stone should be cast at ourselves; we should repent of our own sin, our own lusts, the plague of our own heart; if anything we are apt to allow that is contrary to God, this should be a great grief to us. Unless we cleanse our own unclean sinks at home, how can we hope for reformation abroad? Men cry out against public vices, as the lapwing will croak abroad to draw off the person from her own nest; it is all but the deceit of the heart; and usually we find it to he so in the world. Most men are better acquainted with other men's duties than their own; with the magistrate's duties more than their own, and so other men's sins more than their own. But it is not so where zeal is unfeigned; there it begins at home; they will allow nothing in their own hearts that may be contrary to God's interest and to the sovereignty of his Spirit.

475

(2.) Also in perfecting holiness. The whole business of the spiritual life must be carried on in warmth and vigour: Rom. xii. 11, 'Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' It is ζέοντες πνεύματι, seething hot in spirit. Nothing done for God should be done negligently, but affectionately. To be lukewarm and key-cold, that makes no work in religion; but when a man hath a great zeal for God, oh! then he profits and gets ground, then sin decays, grace is strengthened, love is more rooted in his heart every day, and he doth more for God. Paul profited in the Jewish religion, Gal. i. 14. Why? Because he was 'more zealous than others.' This is the man that will be the honour of God's ordinances, that man that will show forth the virtue and power of religion, when his heart grows warm for God and zealous for God.

Secondly, Why we ought to look after a great and pure zeal, if we have any love to God and the law of God and his ways.

1. Why a great zeal?

[1.] Because it is not zeal else, if it be not in some good degree; for zeal is a great fire and a vehement flame; not only love, but vehement love; it must needs be great: Cant. viii. 6, 7, 'For love

is as strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave.' Zeal is cruel as the grave; read it so: 'Many waters cannot quench love,' &c. Mark, our love to the ways of God should be of such a nature, such a warm and zealous working of heart towards God, that many floods cannot quench it, that nothing can bribe it. Surely the best things deserve the best affections; therefore whatever we do in religion and for God, we should do it with all our might, Eccles. ix. 10.

[2.] Otherwise it will not do the work. Such as increaseth with opposition; as fire, when you put on more fuel, it grows more vehement; so unless it be a zeal that grows earnest with discouragement, alas! it will soon be quenched. We shall meet with many discouragements from within and without; but when we can resolve with David, the more they scoffed and opposed him, he would 'be yet more vile,' 2 Sam. vi. 22. So the more trouble they meet with in the ways of God, the more they will cleave to him, and will please God though with the displeasure of men. True zeal is inflamed with difficulties. As lime, the more water they pour on, the more it burns; as Nehemiah's courage it sparkled the more the more it was opposed: 'Should such a man as I flee?' Should I betray the cause of God? This is the true zeal, when it sparkles by opposition. As Paul, the more they persuaded him, the more he seemed to be bound in spirit to go to Jerusalem, Acts xxi. 13; though they did even break his heart, they could not break his purpose. Such a zeal as is quenched with every drop of water, and goes out with every flout and scorn, will never do it; therefore we had need have a great zeal, that we may harden ourselves against all oppositions we meet with in the way.

476

2. It needs to be pure, too; such a fervent affection had need be right, for since it makes men so active and resolute, certainly it should go upon clear grounds. I showed before nothing hath done more mischief in the world than wild zeal; it is like fire out of its place, that sets all the house in a flame; it doth not comfort and refresh those that have it, but it destroys and consumes all. But why must we have pure zeal?

[1.] Because there is a false zeal, and a self-seeking zeal, which men have while they pretend much love to God and good of souls, but are really hunting after their own interest: Gal. iv. 17, 'They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you that ye might affect them;' that is, they sought to rend their affections from Paul, and from their faithful pastors, that they might affect them; so he tells us, Phil. i. 15, 'Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife.' There may be a zeal that comes merely out of envy and strife;. Jehu could say, 'Come, see my zeal for the Lord,' 2 Kings x. 16.

[2.] This false zeal doth a great deal of mischief. It is a dishonour to God to pretend to him, and to put the varnish of our cause upon God. God himself is involved in the deceit, Jer. iv. 10. It is a strange expression to be used to God, 'Ah! Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people.' The false prophets did it in his name. And it divides the church as well as dishonours God: Gal. iv. 17, 'They would exclude you, that ye might affect them.' The meaning is, they would rend you from the body of the Christian church, and alienate the minds of God's people, so as to devote them

to a faction: Phil. i. 16, 'They preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds.' And it hardens the persons themselves, as Jehu boasted of his zeal, and it was only self-seeking, and the Lord counts it murder, Hosea i. 4.

Use. Have we this pure zeal, such a zeal as David speaks of? There are many notes by which it may be discerned; as—

1. When injuries done to God or religion affect us more than injuries done personally to ourselves; when we carry ourselves in an indifferency in our own cause, but not in God's. Compare Num. xii. 13, with Exod. xxxii. 19. Moses could with a meek spirit bear all the injuries done to himself, but could not contain himself when he saw injury done to God, but breaks the tables.

2. When the same enemies are God's enemies and ours. David was sensible not of the inhumanity of his enemies, but that which most troubled him was because they were God's enemies and forsook his words. David was not so much troubled at Absalom's rebellion, as dying in his sins.

3. When there is a compassion mingled with our zeal Fleshly anger is all for destruction; holy anger is for conversion, when they grieve, and seek to redress the matter.

4. True zeal is universal; it is most against their own sins, and the sins of those that are nearest, and runs out upon weighty things. But those that tithe mint and cummin, and neglect weighty things, they have not true zeal. There are many instances of this false disproportionate zeal of a conscience, taken up for a turn. When there is a partial conscience—in some things men are mighty scrupulous, and strain at a gnat and swallow a camel—it discovers the hypocrisy that lights upon the professors of religion, full of heinous outcries upon small things, yet dashing upon things that are against the fundamentals of the covenant.

477

SERMON CLVII.

Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.—VER. 140.

THERE are three things in this verse:—

1. The excellency of the word, *thy word is very pure*.

2. David's respect to it, *thy servant loveth it*.

3. The connection between both, in the illative particle, *therefore*.

1. The excellency of the word, 'Thy word is very pure.' That which we render 'very pure,' signifieth tried in the fire and refined; the Septuagint reads it, πεπυρωμένον λόγιόν σου σφόδρα,

thy word is set on fire; and so you may see it explained, Ps. xii. 6, ‘The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times.’ The expression may import two things—(1.) The infallible certainty of the word; (2.) The exact purity.

[1.] The infallible certainty of the word, as gold endureth in the fire when the dross is consumed. Vain conceits comfort us not in a time of trouble, but the word of God, the more it is tried, the more you will find the excellency of it. The promise is tried, as well as we are tried, in deep afflictions; but when it is so, it will be found to be most sure. In the old translation it is, Thy word is proved most pure: Ps. xviii. 30, ‘The word of the Lord is tried; he is a buckler to all them that trust in him.’ So Prov. xxx. 5, ‘The word of the Lord is pure; he is a shield to all that trust in him.’ As pure gold suffers no loss by the fire, so the promises suffer no loss when they are tried, but stand to us in our greatest troubles.

[2.] It notes the exact perfection of the word. There is no dross in silver and gold that hath been often refined, so there is no defect in the word of God.

2. Here is David’s respect to the word; speaking of himself in the third person, he saith, ‘Thy servant loveth it.’ The children of God love the word, and the duty and obedience it prescribeth, so as effectually to follow it; that is love, and none but that.

3. Here is his reason for it, ‘Therefore I love it,’ because it is pure. Wicked men hate it and slight it for this reason: the word of God is so pure that it ransacks their consciences, and therefore they cannot endure it: ‘The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be,’ Rom. viii. 7. But the saints do the rather embrace it: wicked men could wish it were less strict, that it might be calculated to their turns; but the children of God love it for this reason.

Doct. That God’s children see such purity in his word that therefore they value it and love it exceedingly.

The point will be made good by four considerations:—

1. That the word of God is pure.

2. That this pure word must be loved and esteemed by us.

478

3. That we must not only love God’s word, but see why we love it.

4. Among all the grounds and reasons of our love to the word of God, this is the most noble and excellent, to love it for its purity.

For the first of these, that the word of God is pure, yea, as it is superlatively expressed in the text, it is very pure, that will appear in two respects—it is pure in itself, and it maketh us pure.

1. It is pure in itself, because it is a holy rule, fit for God to give and us to receive, exactly comprising the whole duty of man. We need not seek elsewhere for direction in order to true happiness: Ps. xix. 8, ‘The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;’ as metal refined from all dross, so here is not the least mixture of error, folly, or falsehood, not the least corruption or flaw to be found in it, as in all other books of human composure. All other writings come as short of the scripture as a coal doth of the sun. The whole art and design of this holy book is to advance the spiritual and heavenly life, and not to fashion our outward carriage a little for converse with men, but to bring us into fellowship and communion with God, and to direct us to do all things from holy principles, in a holy manner, to holy ends. There is no dead fly in this box of ointment, no blemish of weakness and imperfection; it hath the manifest impress of the author left upon it, and is the copy of that exact holiness which is in God himself.

2. The word is very pure, as it maketh us pure if we diligently attend unto it: Ps. cxix. 9, ‘By what means may a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereunto according to thy word.’ It is not said, By what means may a young man guide his way; as if he were yet to choose, or were as white paper, indifferent to any impression. But by what means shall a young man cleanse his way? Man’s heart naturally is a sink of sin, and he delighteth to wallow in this puddle, as swine do in the mire; he hath gotten a tang and smatch of the old Adam. Now, is there no way to make his heart and his way clean? Yes, if he will take God’s counsel, and direct his life according to the word. A young man that is in the heat and strength of his lusts, he may be cured and cleansed. Christ prayeth, John xvii. 17, ‘Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.’ The work is God’s, but he doth it by the truth or his will revealed in the word. He hath reserved the power of his Spirit for this dispensation and way of institution of mankind. A moral lecture may make a man change his life, but it is the word of God that changeth his heart: his Spirit goeth along with his word. So John xv. 3, ‘Now you are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you.’ The word is the instrument of purifying sinners, and to get rid of their sins. But how doth the word make us pure? As it is an appointed instrument of the Spirit, and as it is an accommodate instrument to such an end and purpose.

[1.] It is an appointed instrument by which the Spirit will work: 1 Peter i. 22, ‘Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit.’ It is the Spirit of Christ that powerfully worketh it, but yet in and by the truth: he worketh by his own means, he will not join his assistance with other things. The sum of what I would say is this, it was meet that God should give a rule to his creatures, or else how should they know his will? and then it was meet he should honour his rule by owning it above all other doctrines, by the concomitant operation of his Spirit, that this might be a constant authentic proof of its divine authority. The efficacy of the word is a pledge of the truth of it.

479

[2.] It is a commodious instrument for this end and purpose, for there is a wisdom in all God’s institutions. He that looketh upon an axe will say, This is an instrument made to cut; so he that

looketh upon the scriptures must needs say, This is a means to purify. The word is more morally accommodated to work upon the heart of man then any other instrument, means, or doctrine in the world. Now the word doth so commodiously serve for this purpose because there are—(1.) Such pure precepts; (2.) Such pure examples; (3.) Such great helps to purity; (4.) Great encouragements to purity; (5.) Such great terrors to dissuade men from sin.

(1.) There are pure precepts, setting forth the nature of that purity that is pleasing to God; and so, on the one hand, they serve to humble us for our natural filthiness; for *verum est index sui et obliqui*—truth showeth itself, and discovereth error also, James i. 34. It is such a pure doctrine that it showeth a man his natural face, and discovers soul-spots. And, on the other side, by these precepts and doctrines we are urged and enjoined to seek after true purity and holiness of the right constitution: 1 Tim. i. 5, 'The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.' The word telleth us God will be served, and that he will be served with a pure heart. The right end and scope of the whole law, as it is a gospel rule, is love to God and man, flowing from a sincere and renewed heart, and a good conscience rightly informed of God's will, and faith unfeigned, apprehending the grace of God towards us in Christ our Redeemer. So that you see there is required of us not only good actions, but good principles and ends.

The apostle telleth us ἔργον νόμου, the work of the law, was written upon man's heart, Rom. ii. 14. Natural conscience will take notice of some gross acts, urge to some external conformity and show of duty; but the word of God taketh notice not only of acts, but the frame of the heart; not only of sins, but also of lusts. If ever there were an instrument fitted to do a thing, the word is fitted to make men pure and holy. Briefly, then, the word requireth purity of heart and life. That we should be pure in heart: Mat. v. 8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;' and pure in life: 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way,' Ps. cxix. 1. You have both in one place: James iv. 8, 'Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded;' both must be cleansed, both heart and hands. But we must first begin with the heart. The heart is that polluted fountain from whence floweth all the pollution of life: Mat. xv. 19, 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, blasphemies,' &c. It is in vain to cleanse the outside, unless the heart be cleansed; and therefore the scripture presseth us to wash our hearts from wickedness, Jer. iv. 14. There is the difficulty. It is more easy to heal an outward wound than to stanch an inward bleeding; and the cause is within. The purity of the outside is loathsome to God unless the heart be cleansed; it is more easy to prevent disorders in. our conversations than to cleanse our hearts; and therefore the scripture mainly calleth upon you to purge sin out of the heart, Mat. xxiii. 26, 27. Therefore the great design of the word of God, with which it travaileth, is to get the heart clean; as Elisha when he would cure the brackishness of the waters, cast salt into the fountain, so doth the word of God seek to cleanse the hearts of men, and all its wooings and pleadings and entreaties tend to this.

