

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 aversion. 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 indeed 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 Haman, 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.) *λογισμοί*, *discourses* with its compound *διαλογισμοί*, 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.

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 sheweth 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 Parpar 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.

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.

[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 proggng 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. Uncleaness. 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.

[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 concerns 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 re-

penting, 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 understands 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 excellent 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: Dent. 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.

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 discoursed 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,

Dent. 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.

[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.

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 tempereth 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 overtake us, they shall not 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 himself 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.

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. cxliv. 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.'

Well, now, you see how this defence and this protection is set forth, 'Thou art my hiding-place and my shield.' God accommodates himself 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 outward 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 ; behold 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 not 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 vouchsafe 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 ourselves, 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.

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 anything 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.

[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. Sometimes 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 under 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.

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.'

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 subiecta 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 pulcam, 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 con-

verse 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.

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.

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 withdrawal 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 outward 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 him-

self 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?

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 partaker 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 not 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.¹

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, 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

¹ Irenæus relates this of the apostle John, giving Polycarp as his authority: *Adv. Har.* iii. 3.—Ed.

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.

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 que 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.

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 be 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.

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.

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 support 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, *permanens*, 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, *καὶνὴ 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.

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.

[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, sometimes 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 much 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 moderation 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.'

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 covenant, 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.

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.

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.

4. When is this life in good plight? It sheweth 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.

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 than 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.

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. lxxii. 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 beforehand, 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 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.

[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 uprightly?' 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 wait-

ing, 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.'

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 warning 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, O 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.

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 fighting 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. exxiii. 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.

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 supposition 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 thankfulness. 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.

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 tempest ; 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 'forgot 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.

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 observes 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 revered 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—

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. 125, 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 ; *Aquila, confixisti*, thou hast stricken through ; *Symmachus, ἀπὴλεξας, reprobasti*, thou hast disproved ; the vulgar, *sprevisti*, thou hast contemned ; *Apollinarius, ἀθέμισας, parvi pendidisti*, 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.

[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 Sapore 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 ἐπονιδίστους, 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.

[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 thereof, 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 be-

fore 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.

(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.

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 mali-

cious 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 stupidity 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, ne fias historia*—observe the instances of God's wrath upon others, lest thou be made an instance thyself. Sometimes 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. i. 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.

[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 holden 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 ῥητόν*, 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 innocent 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 sublimary things; but at length, when he saw Rufinus 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 stupidity 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 *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 acceptations 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 be 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 undermine others; for this reason God will bring them down.

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 superstitious 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 beguile 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 religious, 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 acceptance 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.

SERMON CXXX.

Thou pullest 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 pullest 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 'prosper 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.

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 forsake 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.

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?

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 filings 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 off-scouring 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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. xlv. 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, ' By 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.

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 cheerfully : 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, sometimes 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. Symmaechus 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 σαρκίς 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.

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 eat 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.

3. The ground of his fear, 'I am afraid of thy judgments.' The great severity 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 putttest 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 afflictions 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 prophetic. 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.

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 revered 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. lli. 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 all 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.

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 sollicitè 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 observed 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, but also fear his judgments. Carnal men forget themselves when they are so bitter against others.

3. The usefulness of this fear sheweth 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 thou 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 pardon, 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 not 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 moderating 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 wife 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 stupidity! 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 merey 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.

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 sheweth 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. *Iactantius 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.

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 personæ*, the righteousness of the person; and *justitia causæ*, 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