480

(2.) There are pure examples and patterns. We miscarry by low examples, and grow loose and careless seeing others to be so; therefore the word is still to keep us humble under our defects, unsatisfied with our present measure, always contending, and striving towards the mark: it propoundeth all manner of examples to us. It propoundeth the example of God: 1 Peter i. 15, 'Be ye holy, as he that hath called you is holy, in all manner of conversation.' God is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works; and so should we be. And the scripture presseth us to be holy as Christ is holy: 1 John iii. 3, 'He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, as Christ is pure.' It is impossible there should be an exact equality, yet some answerable conformity there should be. God is essentially, immutably, infinitely holy: he loveth himself so much as he can be loved. His essence and his being is the same with his holiness. Our holiness is a superadded quality. God's holiness is like a vessel of pure gold, where the substance is the same with the lustre; but our holiness is like a vessel of earth gilded with gold; the substance is one thing, the varnish another. But yet this God and Christ must ever be before our eyes; we must be holy as he is holy; we must always be increasing in holiness. We must come into an abiding state of holiness. There must be some kind of conformity between God and us, and Christ and us; and head and members must be all of a piece. He will shoot farther that aimeth at a star, than he that aimeth at a shrub; so he will be more holy that doth as God doth, than he that doth as sinful creatures do, like himself. Nay, the scripture propoundeth the example of the saints, Heb. vi. 12. We need all kinds of examples. As we need high and glorious examples, that we may not rest in any low degrees and beginnings of purity, so lower examples, that we may not be discouraged, and think it impossible. And therefore the saints of God are propounded to us, men and women of like affections with us, the same natural interests, and we the same grace with them; the way to heaven is a trodden path all along; you may see the footsteps of the saints before you.

(3.) The scripture offereth great helps to purity. Christ died to purchase it for us: Eph. v. 27, 'He gave himself for us, that he might sanctify and cleanse us by the washing of water through the word.' And God hath promised to give this clean heart to them that seek after it, and undertaketh to give what he requireth: Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27, 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you: a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh: and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' God hath promised this to somebody, and why not to you? You are as fair for this promise as any; and if God hath not excluded you, why will you shut yourselves out from the grace offered?

481

(4.) There are in the scripture excellent encouragements and motives from the reward promised to the pure. Lactantius saith of the heathen, *Virtutis vim non sentiunt quia ejus praemium ignorant*—that they were ignorant of the force of virtue, because they were not acquainted with the reward of it. There is a great force in scripture arguments in this kind. See how the scripture speaks of these promises; they are so great, so pure, and so expressly binding in their condition and

qualification annexed. They are so great, 2 Cor. vii. 1, that ‘having such great and precious promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.’ And then so pure: 1 John iii. 3, ‘He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as Christ is pure.’ It is not barely said, He hath hope in him, hut, He that hath this hope. It is not a Turkish paradise, but a sinless estate; not an estate wherein we shall be engulfed in all sensualities, but satisfied with the vision of God, and made like him. Heaven is not only to be looked upon as a place of happiness, but a state of likeness to God. Once more, so many and so expressly binding to purity, in their condition and qualification annexed. See what the word of God speaks to purity, if we would enjoy the favour of God, and have him good to us: Ps. lxxiii. 1, ‘Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.’ Who are they that God will be good to? To Israel. All are not Israel that are of Israel; but those whose consciences are cleansed by the blood of Christ, and study to be clean -and holy in heart and life, those are God’s Israel. However things fall out here, how blustering and boisterous soever the times are, yet God will be good to them that are his Israel. If we would have his favour actually exhibited, if we would have God to shine upon us, we must look after purity: Ps. xviii. 26, ‘With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.’ God will be to man as man is to God. No degree of purity shall go unrewarded; the holy use of the creatures is their privilege: Titus i. 15, ‘To the pure all things are pure.’ To the wicked all things are defiled, and they have a curse with their blessings; but to the pure these blessings are lawfully enjoyed, and are sanctified to them, and -they receive every temporal mercy as a blessing of the covenant. Would we be accepted in our service? Prov. xv. 26, ‘The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, but the words of the pure are pleasant words.’ The thoughts and words of wicked men are an abomination to the Lord, but the thoughts and words of the saints are his delight. God hath respect to the person and then to his services; so that we must be pure in heart if we would have our ser vices accepted of the Lord. Once more, the pure are those that shall be employed with honour for God: 2 Tim. ii. 21, ‘If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel of honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.’ Again, the purified and cleansed are meet to receive and retain the word: 1 Tim. iii. 9, ‘Hold fast the mysteries of faith in a pure conscience.’ None receive the word with such profit, and retain it with such warmth, as the pure in heart. Precious liquor is not put into musty, filthy vessels; if it be, it is corrupted and spoiled presently. Let a man be addicted to any worldly lust, and he will soon lose all the sense of good he hath received. Once more, none pray aright but the pure: Zeph. iii. 9, ‘For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord;’ and 1 Tim. ii. 8, ‘Lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;’ and Heb. x. 22, ‘Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.’ Then we draw near to God with comfort, being sure of audience. Once more, if we would be happy for ever more, who are they that shall see God? Mat. v. 8, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ You shall see the question propounded in Ps. xxiv. 3, 4, ‘Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? who shall stand in his holy place?’ And the question is answered in the third verse, ‘He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.’ It

standeth upon us to examine how it is with us, since all the visible church are not saved; the pure and holy are they that shall see and enjoy God. Filthy dogs and impure and unclean swine are not suffered to enter into the new Jerusalem.

(5.) Here are terrible threatenings; the word is impatient of being denied; it would have holiness and purity upon any terms; there is something propounded to our fear as well as to our hope. Sometimes the word of God threatens with the loss of happiness: Heb. xii. 14, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' If there were no more but this, this were enough to terrify us (to be shut out from the presence of the Lord!) if it were rightly considered. But oh! how miserable will the poor creature be that the word threatens with the loss of the vision of God, supposing the soul subsists! This is enough to over whelm us, that we shall never enter into the place where God is: Rev. xxi. 17, 'There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth or worketh abomination.' But we hear of a worm that shall never die, a pit without a bottom, a fire that shall never be quenched, and torments that are without end and without ease. God shall say, I would have purged you, but you would not be purged. Whose heart doth not tremble at the mention of these things? Oh! then you see the word is very pure.

The second consideration, that this pure word must be valued and esteemed and loved by us. Here I shall show you what it is to love the word, and then why.

1. What it is to love the word.

[1.] Negatively.

(1.) It is not an outward receiving, or a loose owning of the scripture as the word of God. Many carnal men may so receive it, or rather not contradict it: they receive the word of God, not upon any divine testimony and evidence of the Spirit of God, but upon the authority and credit of men, the practice and profession of the nation where they live, and the injunctions of the civil state, or the tradition of the church. This is the just account of most men's faith and love to the word, and therefore they never feel the power of it. It cometh with power when it is the evidence of the Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 4; human credulity breedeth no true love to the word of God.

(2.) This love is not a bare approbation of purity and holiness; many approve that which they never choose and follow None in the face of the church can be such a wretch as not to think that it is a good thing to be holy, that strictness is commendable Mark vi. 26, Herod reverenced John. There is an excellency in holiness and it winneth esteem, even there where it is not embraced Purity is a stricture of God's majesty, and so it is feared. Where it is not loved it breedeth an aweful respect in wicked men. Natural conscience so far doth homage to the image of God, and doth incline men to think well of holiness, and to show some respect to it.

(3.) It is not a pang or passionate delight; as some, when the word falls upon them, they may be stirred a little; it is not a love that is controllable, or easily overcome by other loves: John v. 45,

‘How can ye believe, that seek honour one of another?’ As Herod rejoiced in John’s light for a season, and, Mark vi. 20, he loved John’s preaching but he loved his Herodias better; and therefore off goes John’s head! The love that he had, it was controllable by a higher love. Unless we be so addicted to the word that it prevaileth over all contrary inclinations, we do not love the word. Whether it be sensuality, or pride, or covetousness, it will be casting off the dominion of the word: John viii. 37, ‘My word hath no place in you;’ it doth not sink down into their hearts that it may bring forth fruit in their lives.

[2.] Positively, what is it then?

(1.) It is such a love as causeth us to wait at wisdom’s gates, to consult with the word upon all occasions, to read it, hear it, meditate on it as the great instrument of sanctification. You will take it for your counsel, Ps. cxix. 4. That we love we will be thinking on often, and exercising our minds in it: Ps. i. 2, ‘But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.’ Oh, how few love the word thus! Few read and delight in the scriptures because of the purity and holiness that is in them. They read them for dispute’s sake, or to know the mystery, or to be able to hold up an argument; but as they serve to make us pure and heavenly, who loves them so? as they forewarn us of sin, and quicken to grace and love to God? Ps. xix. 10, 11, ‘Thy word is sweeter than honey or the honey comb,’ because by ‘them thy servant is forewarned.’ Then we love the word when we love it for this reason.

(2.) We love the word when we are chary of transgressing it, or doing anything contrary to the tenor of it. We are bidden to keep the commandment as the apple of the eye, Prov. vii. 2. The eye is a tender thing, offended with the least dust. Oh, take heed of offending the word of God! Fear of offending is a sure note and effect of love. So he that loves God, he fears the commandment: Prov. xiii. 13, ‘Whoso despiseth the word, shall be destroyed; but whoso feareth the commandment, shall be rewarded.’ A wicked man maketh no bones of a commandment, regardeth not what the word saith, but doth according to the bent of his own will. Those that will turn their back upon a commandment for the least temptation, they have no true love to the word of God. But now a godly man is one that feareth a commandment; he is afraid to do anything against the express will of God. If a commandment stands in his way, it is as much as if an angel with a drawn sword stood in his way, as the angel stood with a drawn sword in Balaam’s way: they had rather have all the world against them, than the word against them, Isa. lxvi. 25. This aweful regard of the word of God it is a good evidence of our love to it.

484

(3.) Then we are said to love the word when we cheerfully and readily delight to do what it requireth in order to the glory of God and our own salvation: that is love; for true love is not only notional, but practical: 1 John ii. 4, ‘He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.’ Our love to God is known by our obedience to him; so our love to the word is known by our obedience to it. And therefore we love the word in good earnest when we observe it readily and diligently, whatever it costs us: Rom. vi. 17, ‘Ye have obeyed from

the heart the form of doctrine that was delivered to you.' Look, as there is a cold love to a man's brother, when we say, Be clothed, be warmed; so there is a pretended love to the word that endeth in talk, and not in action; which is as if a man should hope to pay his debts by the noise of money, and instead of opening his purse to shut it; as ridiculous it is to think to put off our duty with good words.

(4.) It is a rooted affection. A carnal man may have his affections moved, and be a little stirred with this pure doctrine, but he is soon put out of humour; he is not changed by it, he hath not a constant affection to God and holy things: Gal. iv. 18, 'It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing;' to hold out to the end, and still to keep up a warm respect to the word of God. This is to love it, to have the word ingrafted into the stock of corrupt nature, James i. 21. It is not something tied on, but ingrafted into the soul; it hath place in the heart.

2. Let me show you why.

[1.] The necessity of this love to the word appears because without this love we cannot be accepted of God; unwilling and constrained service is of little acceptation with him: 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3, 'If I should give my goods to the poor, and my body to be burnt, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' If a man hath never so many excellencies, if he spend his goods and life and all for God, without this sincere love to God and his ways, all is nothing. God doth not value men by the pomp of their services, but by the affection of their hearts in them; he needeth not the service, and he seeth the heart. A man is pleased so his work be done willingly or unwillingly, for he needeth the labour of the slave; but he seeth not into his heart; but God hath no need of us, and he seeth whether we give him the heart or no. So that if we have not charity, all that we do is nothing.

[2.] Without this love your work will be very difficult, grievous, and irksome to you. It is love maketh all things pleasant and easy, and to go on roundly: 1 John v. 3, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.' A love to the commands of God will make us do them with cheerfulness. When a man loves God, it will be no grievous thing to serve him. It is said, Neh. iv. 6, 'That the building went on because the people had a mind to the work.' The building of the temple was a difficult task, to remove the rubbish, and carry on such a vast piece of work; but they had a mind to the work, and then it went on Love to anything makes it go on sweetly and cheerfully, as we use to say; so in God's service, if we love the work, we cannot count it difficult.

485

[3.] You will never be constant with God without this love. An unwilling servant is ever running from his work, and he that hath not a heart fixed and set will find discouragement enough in heaven's way. They fell off that received not the truth in the love of it, 2 Thes. ii. 10. Fear hath compulsion in it, but it will not hold when the fear is worn off; but love is a lasting affection, when your hearts love holiness, and you love the work for the work's sake.

Third consideration. It is not enough to love the word, but we must look after the grounds and reasons of this love.

1. Because a true love to the word is not blind, but rational, and may be justified: Mat. xi. 19, 'Wisdom is justified of her children.' All that love God and his truth are able to plead for it. If you are not able to show your grounds and reasons for your love to the word, your love is but customary: Phil. i. 9, 'I pray that your love may abound in all knowledge and judgment.' Such a love and zeal is commendable as hath a proportionable measure of knowledge going along with it. When the spouse had spoken so much of her beloved, the question is propounded, Cant. v. 9, 'What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost thus charge us?' Christians should be able to say what is their Christ, and what is the religion they do profess; that there is more in their religion than in all religions in the world.

2. Because many love it upon wrong reasons. There may be a natural and carnal love to spiritual things. Look, as a religious man in outward things rejoiceth spiritually, so a carnal man in spiritual things rejoiceth carnally. So Herod rejoiced in John's preaching with a human passion, Mark vi. 20, as he was a plausible preacher, and a rare and pregnant interpreter of the law. This was but a carnal affection; that is, thus: They may be pleased with notions, and elevated strains of wisdom. I remember a moralist gives this similitude: A gallant going into a garden prizeth flowers altogether for the beauty of them; but a physician he looks after their use and virtue in medicine, but they both go to look after flowers. So a godly man delights in the word of God; it is that he may be brought under the power of it, and made more holy and heavenly-minded; but others go to hear an argument rationally traversed, or to hear cadences of speech and pleasant language. It is not enough to take a liking to things, but we must know why. Nay, let me tell you that mere foreign and external reasons may sway us to delight in the word; when religion is in request, and groweth in fashion, and becometh matter of reputation, it is no great matter to be an honourer and admirer of it. Simon Magus will be a disciple and turn Christian too, when the whole city of Samaria listened to the apostles, and embraced their doc trine, Acts viii.; when there was so great an outward affluence.

3. The more we view the grounds and reasons, the more our love is increased. It is clear the will and affections are moved by the understanding, and that ignorance is the cause of the contempt of the Lord's grace: 'If thou knewest the gift,' John iv. 10. We love, and fear, and hate, and joy, according to the apprehensions that we have of things; and therefore the more knowledge we have, the more love: Phil. i. 9, 'I pray that your love may abound in all knowledge.' If thou dost not increase in knowledge, thou wilt never increase in affection: 2 Peter i. 2, 'Grace and peace be multiplied unto you by the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ our Lord.' Now, the more these grounds and reasons are drawn forth in the view of conscience, the more our love is stirred; as the more we beat the steel upon the flint, the more the sparks fly out.

Fourth consideration. Of all the grounds and reasons of our love to the word of God, the most noble and excellent is to love the word for its purity.

1. Because, this showeth indeed that we are made ‘partakers of the divine nature,’ 2 Peter i. 4. For I pray you mark, when we hate evil as evil, and love good as good, we have the same love and hatred that God hath. It showeth that the soul is changed into the likeness of God when we love a thing for its purity. God hath no interest to be advanced by the creature; he loves them more or less as they are nearer or further off from his glorious being. When once we come to love things because they are pure, it is a sign that we have the same love that God hath.

2. This argueth a suitableness of heart to what God requireth, for things affect us as they suit with us: ‘They that are after the flesh savour the things of the flesh,’ Rom. viii. 5. The pure will only delight in pure things, but swine delight in puddles; they that have the spirit of the world, they must have worldly pleasure and honour, but the pure will delight in the word of God: 1 Cor. ii. 14, ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of God,’ and because they are not suitable to him. First we love things as suitable to our necessity, and then we love them upon interest, and afterwards as suitable to our disposition. Now it argueth a good frame of heart, and a deep sense of God’s interest, when we love the word because it is so pure. A man first loves the word customarily, because he is born there where that religion is in fashion; and then when he beginneth to have a conscience, he loveth it for pardon and peace, as it offers a Saviour: his own happiness, self-love, puts him upon seeking after God; then afterwards his heart is suited to God’s will, and there is something of kin in his heart to the will of God revealed without, and he loveth it for its suitableness of nature unto the will of God.

3. To be sure this love is no way questionable, but is an undoubted evidence of right and sound love to the word of God. Many pretend to have a high estimation and respect to the doctrine of God when they cannot digest the directions of it, because it is contrary to their desires and carnal affections; they reserve something in their hearts that makes their love questionable. They that have not a real love to the word of God are but lightly tinctured with religion, not deeply dyed. The stony ground received the word with joy. Men may have strong affections and strange stirrings in their souls, and yet not be right with God. But here is an undoubted evidence, to love the word for its purity. A man’s love may be questionable, because he may love the word upon foreign motives, either because of novelty, or fineness of expression, or public countenance and credit, or external advantage, John vi. 26. *Vix diligitur Jesus propter Jesum*. Or they may love it for internal reasons, as it is a good word, as they that tasted of the power of the world to come; they may look upon it for pleasure and profit, but not as good and holy. Many look upon the gospel as good and profitable, as offering peace, and pardon, and comfort, and eternal life. Nature, that hath naturally a sense of religion, hath also a hunger after immortality and blessedness; and therefore the promises of the gospel may be greedily catched after, as offering everlasting life and blessedness. But now a love to that which is pure and holy leaveth a more durable impression upon the soul. And further, many have a liking to the purity of the word, and a general approbation of it, as it is a fit rule for creatures to live by; yet unless there be a strong prevailing affection, all comes to nothing; and therefore nothing but this love to the word because of its purity is unquestionable.

4. Unless we love the word as pure, we shall fail in many other parts of religion; we shall not love God as we ought, for God is lovely, not only as the fountain of blessedness, but as he is the most pure and perfect being. He was *diligibilis naturae* before any emanation of goodness passed from him. We are to love him in desertions, when we feel no good from him, and he seemeth to write bitter things against us, Isa. xxvi. 8. So that we cannot discharge this duty to love God as he is a pure and perfect being if we do not love the word because it is pure. And we shall not love the saints as we ought without this, Ps. xvi. 3. We are to love them for the image of God in them. 'If you love them that love you, what thanks have you?' Mat. v. 46. We are to love the saints as saints, and for that reason. Once more, we are to hate sin, as filthy, as it is a gross absurdity, and deordination of the human nature: Ps. xcvi. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.' Now, till we have this frame of heart, to love the law as it is pure, we can do none of these things; for there is the same reason for the one as for the other; and therefore it is not a nicety, but a necessary frame of heart.

Use 1. To inform us that they can never love God and his ways that hate purity, till their hearts be changed. There are a sort of men in the world whose hearts rise against purity; for if they see any make conscience of sin, they brand them with the name of Puritans; so those that seek to keep themselves from sin, and the more holy they are, they are an eyesore to them. Now, can they say, I love thy law because it is pure, and cannot endure to see it copied out in others? Oh, what a vile disposition is this in you, to be despisers of that which is good! 2 Tim. iii. 3. None live up to the purity of their profession but you scorn them; and let me tell you, you scorn that which is most glorious in God himself. Would a father take it well that a slave should mock his child because it is like him? So will God take it well that you should scorn those that are good, because they are like their heavenly Father? These are of the seed of the serpent, who are full of enmity; they have the old antipathy, Gen. iii. 15; Prov. xxix. 27. It is a vile scorn of the God of heaven to hate a man for his holiness. And they can never love the law, whatever they pretend, that do not love the law for its purity. A carnal distempered appetite hath no taste for the word of God, as it is a direction to holiness, 2 Cor. ii. 14.

488

Use 2. To inform us in what rank to place principles. There are several sorts of principles; there are some that are false and rotten, and some more tolerable, and some good and sound, and some rare and excellent.

1. There are some false and rotten principles, as carnal example and custom. Men will do as they have done, or as others do; they will own the religion that their fathers have done, be it what it will. By the same reason you may serve Mahomet as well as Christ. A man that standeth upon the vantage-ground is not taller than another; such are of no better constitution than the Turks, only they stand upon the vantage-ground. Another rotten principle is vainglory, to be seen of men, Mat. vi.; they pray and give alms to be seen of men. 'Come see my zeal for the Lord of hosts,' saith Jehu. Vainglory many times filleth the sails, and carries us on in the service of God. So secular and

worldly interests and ends; as the Pharisees made long prayers that they might devour widows' houses, Mat. xxiii.; that is, they made long prayers and show of devotion, to be trusted with the management of widows' estates, to make a prey of them. All that I shall say to this principle is this, that it is better for the world that men would serve God anyhow, that Christ should be served out of vainglory, than not served at all; as the apostle saith some preach Christ out of envy, and others out of good- will, but I am glad so Christ be preached, Phil. i. 18; though they themselves be rotten-hearted hypocrites, yet the world fares the better for it.

2. There are some more tolerable principles, the hope of temporal mercies. When we come and pray, and do not seek the favour of God, but seek temporal mercies: Hosea vii. 14, 'They howled upon their beds for corn and wine.' Or the fear of temporal judgments, Isa. lviii. 5; Jer. ii. 16; when all that they do is to remove some temporal judgment: 'In their afflictions they will seek me right early.' And I think I may add one thing more here, the fear of eternal death, when it is alone (otherwise it is a grace); they shall be damned else; and so it is a sleepy sop to appease an accusing conscience, and so it is but a sin-offering. Though it requireth some faith to fear what is to come, yet fear of punishment alone showeth you are slaves, and only love yourselves: the devils fear and tremble, but do not love. Yon may fear a thing though you hate it. So far as the heart is affected with the fear of hell, it is good.

3. There are very good and sound principles, yet do not always argue grace, as when duties are done out of the urgings of an enlightened conscience; this may be without the bent of a renewed heart, but yet the principle is sound; for the first thing that influenceth a man is to consider himself a creature, and so to look upon himself as bound to obey his creator. I shall illustrate it by the apostle's words in another case: I must preach the gospel, and 'woe unto me if I preach not the gospel,' 1 Cor. ix. 16, 17, 'Whether I do it willingly or unwillingly, yet a dispensation is committed to me.' So saith the soul, Whether I be fitted to do God service or no, God must be obeyed. But because God's precept is invested with a sanction of threatenings and rewards, here comes in the fear of hell and the hope of heaven. The Lord hath commanded me to fly from hell; this is a good principle: so the hope of heaven, Heb. xi. 26; it is a sound principle: a man may be gracious, or he may not. Many have a liking to heaven and eternal life, as it is a state of happiness, not of likeness to God. Where it is not alone, it is a very sound principle, but as it is, it may sometimes be the sign of a renewed man, and some times not.

489

4. There are rare and excellent principles, when we act out of thankfulness to God, when we consider the Lord's goodness, that might have required duty out of mere sovereignty; he hath laid the foundation of it in the blood of his own Son, 1 John iv. 29; when we love him out of the sense of his love to us in Christ, and when the grace of God that hath appeared teacheth us to deny ungodliness, Titus ii. 11; when the mercies of God melt us, Rom. xii. 1; when there are no entreaties so powerful as that of love. Again, another principle that is rare and excellent is when the glory of God doth season us in our whole course, that it may be to the praise of his glorious grace, 1 Cor.

x. 31. Another is complacency in the work for the work's sake, when we love the law because it is pure, when I see it will ennoble me and make me like God, when I love God and his ways, when nothing but so noble employment doth engage me to his service; and service to God is the sweetest life in the world.

SERMON CLVIII.

I am small and despised; yet do I not forget thy precepts.—VER. 141.

HERE David proveth the truth of his former assertion, that seeing the word of God was so pure, he loved it for its own sake, and that he did not court religion for the portion that he should have with it, but for itself. Some are mere mercenaries; no longer than they are bribed by some worldly profit, have they any respect for God and his ways. The man of God was of another temper. If God would bestow any thing on him, well; if not, he would love his word still; yea, when it brought him apparent loss, meanness, and contempt, yet this could not make any divorce between his heart and the word: 'I am small and despised,' &c.

In the words we have—(1.) David's condition; (2.) David's carriage under that condition. His condition might have been a snare to him, yet still he keepeth up his affection.

1. His condition is set forth by two notions, the one of which implieth the other. God's providence, 'I am small.' God had reduced him to straits. The other, man's treatment of him, 'and despised.' The one showeth what he was really in himself, the other what he was in the opinion of others: mean in himself, and contemptible in the eye of others. The Septuagint has, νεώτερος ἐγώ εἰμι καὶ ἐξουδενωμένος—I am the younger, and set at nought; therefore the Greek interpreters suppose it relateth to the story where God bids Samuel to anoint one of the sons of Jesse to be king, and the elder children were brought forth, who were taller, and more likely too; and they said of them, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him; and when Samuel inquired for another, they told him, 1 Sam. xvi. 7, 'That there remaineth the youngest, and he keepeth sheep;' then, when he was but a youth, and a despised stripling, his heart was with God, and God favoured him. Or else they refer it to the time when Eliab his eldest brother despised him, 1 Sam. xvii. 28. Others think this was verified when the elders of Israel forsook him, and clave to Absalom. Bather I think it general to any afflicted condition, when he was little in estate and reputation, rather than in years; elsewhere so is this word 'small' taken: Arnos vii. 25, 'Jacob is small; by whom shall he arise?' when his condition was helpless and hopeless, and interest inconsiderable in the world. So here: 'I am small and despised;' I am looked upon as a man of no value and interest.

2. David's carriage under this condition, 'Yet do I not forget thy precepts.' First, here is a μείωσις; less is said, more is intended: I do earnestly remember them. Again, a man may be said to remember or forget two ways—notionally or affectively. Notionally, a man forgets when the notions of things formerly known are quite vanished out of his mind; affectively, when, though he retaineth the notions, yet he is not answerably affected, he doth not act suitably. So it is taken here, and implieth as much as I am steadfast in the profession of this truth: as they say in a like case, Ps. xliv. 17, 'We have not forgotten thee, nor dealt falsely in thy covenant;' not parted with any point of truth, or neglected and dispensed with any part of duty. 'Precepts' is put for the whole word of God: 'I do not forget thy word,' the comforts and duties of it. None do so far forget God and his precepts as those that make defection from him. The sum of all is, My mean and despicable condition doth not make a breach upon my constancy, but still I keep the credit of being a faithful servant to thee. His temptation was double. His faithfulness had made him small (God seemeth to forget us in our low estate, yet we should not forget him), and had made him despised. Though we lose esteem with men by sticking to the word of God, yet the word of God should lose no esteem with us.

Doct. They that love God may be reduced to a mean, low, and afflicted condition. 'I am small,' saith David. The Lord seeth it meet for divers reasons.

1. That they may know their happiness is not in this world, and so the more long for heaven and delight in heavenly things: Ps. xvii. 14, 15, 'From men of the world, which have their portion in this life: as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.' Christ gave his Spirit to the rest of the disciples, and the purse to Judas; he had the keeping of the bag, that was the worst. God's dearest children usually have the least in this world, that they may look higher; as Levi had no portion among his brethren, because God would be his portion. Others have more plentiful accommodations for back and belly; they are better clad, their tables more plentifully furnished and supplied, larger portions for their children. They that look to save anything or get anything by religion but the saving of their souls are foully mistaken; if we have more than others, religion calleth for more disbursements. Charity and liberal distributions exposeth to troubles; religion moderateth our desires, and forbids all unjust ways of acquiring wealth, calleth upon us to forsake all for a good conscience. Therefore they that follow Christ out of a design to be rich in this world, lose their aim. Not but that hypocrites sometimes make a market of religion, but then God is angry, and they, and the church too, pay for it at last: not but that religion bringeth in temporal supplies: Mat. vi. 33, 'First seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,' ταῦτα πάντα προστεθήσεται; food and raiment it bringeth in. God may give some a more plentiful allowance; especially if they be faithful stewards, then they are intrusted with more; but generally they are mean and small, or if they have more of this world's goods, they have their afflictions in other kinds.

2. It is necessary to cut off the provisions of the flesh and the fuel of their lusts. A rank soil breedeth weeds, and when we sail with a full stream we are apt to be carried away with it. We either glut our selves with the pleasures of the flesh, or grow proud, and hanker and linger after the pomp and vanities of the world, and neglect God. And therefore God is fain to diet us, and to keep us bare and low; as he is said to cut Israel short, 2 Kings x. 32, when he straitened their coasts and borders. So for our cure we need not only internal grace to abate the lust, but external providence to catch away the prey and bait by which it is fed. The wise man saith not only, Give me grace, but 'Give me neither poverty nor riches,' Prov. xxx. 8, 9; and Gal. vi. 14, 'By whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.' Both parts are necessary. Riches are a great temptation; we would root here, and grow sensual, worldly, and proud, if God did not snatch our comforts from us, when we are apt to surfeit of them. A plentiful portion of temporal things is spiritually dangerous.

3. That they may be more sensible of his displeasure against their sins and scandalous carriage, by which they have dishonoured him and provoked the pure eyes of his glory. Never have scandals fallen out but some great woe followed: Mat. xviii. 7, 'Woe to the world, because of offences.' Therefore God hath brought his people low that he may vindicate his name, which through their means is blasphemed, Rom. ii. 24, and make his people sensible of their sin. The world shall know that he doth allow sin no more in them than in others; and therefore, though they were as the signet upon his finger, he will pluck them off, and make them feel the smart of their wanderings: Amos iii. 2, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.' They that have been so near and dear to him, the world might think he did approve their sins if he did not manifest his displeasure at them. Usually their sins go nearest his heart, and meet with the sorest vengeance: Deut. xxxii. 19, 'When the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provokings of his sons and of his daughters.' Their relation to God, their privileges, and the consequences of their actions, aggravate their sins; and therefore God is most quick and severe in punishing their sins. We complain we were brought low, but were not our provocations first very high? The most religious cannot wipe their mouths, and excuse themselves as faultless. Oh! what a sad part hath been lately acted upon the public stage! What a trade have many driven for themselves under a mask of religion! What breaches in the body of Christ, uncharitable divisions, making a profession of the name of Christ for carnal ends!

492

4. That we may learn to live upon the promises, and learn to exercise suffering graces; especially dependence upon God, who can support us without a temporal visible interest. Compare Rev. xii. 11, 'And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives to the death;' Rev. xiii. 7, 'And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations.' You shall see how the enemies overcome, and the saints overcome; the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The beast raiseth the world against the saints, and prevaileth over their bodies; he overcomes them by spoiling them, of liberty, lives, and temporal estate; but they overcome by adhering to truth, and resisting his temptations and their own corruptions even in the lowest

estate by suffering. So for other graces,—patience, meekness, self-denial, spiritual comforts. As the stars in their order fought against Sisera, so all graces are exercised in their turn: Rev. xiii. 10, 'Here is the faith and patience of the saints;' that is, a time to act these graces. A full third of the scriptures would be lost which containeth comfort for afflicted ones, if God did not exercise them with temporal afflictions.

5. That God may convince the enemies that there is a people that do sincerely serve him, and not for carnal selfish ends, Job i. The carnal world suspects private, selfish, worldly aims and designs in all that we do, and attributes all our duties to interest; being themselves led by interest, they cannot think others are led by conscience. Men are apt to suspect and malign what they will not imitate. There is sometimes too much advantage given; many are mercenaries, only esteem the ways of God when beneficial to them: John vi. 26, 'Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.' Therefore it is needful to heighten the price of religion when it is too cheap a thing to be a Christian. This God doth by bringing his people low, that the world may see some will cleave to him in all conditions; not only when his ways are befriended, but when frowned upon. God will glorify himself and his truth by their constancy.

6. That his glory may be more seen in their deliverance; and therefore before God doth appear for his children, he bringeth them very low. Thus Paul, 2 Cor. i. 9, 'We had the sentence of death in our selves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raised the dead;' and Ps. cxxxvi. 23, 'He remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever.' His mercy and power is the more glorious in our rescue.

All that I shall say by way of use on this point is this—

1. That when we are a small people, and persons of no interest, we have a liberty to use it to God; you may make use of your weak and low condition as an argument of pity. So doth the prophet Amos, 'Jacob is small;' so doth David here and elsewhere: Ps. cix. 22, 'But I am poor and needy; deliver me for thy name's sake;' and Ps. lxix. 29, 'But I am poor and sorrowful; let thy salvation, O God, set me on high.' It is some ease to acquaint a friend with our griefs that can only pity us, much more when we have liberty to go to God, who can and will help us, and will allow us to complain to him, though not of him.

2. When God's ends are accomplished there is hope: Isa. x. 12, 'When the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion;' when he hath chastised his people, and brought them to his purpose, then he will reckon with his enemies; when heaven is minded more, and earth less. We naturally mind earthly things, and please our selves with the dreaming of a happy estate in the world; the appetite of temporal dominion, and wealth, and honour, and peace is natural to us, and very hardly subdued; and therefore we would fain flourish here, and do not comfort ourselves in our crosses with the meditation of the glory of the world to come, but are always feeding ourselves with desires and hopes of earthly happiness, and of turning the tide and current of affairs, that things

may again smile, upon us; and when frustrated and disappointed of this hope, our soul fainteth. Your worldly happiness will be a snare to you while you are thus affected, Mat. vi. 33. Prepare for heaven, and God will give you so much happiness by the way as will be needful and fit for you. Again, when we are mortified, and the cross hath purged out sin, Isa. xxvii. 9, the cross hath done its work. So when we are humble: Lev. xxvi. 41, 'If then their uncircumcised hearts be humble, and they accept of the punishment of their iniquity.' To be meek in spirit and to trust in the Lord is a forerunner of mercy: Zeph. iii. 12, 'I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.' When you bring honour to God by your sufferings: James i. 4, 'But let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.' When it is most for God's glory to do it: 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.'

Doct. God's people, when they are brought low, are usually a very despised people, the most despised people under heaven.

Here I shall show—

1. That this is the usual lot of an afflicted people.

2. But especially of the people of God.

3. The trial is very grievous to them.

1. An afflicted people are usually a despised people: Ps. cxxiii. 4, 'Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at case, and with the contempt of the proud.' They that are proud, and have all things flow in upon them according to their own will, contemn and slight others, and take no notice of their burdens, unless it be to increase them; they pour vinegar on the wound. The heathens had a reverence for places stricken with thunder, because the hand of God had touched them; but here it is not so: Job xii. 5, 'He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thoughts of him that is at ease.' While we are burning lamps, shining in riches and greatness, we shall have enough to look after us; but a poor, broken, dying lamp, a snuff, that is ready to go out, everybody holdeth their nose at it. Whilst the enemies are honourable, great, tumble in wealth and the excess of carnal delights, they despise those that are mean and low, and fallen under God's hand.

494

2. The people of God, much more common sufferers, may meet with some pity in their calamity, but the godly are subject to reproaches and mockings in their troubles; and this many times proveth the heaviest part of the cross, and maketh it most grievous to be borne. It is so partly because they are fallen from their great hopes, carried on in a way of religion. Where is their God, their fasting, prayer? As if all were now delusions and fantastical impressions. And partly because the presence of God is sensibly gone from them. The presence of God among his people maketh them wise,

courageous, prosperous. How should one chase a hundred, and a hundred put a thousand to flight? But when God leaveth them, they grow despicable and ridiculous above all others: Hosea xiv. 1, 'Return to the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.' 'All that honoured her shall despise her, because her nakedness is seen,' Lam. i. 8. A dispirited, judgment-blasted people shall be contemned. And partly because the cause for which they suffer may be strangely disguised and ill-represented to the world. Satan was first a liar and then a murderer, John viii. 44. Elijah was thought the troubler of Israel. They may not only persecute, but say all manner of evil against us falsely for Christ's sake, Mat. xi. 19. Christ is called a glutton, a wine-bibber; and Stephen a blasphemer. And partly by Satan's instigation; by this means he maketh the despisers increase their sin and hasten their judgment, and so he dissuades and discourages many weak Christians from owning the despised ways of Christ; yea, it taketh off much of the cheer fulness and courage of the strong in the profession of godliness.

3. It is very grievous. Contempt maketh our other trials more sharp. Every man thinketh himself worthy of some respect, and would be somebody in the world, and therefore, when we are laid aside as if dead and useless, the temptation is the greater. Saul could better bear death than contempt: 1 Sam. xxxi. 4, 'Draw thy sword and thrust me through, lest the uncircumcised come and abuse me.' Zedekiah was afraid of mocking: Jer. xxxviii. 19, 'Lest they deliver me into the hands of the Chaldeans, and they mock me.' But not only as we are men is it grievous to us, but also as Christians; because this contempt reflecteth upon our hopes and the worship of God; it hindereth our service: while we were esteemed we did more good, and had greater advantages. It may revive the sense of guilt. God saith, 1 Sam. ii. 30, 'Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.' We have made God's name to be reproached, and religion to be lightly esteemed; we may own the justice of God in all this.

Use. Oh! then, let us be fore-armed against this temptation, that when we lose esteem with wicked men, because we will not comply with their lusts, we may bear it patiently. Surely we stand too much upon honour and respect, and have too tender a sense and feeling of contempt, when it discourageth us in the ways of God. A Christian should seek the honour that cometh from God only, and be content with his approbation. I know it is a blessing to have respect with men; it is said of our Lord Christ that he grew in favour with God and with men, Luke ii. 52; the same also is spoken of Samuel: 1 Sam. ii. 26, 'And the child grew, and was in favour with God and with men.' It is a blessing where it may be had without any violation of duty. When God blameth us not, and men have no just complaint against us, our care must be to provide things honest in the sight of God and men, Rom. xii. 17; to take away all cause of offence both from Jew and Gentile, and from the church of God, 1 Cor. x. 32. But if men will not be pleased but with the offence of God, we should count it a privilege to be worthy of the world's hatred. *Gratias ago Deo meo, quod dignus sum, quem mundus oderit*, saith Hierome; be not discouraged if they slight you that slight God and Christ and their own salvation. Our self-love is too great when so tender to suffer a little disgrace and contempt for Christ, who hath suffered so many and so great indignities for us. Therefore,

though we be small and despised, let our affection be as great to the word as ever; say, 2 Sam. vi. 22, ‘I will yet be more vile than this, and base in mine own sight.’ Alas! many cannot bear contempt, *coguntur esse mali ne viles habeantur*, as Salvian complains in his days. As we should not forsake the despised ways of God, so not be dejected and troubled at it; better we be despised than God dishonoured; therefore let us purchase the glory of God with our disgrace. To animate you—

1. Consider it is the usual lot and portion of God’s children. When God meaneth thoroughly to humble his children, he suffereth them to be odious in the eyes of the people where they live: we need so sharp a means to do us good, therefore the church complaineth of contempt: Lam. iii. 45, ‘Thou hast made us as the off-scouring and refuse in the midst of the people.’ You will say this was a sinning nation. Nay, the apostle saith the same thing of himself and other apostles: 1 Cor. iv. 13, ‘We are made the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things;’ cast out, as the sweeping of the city. Yea, Christ himself complaineth, Ps. xxii. 6, ‘I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people;’ as if he were but as a worm to be trod upon in respect of the world. Thou canst not be more despised than Christ was. So Isa. liii. 3, ‘He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; we hid our faces as it were from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not.’ Well, if this be a common lot and portion of God’s people, it is more usual to persecute with contempt than with violence; men are kept off by the restraint of laws.

2. Shall we not suffer a little for Christ who suffered so much for us? He hath endured greater reproaches for our sakes; and what are we to him? If he endured shame, was made a curse for us, what a softness and tenderness have we for our interests! Mat. x. 24, ‘The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord,’ &c.

3. We must be dead to esteem, credit, and reputation, as well as other things, or else we are incapable of the kingdom of heaven: John v. 44, ‘How can ye believe, that seek honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh of God only?’ John xii. 41, 42, ‘These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. Nevertheless among the chief 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.’ It is not enough to deny brutish pleasures, to escape sordid covetousness, but all prizing of our own credit, content to be nothing, that Christ maybe all in all, or else there is some affection not yet subdued to Christ’s interest; any interest of ours that cometh into competition with Christ must be denied.

4. This is the true fortitude. We all affect to be counted men of spirit and courage; there is not a greater evidence of it than when we can endure contempt for Christ. Military valour depends upon bodily spirits; it is a more brutish thing. Peter, that ventured upon a band of men, was overcome by the weak blast of a damsel’s question. He that can in a generous contempt count man’s day nothing: 1 Cor. iv. 3, ‘But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment,’ &c.

5. The more despised in the world for righteousness' sake, the more honourable with God. If they could hinder your esteem with him it were something, 2 Cor. x. 18. He is approved whom the Lord commendeth. They will ever be of great account in heaven that have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb, and kept themselves unspotted from the world, and are clothed with the sun and have the moon under their feet, Rev. xii. 1. The true and afflicted despised church is in the eyes of God fair as the sun, pure as the moon, Cant. vi. 10. You are an elect seed, a royal priesthood, 1 Peter ii. 9.

6. If we cannot endure a little disgrace for God, what shall we do when called to resist unto blood? Jer. xii. 5, 'If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, how canst thou contend with horses?' *Scommata nostra ferre non potes,* &c.

7. God hath his times of bringing you into request again: Ps. xxxvii. 6, 'He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day;' Zeph. iii. 19, 'Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee, and will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out, and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.' All God's children were despised in their time, and yet afterwards were honoured. There is a resurrection of names as well as persons. Abraham gave Isaac his son to God in sacrifice, and received him again; so we receive our names from reproach and contempt. He that draweth light out of darkness is able to revive our credit and esteem; if not in this world, yet in the world to come we shall be glorious, though our condition be never so contemptible here; our reward is not in this life. When he dies, the beggar is carried into Abraham's bosom. Would you be in the condition of Dives or Lazarus? to wallow in ease and plenty, and go to hell, and be cast out with the devil and damned spirits? or to be poor and despised here, to be carried by angels into the presence of God hereafter? So at the day of judgment: Mat. x. 32, 'Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father in heaven;' we shall be publicly owned.

497

8. Great contempt shall be poured upon those that now contemn you. When Hanun offered injury to David's servants, he took severe revenge of it. God will require an account of all the wrongs and affronts that are put upon his servants. The wicked shall be made the scorn of good men and angels: Ps. Hi. 6, 7, 'The righteous also shall see and fear, and laugh at him. Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness; but I am like a green olive-tree,' &c.

Doct. That though our condition be small and despicable, yet we should be still faithful in our respects to God and his word.

1. The temptation will not excuse us. *Esse bonum facile est, ubi quod vetat esse remotum est.* Our trial is expressly mentioned in the promise, as necessary for our crowning: James i. 12, 'When he is tried;' when the temptation is over, the trial is past. It is no praise for a woman to be chaste that hath no suitors. Adam was tempted by Eve, and Eve by Satan, yet both bore their burden. *Si*

taceret Deus et loqueretur Satan, &c. Why should we hearken to Satan's suggestions rather than God's admonitions?

2. God observeth what we do in our trouble: Ps. xliv. 20, 21, 'If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god, shall not God search out this, for he knoweth the secrets of our hearts?' If we slacken our service to God, or fall off to any degree of apostasy, the judge of hearts knoweth all; God knoweth whether we have or would deprave and corrupt doctrine, worship, or ordinances, or whether we will faithfully adhere to him, to his word, and worship, and ordinances, whatever it cost us.

3. God and his law are the same, and therefore though our condition be altered, our affections should not. If we love the word of God upon intrinsic reasons, there is the same reason we should adhere to it with love still, as to embrace it out of love: ver. 142, 'Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.' Among men, that may be just to-day which is not so to-morrow, because they and their laws alter; but God's law is the eternal rule of righteousness, that never alters.

4. In our poor and despicable condition, we see more cause to love the word than we did before; because we experiment supports and comforts which we have thereby: Rom. v. 3, 'Knowing that tribulation worketh patience,' &c.; 2 Cor. i. 5, 'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.' God hath special consolations for his afflicted and despised people; and makes their consolation by Christ to run parallel and to keep pace with their sufferings for Christ.

Use 1. Carry your duty still in remembrance. The first step of defection is to forget what God hath commanded. There is an oblivion, and a darkness for the present on the mind, so that a man knoweth not what he knoweth > as Hagar saw not the well that was before her, till God opened her eyes. Therefore revive the grounds of your adherence, if you would constantly adhere to God. The temptation cometh afresh upon you every day, with all the enticing blandishments; so should the reasons of your duty. It helpeth our perseverance to consider how strong and cogent they are, and what wrong we should do to God and religion to consent. At first a man beholds temptations with horror; but being familiarised, our thoughts are more reconciled to them; therefore recollect yourselves, and remember the reasons you first had to put you upon your duty; and if you duly consider them, they will be strong and cogent to repel the temptation, that would take you off from it.

498

Use 2. It showeth who are lovers of the word and who not. On the one hand, some love the precepts of God when they are in honour and esteem, have many to join with them, and they see peace and plenty follow the profession of it; but rather than they will endure trouble and contempt, forsake it. The Samaritans would be Jews when the Jews were favoured; but in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, when the Jews were in trouble, they would be called Sidonians, οὐκέθ' ὡμολόγουν τὸν

ἐν Γαριζιν ναὸν τοῦ μεγίστου θεοῦ, dedicating their temple not to Jehovah but Jupiter (Josephus). These never received the love of the truth. On the other side, when a man loveth it alike in all times and in all conditions, when rich, when poor, in liberty and in bonds, when the ways of God are countenanced or when despised, it is all one to him; they love it not for out ward respects, but internal reasons.

THE END OF VOL. VIII.

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Indexes

Index of Scripture References

Genesis

1:31 2:7 2:7 2:17 3:5 3:5 3:6 3:10 3:15 3:15 3:15 4:14 4:18 6:2 6:5 6:5 6:5 6:9 6:9 6:9 6:9 9:2 14:12 15:1 15:1 15:6 15:16 15:16 17:1 17:1 17:1 18:15 18:19 18:32 19:4 19:17 19:17-18 19:18 19:30 20 21:11 25:17 27 27:41 28:20 28:21 28:21 29:20 31:34 32 32:10 32:10 32:25 32:26 32:26 34:22 34:23 35:1 35:20 38:25 39:9 40:13 42:21 43:9 48:15 48:16 48:16 49:4 50:20

Exodus

1:12 2:27 3:7 5:5 6:12 7:13 10:23 13:21 15:1 15:2 20:3 20:5 20:20 22:10 22:21-23 22:21-27 23:2 23:20-23 24:7 24:8 25:23 27:20 27:21 28:41 29:4 32:19 32:19 33:2 33:3 34:15 36:2 38:8

Leviticus

3:3 3:10 7:16 8:4 8:5 10 13:24-26 14:4 18:2 18:4 18:5 18:5 18:5 18:27 18:28 22:2 22:3 22:18 25:17 26:25 26:25 26:41 26:41

Numbers

6:3 6:4 6:25 12:13 12:14 16:15 20:10 20:11 20:12 21:2 23:10 25:7 25:11 27:21 28:3 29:39 30:2

Deuteronomy

4:6 4:23 5:2 5:29 5:29 5:29 5:32 6:5 6:6 6:6 6:6 6:6 6:7 6:7 6:7 6:24 7:22 7:22 7:23 8:2 8:15 8:16 10:12 13:2 13:3 16:20 16:20 17:18 17:19 21 21:32 23:18 23:24 24:14 25:4 26:15 27:26 28 28:47 28:48 28:58 28:59 28:65 29:2 29:2 29:3 29:4 29:9 29:10 29:19 29:19 29:19 29:20 30:6 30:11 30:12 30:15 30:20 32:4 32:5 32:15 32:19 32:27 32:27 32:35 32:36 33:29

Joshua

1:1 3:10 6:15 7:9 7:11 7:12 9 9:3 9:3 9:4 9:19 9:20 10:24 14:8 14:11 23:14 24:15 24:15 24:18 24:19 24:19

Judges

1:7 4:21 5:28 6:23 9:53 9:53 10:16 10:16 10:16 12:3 18:24

Ruth

1:14 1:18 2:12 3:13

1 Samuel

1:6 2:13 2:26 2:26 2:30 2:30 3:17 3:18 3:18 4:13 4:18 8:11 12:2 12:3 12:3 12:4 13:6 13:13 13:14 15:35 16:7 16:7 16:25 17:28 17:36 17:37 18:9 19:5 19:23 20:32 21:13 23:9 23:11 23:12 24:17 24:17 25:11 26:19 27:1 27:1 27:11 28:21 30:6 31:4

2 Samuel

1:11 1:12 3:1 6:7 6:7 6:8 6:22 6:22 6:22 7:2 7:13 7:19 7:19 8:15 12:7 12:9 12:10-12 13:22 14:25 14:30 14:31 14:32 15:26 16:7 16:8 16:9 16:11 19:43 20:1 21:1-3 23:5 24:14 24:25

1 Kings

1:21 3:6 10:8 13 13 13:21 15:5 18:4 18:40 19:4 19:10 19:14 20:11 20:31 21:3 22:8 22:37

2 Kings

1:13 1:13 1:14 5:12 5:13 6:15 6:15 6:16 6:33 6:33 6:33 8:11 8:18 9:32 10 10:16 10:32 14:26 14:26 14:26 18:5 18:6

1 Chronicles

12:17 13:12 13:12 19:13 22:19 22:19 29:9 29:18 35:23

2 Chronicles

6:38 6:39 7:12 7:14 7:14 7:14 12:8 12:8 15:12-14 16:9 20:3 20:12 20:12 24:22 26:16 28:20 28:22 30:8 30:8 30:8 31:14 32:25 33:22 34 34:31

Ezra

9:3 9:4 9:6 9:7 9:13 9:13 9:13 10:6

Nehemiah

1:1-11 1:6 4:6 5:9 5:9 6:11 9:6 9:16 9:19 9:29 9:33 10:29 10:29 13:11 13:17 13:29 13:31

Esther

3:5 3:6 3:16 4:16 5:6 5:9 5:10 6:6 6:12 7:3 7:8 7:9 8:17

Job

1 1 1:1 1:1 1:21 1:21 1:21 2:4 4:14 4:15 5:3 5:3 5:8 5:8 5:12 5:13 5:13 5:19 5:27 6:14 6:20 6:30 7:9 8:9 8:12 8:12 11:12 11:20 12:5 12:5 12:11 13:14 13:14 13:15 13:15 13:15 13:27 15:11 15:11 15:35 17:3 18:8 19:8 20:12 20:12 20:12 20:13 20:15 20:26 22:27 27:8 27:8 27:10 27:11 28:15-20 28:28 29:3 29:22 31:1 31:1 31:23 31:29 32:1-22 32:4-6 32:4-6 32:7 32:7-9 32:8 33:16 33:17 33:22 33:23-25 33:24 33:24 33:25 34:3 34:19 34:23 35:9 36:8 36:9 38:7

Psalms

1:1 1:2 1:2 1:2 2:3 2:3 2:11 2:12 3:3 3:3 4:1 4:3 4:3 4:4 4:6 4:6 4:6 4:6 4:6 4:6 4:7 4:7 4:7 4:7 5:3 5:3 5:3 5:12 5:12 6:6 6:7 6:8 6:9 7:9 7:15 8:2 8:2 8:2 8:9 9:4 9:7 9:7-9 9:9 9:10 9:10 9:10 9:10 9:12 9:13 9:13 9:14 9:14 9:15 9:16 9:16 9:16 9:16 9:16 9:18 10:2 10:2 10:14 10:17 10:18 10:18 11:6 11:7 11:7 11:7 12:4 12:5 12:6 13:5 14:1 15:1 15:4 16:2 16:3 16:5 16:5 16:7 16:7 16:9 16:11 17:4 17:5 17:7 17:8 17:14 17:14 17:14 17:14 17:14 17:14 17:14 17:15 17:15 17:15 18:21 18:21 18:23 18:23 18:23 18:26 18:30 18:30 18:30 18:30 18:30 19:1-14 19:6-8 19:7 19:7 19:7 19:7 19:8 19:8 19:8 19:8 19:8 19:8 19:9 19:10 19:10 19:10 19:10 19:11 19:11 19:11 19:13 19:13 19:14 19:14 21:3 22:4 22:5 22:5 22:6 22:7 22:8 22:11 22:20 23:4 23:6 24:3 24:4 24:6 24:6 25:1 25:2 25:3 25:5 25:5 25:8 25:8

25:8 25:8 25:9 25:9 25:10 25:12 25:14 25:14 25:15 25:15 25:18 25:21 26:4 26:9 26:16 27:1 27:1 27:4 27:4 27:4 27:5 27:8 27:8 27:11 27:11 28:7 28:7 28:7 30:6 30:6 30:7 30:31 31:5 31:16 31:20 31:20 31:22 31:22 31:22 31:22 31:24 32:5 32:6 32:7 33:5 33:18 33:20 34:8 34:10 34:10 34:10 34:15 34:19 34:19 34:22 35 35:1 35:7 35:14-16 36:6 36:7 36:9 37 37:1 37:2 37:5 37:6 37:12 37:12 37:13 37:13 37:16 37:27 37:37 37:38 37:39 38:10 39:5 39:9 39:11 40:1 40:8 40:8 42 42:1 42:1 42:5 42:5 42:9 43:3 43:3 44:17 44:17 44:17 44:17 44:18 44:20 44:21 45:1 46:1 46:2 48:10 48:14 48:14 48:14 49:12 49:13 50:5 50:13-15 50:14 50:15 50:15 50:17 50:21 50:21 50:21 50:21 50:22 50:22 50:22 50:23 51 51:3 51:4 51:4 51:4 51:8 51:12 51:12 51:17 51:18 51:18 51:19 53:5 54:6 55:19 55:19 55:20 56:4 56:6 56:10 57:1 57:1 57:2 57:6 58:7-11 58:10 58:11 58:11 58:11 59:11 59:11 60:18 62:9 63:1 63:3 64:7 66:14 66:18 66:18 66:18 67:1 68:9 69:9 69:22 69:29 69:30 69:31 71:20 71:20 73 73:1 73:1 73:1 73:1 73:4 73:11 73:12 73:12 73:16 73:17 73:17 73:17 73:17 73:17 73:17 73:17 73:17 73:17 73:18 73:18 73:23 73:24 73:24 73:26 73:26 73:28 73:28 74:9 74:10 74:22 75:2 75:8 76:6 76:7 76:7 76:11 76:11 77:8 77:8-10 77:9 77:9 77:10 77:19 78:11 78:37 78:41 80:1 80:3 80:7 80:14 80:18 80:19 80:19 81:10 84:11 84:11 84:11 84:11 84:11 84:11 84:11 85:6 85:6 85:8 85:8 85:13 86:2 86:11 86:11 86:11 86:17 86:17 88:13 88:14 88:18 89:19 89:31 89:32 89:33 89:34 90:1 90:1 90:11 90:12 90:15 91:1 91:4 91:9 92:7 94:2 94:11 94:12 94:12 94:12 94:13 94:15 94:18 94:19 96:10 97:1 97:1 97:2 97:10 97:10 97:10 97:10 97:10 101:3 102:13 102:14 103:3 103:6 103:6 103:14 103:18 103:20 103:21 104:29 105:4 105:22 106:3 106:3 106:4 106:4 106:5 106:33 106:33 106:35 106:35 107:11 107:12 107:43 109:22 110:1 110:1 111:10 111:10 111:10 112:7 112:9 112:10 115:1 115:1 115:2 116:5 116:6 116:8 116:9 116:16 116:16 116:17 116:18 118:8 118:18 118:18 119 119:1 119:4 119:4 119:4 119:5 119:6 119:8 119:9 119:9 119:11 119:14 119:18 119:20 119:20 119:21 119:24 119:24 119:27 119:32 119:32 119:32 119:33-35 119:36 119:36 119:37 119:49 119:51 119:51 119:53 119:61 119:69 119:71 119:75 119:82 119:83 119:87 119:91 119:96 119:98 119:99 119:99 119:100 119:101 119:101 119:102 119:103 119:103 119:104 119:104 119:104 119:105 119:105 119:105 119:105 119:106 119:106 119:107 119:107 119:108 119:109 119:110 119:111 119:111 119:111 119:111 119:112 119:113 119:113 119:114 119:114 119:114 119:115 119:115 119:115 119:115 119:115 119:116 119:116 119:116-117 119:117 119:118 119:118 119:119 119:119 119:119 119:120 119:121 119:121-122 119:122 119:122 119:123 119:123 119:124 119:125 119:126 119:127 119:128 119:128 119:129 119:129 119:130 119:131 119:132 119:132 119:132 119:133 119:133 119:133 119:134 119:135 119:136 119:136 119:136 119:137 119:137 119:138 119:139 119:139 119:139 119:140 119:140 119:141 119:141 119:142 119:158 120:5 120:5 120:6 121:1 121:2 121:4 123:1 123:2 123:2 123:2 123:2 123:3 123:4 123:4 123:4 124:3-5 124:7 125:2 125:2 125:3 125:3 125:3 125:3 125:3 125:3 125:4 127:2 128:2 129:2 130:1 130:3 130:5

130:6 131:1 131:5 132:1 135:10 136:23 138:2 138:2 138:2 138:3 138:3 138:3 138:3
139:2 139:8 139:21 139:21 139:22 140:5 140:12 141:2 141:3 141:3 141:8 141:9
141:9 142:4 142:5 142:7 142:7 143:2 143:2 143:2 143:2 143:10 143:10 143:10
143:10 144:15 145:5 145:9 145:9 145:17 145:18-20 146:4 149:4

Proverbs

1:4 1:10-15 1:17 1:22 2:2 2:2-5 2:3 2:3 2:4 2:4 2:5 2:7 2:9 2:10 2:10 2:14 3:1
3:2 3:3-6 3:5 3:6 3:6 3:9 3:14 3:17 3:17 3:31 3:32 4:4 4:7 4:14 4:15 4:16 4:18
4:18 4:18 4:23 5:6 5:8 5:11 5:22 6:1 6:2 6:14 6:21 6:22 6:23 6:23 6:23 6:23
7:1-27 7:2 7:22 7:23 7:23 8:4 8:5 8:5 8:9 8:10 8:11 8:13 8:13 8:13 8:17 8:19
8:31 8:36 9:3-5 9:12 10:2 10:3 10:4 10:5 10:9 10:20 10:20 10:36 11:3 11:4 11:15
11:15 11:18 11:19 11:20 11:21 11:23 11:31 11:31 11:31 12:3 12:3 12:5 12:5 12:7
12:26 12:26 12:26 12:28 13:6 13:12 13:12 13:13 13:13 13:20 13:20 13:25 13:34
14:14 14:17 14:25 14:32 14:32 15:8 15:9 15:13 15:15 15:16 15:17 15:24 15:24
15:26 15:26 16:2 16:2 16:3 16:3 16:4 16:7 16:7 16:8 16:10 16:14 16:15 16:16
16:16 16:24 16:30 17:5 17:18 18:14 18:14 19:2 20:7 20:16 20:25 20:27 21:3 21:12
21:21 21:30 22:3 22:3 22:3 22:6 22:22 22:23 22:23 22:24 22:26 22:27 23:4 23:4
23:10 23:11 23:11 23:12 23:26 23:26 23:26 24:9 24:13 24:14 24:15 24:16 24:17
24:18 24:25 25:4 25:5 26:7 26:9 26:26 27:5 27:7 28:2 28:3 28:8 28:14 28:14
28:14 28:14 28:20 29:6 29:25 29:27 30:2 30:3 30:5 30:5 30:5 30:8 30:9 31:30

Ecclesiastes

1:18 3:11 4:1 4:1 4:1 5:1 5:4 5:5 5:8 5:8 5:8 6:9 7:4 7:7 7:7 7:20 7:20 7:29
8:4 8:11 8:11 8:11 8:12 8:13 9:1 9:2 9:2 9:4 9:10 9:18 11:7 11:7 12:1 12:1 12:7

Song of Solomon

1 1 1:4 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2:3 4:11 4:16 5:2-3 5:6 5:6 5:8 5:9 6:10 8:6
8:7

Isaiah

1 1:3 1:3 1:5 1:6 1:16 1:16 1:17 1:25 3:5 3:5 3:9 3:9 3:10 3:11 3:13 3:14 4:1
4:4 5:18 5:20 5:20 6:5 6:5 6:5 6:5 6:13 7:13 7:14 8:9 8:10 8:12 8:13 8:17 8:19
8:20 8:20 8:20 8:20 8:20 9:2 9:10 10:5 10:6 10:6 10:12 10:12 10:12 10:14 10:15
11:6 13:22 14:12-16 23:4 26:1 26:6 26:8 26:8 26:8 26:9 26:9 26:9 26:10 26:16
26:20 26:20 27:3 27:4 27:8 27:9 27:9 27:9 27:9 27:9 28:16 28:29 29:8 29:14
30:31 32:8 33:15 33:15 33:15 33:16 33:16 33:22 38:3 38:3 38:7 38:9 38:14 38:14
38:15 40:1 40:11 40:29 40:31 40:31 42:6 42:8 42:16 43:10 44:3 44:22 45:9 45:10
45:15 48:7 48:10 48:17 48:17 48:19 49:8 49:14 49:14-15 49:15 49:23 49:24 49:25
50:8 50:10 51:1 51:12 51:13 51:13 51:22 51:23 52:2 52:3 52:5 52:5 53:1 53:3
53:4 53:4 53:6 53:10 53:10 54:7-8 54:8 54:10 54:11 54:13 55 55:1 55:2 55:3
55:7 55:7 55:7 55:13 56:4 56:6 56:6 56:6 56:6 57:10 57:15 57:15 57:15-18 57:17
57:17 57:18 57:20 58 58:1 58:5 58:13 59:1 59:2 59:2 59:2 59:4 59:14 59:16 60:2

60:7 62:6 62:7 63:7 63:8 63:9 63:9 63:15 63:17 64:6 64:7 64:7 65:20 66:2 66:2 66:2 66:8 66:25

Jeremiah

1:5 2:13 2:16 2:17 2:19 2:19 2:21 2:25 3:7-10 3:12 3:13 3:25 3:25 4:3 4:10 4:14 4:14 4:14 4:23 5:1 5:3 5:3 5:3 6:3 6:16 6:16 6:16 6:16 6:19 6:30 7:6 7:10 7:12 7:12 8:9 8:9 9:1 9:3 9:3 9:7 10:23 10:24 11:17 12:1 12:1 12:1 12:5 12:5 12:13 13:17 13:17 13:17 14:7 14:11 15:1 15:16 15:16 15:16 15:19 17:9 17:10 17:13 18:6 18:17 18:22 20:10 22:16 22:16 23:19 24:3 24:5 24:7 25:17 25:29 25:29 25:32 29:11 29:11 29:12 30:7 30:21 30:21 30:21 31:3 31:15 31:18 31:19 31:19 31:19 31:33 31:33 32:40 32:40 32:40 32:40 32:40 34:5 34:6 34:16-18 34:18 38:19 42 44:16 44:17 45:5 50:7 50:34

Lamentations

1:8 1:12 1:18 2:18 3 3:1 3:7 3:22 3:24 3:27 3:45 3:50

Ezekiel

3:3 9:4 9:4 9:4 9:5 11:20 12:21-28 14:2 14:14 16:6 16:6-8 16:8 16:8 16:8 16:20 16:51 16:52 17:18 17:19 18:5 18:25 18:25 20:38 22:19 22:20 24:13 33:7-9 33:31 33:32 34:29 36:25-27 36:26 36:26 36:26 36:26 36:26 36:27 36:30 36:32 36:37 38:22

Daniel

1:2 1:9 1:17 1:17 1:18 1:20 3:16 3:17 3:17 4:27 4:30 4:30 4:31 4:37 6:7 6:8 7:12 8:23 9:2 9:5 9:13 9:18 11:21 11:27 11:35 11:35 12:3

Hosea

1:4 2:19 2:20 3:5 3:5 4:1 4:2 4:3 4:4 4:8 4:12 5:15 5:15 5:15 5:15 5:15 6:3 7:4 7:12 7:12 7:14 7:14 7:14 7:14 10:11 11:12 12:7 12:7 13:11 14 14:1 14:2 14:2 14:8 14:8

Joel

2:17 2:17 2:28-30 3:13

Amos

1:9 2:4 2:9 3:2 3:2 3:2 3:2 3:6 3:8 4:5 5:15 5:23 5:24 6:2 6:2 6:4-6 9:4

Jonah

1:5 1:16 1:18 2:4 2:8 2:8

Micah

2:1 2:1 2:1 2:1 2:1 2:7 2:10 3:1-3 4:12 6:3 6:7 6:8 6:8 6:8 6:8 6:9 7:7 7:9 7:10

Habakkuk

1:13 1:13 1:13 1:15 1:16 2:1 2:3 2:3 2:3 2:4 2:9 2:10 3:15 3:18

Zephaniah

1:12 1:12 3:3 3:5 3:6 3:6 3:7 3:7 3:7 3:9 3:10 3:12 3:19

Haggai

1:2 2:13

Zechariah

1:15 1:15 1:15 1:15 2:5 2:8 2:8 3:1 3:2 7:3 7:10 8:16 8:17 8:17 10:3 12 12:10 12:10 12:12-14 13:8 13:9 13:9 14:7

Malachi

1:6 1:6 1:6 2:7 2:9 2:12 3:3 3:3 3:4 3:6 3:15 3:16 3:17 3:17 3:17 3:17 4:3

Matthew

2 2:8 3:7 3:8 3:12 4:3 4:6 5:6 5:8 5:8 5:8 5:10 5:13 5:16 5:19 5:19 5:19 5:25 5:28 5:28 5:46 5:46 6 6 6:2 6:9 6:12 6:19 6:20 6:21 6:21 6:24 6:24 6:24 6:24 6:25 6:27 6:30 6:33 6:33 6:33 6:33 6:33 6:33 6:34 6:44 6:63 7:5 7:6 7:6 7:12 7:14 7:22 7:27 8:11 8:31 9:13 9:15 9:15 9:17 10:16 10:16 10:16 10:24 10:28 10:28 10:29 10:30 10:32 10:36 10:37 11:11 11:19 11:19 11:25 11:25 11:26 11:28 11:28 11:28 11:29 11:29 11:30 12:5 13:5 13:11 13:20 13:21 13:29 13:37 13:37 13:44-46 13:46 13:52 15:6 15:19 15:19 15:19 15:22-27 16:16 16:17 16:24 16:24 16:24 16:26 17:5 18:7 18:8 18:9 18:25 19:22 19:27-29 20:6 20:15 20:15 20:15 20:15 20:22 21:15 21:16 22 22:21 22:29 23 23:1 23:2 23:2 23:3 23:23 23:26 23:27 23:32 24 24:12 24:20 24:26 24:40 24:41 24:51 25:11 25:12 25:14 25:32 25:33 26:40 26:40 26:44 26:72 26:75 27:4 27:4 27:46 27:46 27:46 28:20 28:20 28:20

Mark

3:5 3:5 4:11 4:19 4:24 4:33 5:9 6:20 6:20 6:20 6:20 6:20 6:26 6:41 7:21-23 7:28 7:29 9:44 10:20 10:23-27 10:48 13:1 16:16 16:20 16:21

Luke

1:6 1:29 1:30 1:35 1:51 1:51 1:74 1:74 1:74 1:74 1:74 1:75 1:75 1:75 1:75 1:77-79 2:14 2:19 2:52 3:14 6:26 6:46 7 7:41 7:47 9:22 9:23 9:54 9:55 9:60 10:42 11:4 11:13 11:27 11:28 11:52 11:52 12:4 12:13 12:18 12:20 12:20 12:32 12:47 12:47 12:48 13:5 13:5 13:5 13:23 13:24 13:31 13:32 14:15 14:26 14:26 14:26 14:26 14:26 15 15:2 15:7 15:19 16 16:8 16:9 16:10 16:14 16:25 16:25 16:30 16:31 17:9 17:10 17:26-32 17:32 17:35 18:7 18:7-18 18:11 18:11 18:14 18:25 19:8 19:10 19:41 19:41 20:31 21:34 22:3 22:3 22:28 22:29 22:31 22:32 23:13 24:16 24:25

John

1:4 1:4 1:5 1:5 1:12 1:12 1:29 2:4 2:15 2:17 3:16 3:16 3:16 3:18 3:18 3:19 3:19 3:19 3:20 3:20 3:20 3:20 3:20 3:21 3:30 3:33 3:33 4 4:9 4:10 4:10 4:10 4:10 4:24 4:37 4:42 5:29 5:35 5:35 5:44 5:44 5:44 5:45 6:26 6:26 6:26 6:27 6:44 6:45 6:45 6:45 6:45 6:51 6:55 6:66 6:67 6:69 6:69 7 7:6 7:7 7:7 7:17 7:17 7:24 7:37 7:38 7:46 7:49 7:50 7:51 8:12 8:29 8:31 8:32 8:34 8:37 8:44 8:44 8:44 8:52 8:56 8:56 9:4 9:39 10:10 10:20 10:28 10:28 11:6 11:8-10 11:12 11:25 11:27 11:28 11:36 12:6 12:19 12:26 12:27 12:41 12:42 13:6 13:7 13:23 13:24

14:6 14:18 14:21 14:21 14:22 15:2 15:2 15:3 15:15 15:15 15:19 15:19 15:19 16:2
17:3 17:4 17:8 17:14 17:17 17:17 17:17 17:25 18:38 19:10 19:11 20:29 21 21:19

Acts

1:6 2:37 2:39 3:22 3:26 4:12 4:19 4:19 5:4 5:5 5:5 5:13 5:13 5:17 5:31 5:31
6:14 7:20 7:22 7:25-27 7:33 7:34 7:34 7:34 7:55 8 8 8:22 8:22 8:39 9:4 9:6
9:6 9:31 9:31 9:31 10:35 11:21 11:23 11:23 11:23 11:23 12 12:9-11 13:10 13:36
13:36 13:41 14:19 14:20 15:3 15:9 15:21 16:21 17:5 17:11 17:11 17:16 17:28
17:28 17:31 18:5 19:10 19:13 19:31 20:21 20:32 21:13 21:13 21:13 21:14 21:14
22:3 23:12 24:16 24:16 24:25 26:7 26:9 26:16 26:20 26:28 27:23 27:24-26 27:25
27:30 28:4 28:18

Romans

1:9 1:9 1:14 1:14 1:16 1:18 1:18 1:18 1:18 1:20 1:20 1:21 1:27 1:28 1:30 1:32
2:4 2:5 2:5 2:5 2:5-9 2:6-8 2:7 2:9 2:14 2:14 2:15 2:15 2:15 2:15 2:15 2:18
2:18 2:20 2:24 2:28 2:29 3:2 3:3 3:4 3:19 3:20 3:22 3:24-26 3:26 3:31 4:4 4:11
4:16 4:16 4:17 4:18 4:23 4:24 5:1 5:2 5:3 5:3 5:3 5:3-5 5:5 5:5 5:6 5:11 5:12
5:12 5:18 5:18 5:20 5:21 6:1 6:2 6:11 6:12 6:12 6:12 6:13 6:14 6:14 6:16 6:16
6:16 6:17 6:17 6:17 6:21 6:21 6:22 7:7 7:8 7:9 7:9 7:11 7:12 7:12 7:14 7:15
7:15 7:15 7:15 7:16 7:18 7:18 7:18 7:18 7:21 7:22 7:23 7:24 7:24 7:24 7:24 8:1
8:1 8:1 8:2 8:3 8:3 8:3 8:5 8:5 8:5 8:7 8:7 8:7 8:7 8:7 8:8 8:13 8:13 8:13
8:14 8:15 8:17 8:17 8:18 8:18 8:19 8:24 8:27 8:28 8:28 8:28 8:28 8:28 8:28
8:28 8:28 8:28 8:29 8:29-30 8:31 8:31 8:32 8:36 8:37 8:37 9:16 9:16 9:16 9:18
9:20 9:21 9:22 9:22 9:22 9:23 10:2 10:2 10:3 11:20 11:22 11:36 12:1 12:1 12:1
12:1 12:1 12:1 12:1 12:2 12:2 12:9 12:11 12:11 12:12 12:12 12:17 12:17 12:18
13:4 13:7 13:8 13:12 13:14 14:7 14:8 14:9 14:12 14:17 14:17 14:18 15:3 15:13
16:7 16:17 16:18 16:20 16:20

1 Corinthians

1:2 1:9 1:19 1:21 1:26 1:26 2:2 2:4 2:4 2:4 2:4 2:4 2:5 2:8 2:9 2:11 2:14 2:14
2:14 2:14 2:14 2:14 2:14 3:1 3:2 3:3 3:3 3:6 3:13 3:18 3:18 3:18 3:18-20 3:21
3:22 4:3 4:5 4:7 4:10 4:13 4:13 5:6 5:6 5:7 5:9 5:10 6:9 6:9-11 6:12 6:15 6:19
6:19 6:20 6:20 6:20 7:4 7:12 7:29 7:30 7:30 7:31 7:31 8:1 8:2 8:2 9:16 9:17
9:21 9:24 9:26 10:1-10 10:9 10:11 10:13 10:13 10:13 10:13 10:13 10:31 10:31
10:32 11:32 11:32 11:32 11:32 11:32 13:1-3 13:9 13:9 13:9-11 13:12 13:12 14:20
14:24 14:24 14:25 15:10 15:19 15:31 15:32 15:32 15:45 15:47 15:58 15:59

2 Corinthians

1 1:4 1:4 1:5 1:5 1:9 1:9 1:9 1:10 1:10 1:10 1:10 1:11 1:11 1:12 1:12 1:12
1:12 1:12 1:12 1:17 1:19 1:20 1:20 1:20 1:22 2:4 2:14 3:3 3:5 3:8 3:18 3:18
4:2-4 4:3 4:3 4:4 4:4 4:4 4:4 4:4 4:4 4:4 4:6 4:6 4:8 4:9 4:16 4:17 4:17 4:17 5:7
5:8 5:14 5:14 5:17 5:19 5:20 6:10 6:10 6:10 6:11 6:12 6:15 7:1 7:1 7:6 7:10

7:11 7:13 8:5 8:12 10:5 10:5 10:5 10:18 10:18 11:23 11:29 12:7 12:7 12:8 12:9 12:9 12:10 12:10 12:21

Galatians

1:8 1:8 1:12-14 1:14 1:14 2:12 2:12 2:13 2:13 2:13 2:18 2:19 2:20 2:20 2:20 2:20 2:20 2:20 3:1 3:10 3:18 3:20 3:20 3:20 4:1 4:2 4:14 4:16 4:17 4:17 4:18 4:18 4:18 4:29 4:29 5:6 5:7 5:7 5:7 5:13 5:17 5:17 5:17 5:17 5:17 5:19 5:24 6:1 6:1 6:12 6:13 6:14 6:14 6:16 6:16 6:16 6:16 6:16 6:16 6:16 6:16 6:16

Ephesians

1:3 1:6 1:6 1:11 1:12 1:12 1:12 1:13 1:17 1:17 1:18 1:18 1:18 1:19 2:1 2:2 2:2 2:2 2:3 2:4 2:4 2:5 2:5 2:5 2:7 2:8 2:10 2:10 3:5 3:7 3:9 3:10 3:17 3:20 3:20 4:14 4:14 4:15 4:18 4:18 4:21 4:22 4:22 4:24 4:24 4:24 4:24 4:24 4:25 4:25 4:28 4:30 5:2 5:8 5:8 5:8 5:8 5:11 5:13 5:13 5:14 5:15 5:17 5:27 5:27 6:1 6:4 6:6 6:10 6:12 6:13 6:14 6:16 6:17 6:17 6:24

Philippians

1:7 1:8 1:9 1:9 1:9 1:12 1:14 1:15 1:16 1:18 1:20 1:27 1:28 2:12 2:12 2:12 2:12 2:15 2:15 2:15 2:16 3:8 3:10 3:12 3:12 3:13 3:13 3:13 3:15 3:18 3:18 3:18 3:19 3:19 3:19 3:19 3:19 3:19 3:20 3:20 3:20 3:20 4 4:5 4:6 4:7 4:7 4:8 4:12 4:13 4:13 4:13 4:13 4:18 4:22

Colossians

1:6 1:6 1:10 1:10 1:10 1:11 1:11 1:12 1:13 1:23 1:23 2:2 2:9 3:2 3:2 3:3 3:10 4:1 4:3

1 Thessalonians

1:3 1:5 1:5 1:9 1:9 2:12 2:12 2:13 2:13 2:16 4:1 4:5 4:6 4:9 5 5:18 5:22

2 Thessalonians

1:6 1:7 1:8 2:10 2:17 3:3 3:5 3:6 3:14

1 Timothy

1:3 1:5 1:13 1:15 2:1 2:2 2:8 3:5 3:9 3:9 3:16 3:16 4:5 4:5 4:7 4:8 4:8 4:12 4:13 4:15 5:6 5:8 5:8 5:8 5:22 6:5 6:8 6:9 6:9 6:9 6:10 6:10 6:11 6:12 6:13 6:19

2 Timothy

1:6 1:6 1:10 1:12 1:12 2:1 2:7 2:7 2:13 2:18 2:21 2:21 2:26 3:3 3:5 3:5 3:5 3:12 3:12 3:12 3:12 3:15 3:15 3:16 3:16 3:17 4:8 4:8 4:8 4:10 4:10 4:10 4:17 4:17 4:17 4:18 4:18 4:18

Titus

1:1 1:2 1:2 1:9 1:9 1:9 1:15 1:15 2:3 2:10 2:11 2:11 2:12 2:12 2:12 2:12 2:12 2:12 2:12 2:14 2:14 3:3 3:3 3:3 3:3 3:3 3:5 3:7 3:8 3:11

Hebrews

1:1 1:3 2:1 2:2 2:2 2:2 2:2 2:2 2:3 2:3 2:11 2:15 3:6 3:12 3:13 3:13 4:2 4:2 4:2 4:12 4:12 4:12 4:12 4:13 4:16 4:16 5:2 5:9 5:12 5:12 5:12 5:12-14 5:13 5:14

5:14 6 6:1 6:2 6:4 6:4 6:4 6:4 6:5 6:5 6:6 6:7 6:9 6:10 6:10 6:12 6:12 6:12 6:12 6:17 6:18 6:18 6:18 6:18 6:18 6:18 6:18 6:18 6:18 6:18 7 7:2 7:22 7:25 7:27 8:10 8:10 8:10 8:10 10:5-7 10:14 10:16 10:22 10:24 10:29 10:29 10:34 10:37 11 11:1 11:1 11:1 11:2 11:3 11:5 11:6 11:6 11:7 11:7 11:7 11:7 11:7 11:7 11:7 11:13 11:13 11:13 11:13 11:13 11:13 11:19 11:25 11:26 11:26 11:26 11:27 11:27 11:27 11:27 11:35 11:35 11:35 11:36 11:38 12:3 12:3 12:3 12:3 12:3 12:5 12:5 12:10 12:10 12:11 12:11 12:11 12:11 12:13 12:13 12:14 12:15 12:15 12:16 12:16 12:16 12:17 12:22 13:5 13:5 13:14 13:15 13:15 13:15 13:16 13:17

James

1:3 1:4 1:4 1:4 1:5 1:5 1:8 1:8 1:8 1:8 1:8 1:8 1:8 1:12 1:12 1:18 1:18 1:19 1:21 1:21 1:21 1:27 1:34 2:5 2:5 2:5 2:5 2:6 2:10 2:10-12 2:13 2:15 2:15 2:19 2:19 2:23 3:2 3:14 3:16 3:17 4:3 4:8 4:8 4:9 4:11 5:13

1 Peter

1:3 1:3 1:5 1:5 1:6 1:7 1:8 1:8 1:8 1:12 1:15 1:15 1:15 1:15 1:17 1:18 1:18 1:18 1:19 1:19 1:22 2:2 2:2 2:2 2:3 2:3 2:3 2:3 2:3 2:4 2:4 2:5 2:5 2:7 2:8 2:9 2:9 2:9 2:11 2:11 2:12 2:12 2:12 2:14 2:15 2:18 2:19 2:20 2:23 2:24 2:24 3:3 3:4 3:13 3:13 3:15 3:16 3:17 3:21 3:21 4:2 4:4 4:4 4:4 4:10 4:12 4:12 4:12 4:14 4:17 4:17 4:17 4:18 4:19 5:6 5:6 5:7 5:8 5:8 5:9 5:9 5:9 5:10

2 Peter

1:1 1:2 1:2 1:2 1:4 1:4 1:4 1:5 1:5 1:5 1:6 1:9 1:9 1:9 1:9 1:9 1:9 1:9 1:9 1:10 1:12 1:16 1:19 1:19 1:19 1:21 2 2:1 2:6 2:7 2:8 2:8 2:8 2:8 2:9 2:9 2:14 2:14 2:19 2:20 3:3 3:9 3:11 3:12 3:13 3:14 3:16 3:16 3:16 4:14

1 John

1:1 1:5 1:5 1:9 1:9 1:9 1:9 1:9 2:3 2:4 2:10 2:11 2:11 2:13 2:13 2:14 2:14 2:20 2:20 2:27 2:27 2:27 2:29 3:3 3:3 3:4 3:7 3:9 3:9 3:9 3:9 3:9 3:12 3:12 3:17 3:22 3:23 4:4 4:5 4:5 4:9 4:10 4:13 4:13 4:19 4:29 5:3 5:3 5:3 5:4 5:9 5:10 5:10 5:10 5:14 5:18 5:20 5:20

2 John

1:8 1:10 1:10 1:11

3 John

1:2 1:12

Jude

1:3 1:4 1:4 1:5 1:6 1:11 1:19 1:20 1:21 1:21 1:23

Revelation

1:6 1:20 2:2 2:6 2:9 2:13 2:13 2:21 2:24 2:28 3:2 3:3 3:4 3:7 3:7 3:10 3:17 3:18 3:18 3:19 4:11 6:15-17 10:10 12:1 12:11 12:11 12:11 12:11 12:12 13:6 13:7 13:8 13:10 13:10 13:10 13:11 14:13 14:13 15:3 15:3 17:4 18:4 18:7 18:20 19:2 19:3 21:17 22:16

Index of Greek Words and Phrases

- Θυμήσεις: 1
- Λόγισμοι: 1
- Λογισμοὶ: 1
- Νοήματα: 1
- ἀγοράσαντα: 1
- ἀδάπανον εὐαγγέλιον: 1
- ἀθέριξας: 1
- ἀκμή: 1
- ἀληθεύειν καὶ εὐεργετεῖν: 1
- ἀναδέξαι μὲ εἰς ἀγαθὸν: 1
- ἀναθεματίζειν ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θεῷ: 1
- ἀνόητα: 1
- ἀνομία: 1 2
- ἀντεχόμενον: 1
- ἀντεχόμενος: 1
- ἀπήλεγξας: 1
- ἀποκαραδοκία τῆς κτίσεως: 1
- βάθη: 1
- βάθη τοῦ Ζατανᾶ: 1
- γενέσθω καὶ ἐγένετο: 1
- δεσπότης: 1
- δήλωσις: 1
- δίκαιον: 1
- διαλογισμοὶ: 1
- δυσνόητα: 1
- δυσνόητά τινα: 1
- ἐξω βέλους: 1
- ἔργα τῆς σαρκὸς: 1
- ἔργον νόμου: 1
- ἐκδέξαι τε δοῦλόν σου: 1
- ἐμφατικῶς: 1
- ἐν διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν: 1
- ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ: 1
- ἐν πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ: 1
- ἐν τῇ παρουσῃ ἀληθείᾳ: 1
- ἐνθυμήσεις: 1 2
- ἐνομοθέτησάς με: 1
- ἐντολὴ: 1

•ἐξουδένωσας: 1
•ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι: 1
•ἐπερώτημα: 1
•ἐπὶ πάντων ἐπεκαλεῖτο, δίκαιος εἶ κύριε καὶ εὐθεῖς αἱ κρίσεις σου: 1
•ἐπίβλεπε ἐπὶ ε᾽μέ: 1
•ἐπίγνωσις τῆς ἀληθείας: 1
•ἐπιχαιρεκακία: 1
•ἐπλήσθησαν ζήλου: 1
•ἐπονειδίστους, καὶ καταγελάστους: 1
•ἐταπεινώθηω ἕως σφόδρα: 1
•εἰς ἀπολόγιαν: 1
•εἰς πασὰν ἀρέσκειαν: 1
•εἰς τὰ γένη: 1 2
•εἵργω: 1
•εὐπειθὴς: 1
•ζέοντες πνεύματι: 1
•ἥλιος: 1
•ἠλεήθην: 1
•ἵνα λύσῃ: 1
•καθήλωσον ἐκ τοῦ φόβου τὰς σαρκάς μου, ἀπὸ γὰρ τῶν κριμάτων σου ἐφοβήθην: 1
•καινὴ κτίσις: 1
•καιρὸς τοῦ ποιῆσαι τῷ κυρὶῳ: 1
•κακὸν παράκειται: 1
•καλῶς ἀρ᾽ ἄρκυν ἐς μέσην πορεύεται: 1
•κατὰ εὐδοκίαν: 1
•κατὰ τὴν αἰῶνα: 1
•κατὰ τὸ λόγιόν σου: 1
•κατὰ τὸ ῥητὸν: 1
•κατεργάζεσθαι: 1
•κατευθυνον: 1
•κρίσις: 1
•κύριος: 1
•λόγισμοι: 1
•μέγα μυστήριον: 1
•μείωσις: 1
•μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας: 1
•μὴ κατακυριευσάτω μου πᾶσα ἀνομία: 1
•μὴ συκοφαντησάτωσάν με ὑπερήφανοι: 1
•μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον: 1
•νεώτερος ἐγώ εἰμι καὶ ἐξουδενωμένος: 1
•νόμος: 1

•νοήματα: 1
•ὀρθοτριχεῖ ἀπὸ τοῦ φόβου ἡ σάρξ μου: 1
•ὀρφανοὺς: 1
•ὁ νόμος λύκνος ὀνομάζεται, ὁ Κρίστος υἱοςQu. ἥλιος: 1
•ὁ πιστὸς ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ: 1
•ὁ τοσαύτης ἀρετῆς ἐργάτης ἐλέους τυχεῖν: 1
•ὅρκος: 1
•ὅτι ἄδικον τὸ ἐνθύμημα αὐτῶν: 1
•οὐκ ἀπαιτεῖ μίσθον ἀλλὰ φιλανθρωπίαν αἰτεῖ: 1
•οὐκ εἶπε μὴ τυραννεῖτο, ἀλλὰ μὴ βασιλευέτω: 1
•οὐκέθ᾽ ὡμολόγουν τὸν ἐν Γαριζὶν ναὸν τοῦ μεγίστου θεοῦ: 1
•παρ᾽ ἐλπίδα ἐπ᾽ ἐλπίδα: 1
•πεισθέντες: 1
•πεισθέντες καὶ ἀσπασάμενοι: 1
•πεπυρωμένον λόγιόν σου σφόδρα: 1
•πικρὸν ζῆλον: 1
•πιστοὶ ἐν ὀλίγῳ: 1
•πλήρωμα νόμου: 1
•πολλὰ: 1
•πρῶτον αἴτιον τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῆς ταξεως πάσης: 1
•πρὸς πάσας τὰς ἐντολάς σου κατωρθούμην: 1
•πρὸς τὰ γένη: 1
•πρόθυμοι: 1
•σήμερον: 1
•σπέρμα: 1
•σπέρμα αὐτοῦ: 1
•τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶ λογίων τοῦ Θεοῦ: 1
•τὰ τίμια καὶ μέγιστα ἐπαγγέλματα: 1
•ταῦτα πάντα προστεθήσεται: 1
•τίνα: 1
•τὸ ἐπιεικὲς: 1
•τὸ θέλειν παράκειται: 1
•φωτίζει καὶ συνετίζει νηπίους: 1
•ὥσπερ κυβερνήτης πνεύματος ἐκλίποντος: 1

Index of Latin Words and Phrases

•Chirographa tua injiciebat tibi Domine.: 1
•Eodem sanguine Christi glutinati.: 1

- laetos diu florere nocentes vexarique pios: 1
- à minori ad majus: 1
- Ab alieno libera me Domine.: 1
- Amor meus est pondus meum, eo feror quocunque feror: 1
- Anima nunquam melius agit: 1
- Anne dabit regnum, et non dabit viaticum?: 1
- Certum est nos facere quod facimus, sed Deus facit ut faciamus: 1
- Cogitemus ipsum magis mundum carcerem esse, exisse eos de carcere, quam in carcerem introisse intelligemus. Majores tenebras habet mundus, quae hominum corda excaecant: graviores catenas induit mundus, quae animas hominum obstringunt: 1
- Contractus est consensio ad constituendam obligationem, qua alter alteri fit obnoxius.: 1
- Cui res nomini subjecta negatur, nomini illuditur: 1
- Cui res subjecta nomini negatur, is nomine illuditur: 1
- Cur male bonis, et bene malis: 1
- Da veniam, imperator, tu carcerem comminaris, Deus autem comminatur Gehennam: 1
- De jure: 1 2
- De sera numinis vindicta: 1
- Defensio est, non arrogantia: 1
- Deus et mentis, et linguae, et vocis artifex: 1
- Deus non est debitor: 1
- Docet Spiritus Sanctus, sed per verbum: 1
- Dona talenta.: 1
- Eadem velle et nolle est summa amicitia.: 1
- Ego non sum ego.: 1
- Electorum corda semper ad se sollicite videant: 1
- Esse bonum facile est, ubi quod vetat esse remotum est.: 1
- Et convertat iram suam in te: 1
- Excussit membris tremor albus aristas: 1
- Exemplo qui peccat, bis peccat.: 1 2
- Fidelitas: 1
- Finis operis: 1
- Fugio paleam, ne hoc sim; non aream, ne nihil sim: 1
- Gratias ago Deo meo, quod dignus sum, quem mundus oderit: 1
- Hesterni sumus: 1
- Homines plus oculis credunt, quam auribus: 1
- Hominum non daemonum: 1
- Homo homini lupus: 1
- In malitiam statim invectus est: 1
- Ingeniosa res est esse Christianum: 1
- Involuntarium minuit de ratione peccati: 1
- Judicium adversus sceleratos, justitia erga bonos: 1
- Lege historiam, nefias liistoria: 1
- Legem posuisti mihi: 1
- Lex jubet, evangelium juvat: 1

- Modus operandi sequitur modum essendi.: 1
- Multa sunt aperta et manifesta: 1
- Ne videretur authoritate traxisse aliquos, et veritatis ratione, non pompae gratia praevaleret: 1
- Necessitas cogit ad turpia: 1
- Nemo consequitur praemium, quod facit ex officio debitum.: 1
- Nihil admirari: 1
- Nihil infelicius felicitate peccantium.: 1
- Nil admirari.: 1
- Non aeque glorietur accinctus, ac discinctus: 1
- Non dicit cum hostibus tuis, sed cum servo tuo.: 1
- Non differunt re consensus et electio: 1
- Non nisi grave bonum a Nerone damnari.: 1
- Nunquam ad te accedo, quin doctior recedam, quin sanctior: 1
- Nunquid ego tali?: 1
- O nimis iniqua amicitia! seductio mentis investigabilis: 1
- Odium abominationis: 1 2
- Odium in religionis professores: 1
- Odium inimicitiae: 1 2
- Omnia admirari: 1
- Omnis vita gustu ducitur: 1
- Omnis vita gustu ducitur.: 1
- Oportet Caesaris uxorem non solum castam esse, &c.: 1
- Optimus ille lector est: 1
- Pascimur apertis, exercemur obscuris; ibi fames pellitur, hic fastidium.: 1
- Paulus expectat coronam justitiae, justitiae Dei, non suae; justum est ut reddat quod debet, debet autem quod pollicitus est.: 1
- Periissem nisi periissem: 1
- Pro illa misericordia quam inter te et timentes nomen tuum constituisti.: 1
- Professio ipsa: 1
- Prout est jus diligentium nomen tuum: 1
- Quem fructum habui miser aliquando in iis quae nunc recolligens erubesco, maxime in illo furto, in quo ipsum furtum amavi, nihil aliud; et ipsum esset nihil, et ego eo miserior, et tamen solus id non fecissem. Sic recordor animum tunc meum, solus omnino id non fecissem, ergo amavi consortium eorum cum quibus id feci: 1
- Qui petat, accipiet: 1
- Quia Deus est: 1
- Quia non totaliter sanat: 1
- Quis comeditur zelo Domus Dei?: 1
- Quoad realum et magnitudinem peccati: 1
- Quoad subjectum: 1
- Quod non metuitur, contemnitur, quod contemnitur utique non colitur.: 1
- Quod si dolentem: 1
- Quod tibi non vis fieri, alteri ne feceris: 1
- Remove justitiam: 1

•Scommata nostra ferre non potes: 1
•Scriptura sic loquitur: 1
•Secundum judicium.: 1
•Secundum jus, et foedus illud.: 1
•Servire Deo regnare est.: 1
•Si non vis tibi parcere, parce Carthagini: 1
•Si taceret Deus et loqueretur Satan: 1
•Surgunt indocti, et rapiunt coelum, cum nos doctrma nostra detrudimur in gehennam.: 1
•Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.: 1
•Temporibus malis ausus esse bonus.: 1
•Tempus faciendi, Domine.: 1
•Tempus mittendi Filium Dei: 1
•Unumquodque operatur secundum suam formam: 1
•Ut qui vivi noluerunt prodesse, morte eorum respublica utatur: 1
•Velut factorem, adjutorem et excusatorem sui criminis: 1
•Venter in omni religione est potentissimum idolum: 1
•Verberat nos? lacerat nos Jehovah? patimur; non est saevitia, certamen est.: 1
•Veritas: 1
•Veritas, fidelitas, justitia: 1
•Verum est index sui et obliqui.: 1
•Vetus: 1
•Virtutis vim non sentiunt quia ejus praemium ignorant: 1
•Vix diligitur Jesus propter Jesum: 1
•a quatenus ad omne valet consequentia: 1
•ab efficiente ad effectum, a legislatore ad leges: 1
•ab impossibili: 1
•ab incongruo: 1
•abstulit hunc tandem Ruffini poena—absolvit Deos, tolluntur in altum, ut lapsu graviore ruant.: 1
•abstulit, sed et dedit: 1
•actualis praelatio unius rei prae altera: 1
•ad nihil deduxisti: 1
•ad plenitudinem scientiae: 1
•alimenta sunt medicamenta: 1
•aspice me: 1
•caeca potentia: 1
•coguntur esse mali ne viles habeantur: 1
•confixisti: 1
•conservare: 1
•continuationem actus: 1
•de facto: 1 2 3 4
•de ordine modus: 1
•dejectum quodammodo, non ejectum tamen: 1
•depositum: 1

•diligibilis naturae: 1
•dimensum: 1
•dissonantia quaedam appetitus, ad id quod apprehenditur ut repugnans: 1
•e contra: 1
•esse bonum facile est: 1
•et incerto florent mortalia casu: 1
•ferventis amoris gradus: 1
•ficta rectitudo: 1
•fide-jube, Domme, pro servo: 1
•finis operantis: 1
•finis operis: 1
•fons actionum ad extra: 1
•formaliter et interpretative: 1
•furor brevis: 1
•horrivilavit caro mea: 1
•idem velle et nolle: 1
•impetrare: 1
•in foro conscientiae: 1
•in minimo: 1
•in patria: 1
•in puncto: 1
•in statu destituto: 1
•in statu instituto: 1
•in termino: 1
•in via: 1
•inauditum et insperatum: 1
•indebitum: 1 2
•institue: 1
•intus existens prohibet exitum: 1
•ipso jure ministerium domino debet: 1
•jure creationis: 1
•jure venit in auxilium nostrum: 1
•jus suum cuique tribuere: 1
•jus zenorum: 1
•justitia: 1
•justitia causae: 1
•justitia personae: 1
•libido intellectus: 1
•lux dirigens: 1
•lux est vehiculum influentiarum: 1
•lux exhilarans: 1
•lux manifestans: 1
•lux vivificans: 1
•majoris infamiae: 1

•majoris reatus: 1
•mereri: 1
•meritorie et effective: 1
•meum et tuum: 1
•miles per sacramentum: 1
•milites per conjurationem, et milites evocati: 1
•ne damnet: 1
•ne regnet: 1
•ne sit: 1
•non dicit cum hostibus tuis: 1
•non peccare metuunt, sed ardere: 1
•non potest: 1
•non totaliter: 1
•num inesset rector: 1
•obedientiam servi: 1
•odium offensionis: 1
•operantis: 1
•operari: 1
•ostium: 1 2
•parvi pendisti: 1
•patronus: 1
•peccatum patitur, non facit: 1
•peccatum regnans, cui homo nec vult, nec potest resistere: 1
•penetrale: 1
•per modum auxilii transientis: 1
•per modum habitus: 1
•permanentis: 1
•perniciosior est, quo flagrantior: 1
•picta justitia: 1
•praecepisti justitiam testimoniorum tuorum et fidem valde: 1
•principium universalissimum: 1
•pro hic et nunc: 1
•promittendo se fecit debitorem: 1
•quantus quantus est: 1
•qui Platonicum et Aristotelicum Christianismum procudunt Christianis.: 1
•quoad naturam peccati: 1
•ratio dati et accepti: 1
•removendo prohibens: 1
•removens prohibens: 1
•reprobasti: 1
•respectu viae, et respectu termini: 1
•respice me: 1
•sacramentum militare: 1
•saepe occulta, nunquam injusta: 1

•sapientia eorum abscondit vitia, non abscindit: 1
•secundum judicium: 1
•sententia judicis: 1
•sententia lata, sed dilata: 1
•sententia legis: 1
•servilem: 1
•solvendo: 1
•sprevisti: 1
•suscipe servum tuum: 1
•terminum temporis: 1
•terminus actionum ad intra: 1
•tuti si cauti, securi si attoniti: 1
•unum magnum: 1
•ut bonis bene sit; et malis, male: 1
•ut sim bonus et justus: 1
•utile: 1 2
•verba mentis: 1
•verum est index sui et obliqui: 1
•video meliora proboque: 1
•visione simplicis intelligentiae: 1
•vitium seculi: 1 2
•voce: 1
•voto: 1

Index of Pages of the Print Edition

i ii iii iv v vi vii viii 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28
29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59
60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 105 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90
91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 108 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116
117 118 119 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140
141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163
164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186
187 188 189 190 191 192 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210
211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233
234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256
257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279
280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291 292 293 294 295 296 297 298 299 300 301 302
303 304 305 306 307 308 309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325
326 327 328 329 330 331 332 333 334 335 336 337 338 339 340 341 342 343 344 345 346 347 248

349 350 351 352 353 354 355 356 357 358 359 360 361 362 363 364 365 366 367 368 369 370 371
372 373 374 375 376 377 378 379 380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393 395
396 397 398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411 412 413 414 415 416 417 418
419 420 421 422 423 424 425 426 427 428 429 430 431 432 433 434 435 436 437 438 439 440 441
442 443 444 445 446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453 454 455 456 457 458 459 460 461 462 463 464
435 466 467 468 469 470 471 472 473 474 475 476 477 478 479 480 481 482 483 484 485 486 487
488 489 490 491 492 493 494 495 496 497 498