

he is rooted in godliness. So a man is not resolved against sin till he hate it for its own sake. He may be frightened out of sin for a fit, put out of humour with it, but his heart is in again with his old lusts, till there be a detestation of sin; but when once he cometh to hate it, persuasions cannot easily move him, nor example draw him, nor difficulties compel him, to that which is evil; nor allurements, that have a great force upon us: 'Straightway he followed her.' But they cast away sin with indignation: Hosea xiv. 8, 'What have I any more to do with idols?'

2. This is a true distinctive note between good and bad. Men may forbear sin that do not hate it: they forbear it by constraint, for fear of punishment, shame, worldly ends; but regard it in their hearts. Ps. lxvi. 18. The dog hath a mind to the pail, but feareth the cudgel. But God judgeth not as man judgeth.

SERMON CXLI.

Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.—VER. 129.

IN the words are two parts—

1. The dignity and excellency of God's testimonies, *thy testimonies are wonderful.*

2. The effect it had upon David's heart, *therefore doth my soul keep them.*

Accordingly two points—

Doct. 1. That the testimonies of God, when duly considered and thoroughly understood, will indeed be found to be wonderful.

Doct. 2. The wonderful excellency of the word should beget in our hearts a readiness and diligent care to keep it.

Doct. 1. The testimonies of God are wonderful.

1. The word in itself is wonderful, as containing truths of a sublime nature.

2. It is wonderful in its effects; as it produceth effects rare and strange.

1. In itself considered, it is sometimes called the mystery of faith, as it containeth principles of faith; and sometimes a mystery of godliness, as it containeth rules of practice. As it is a mystery of faith, there are many strange doctrines in it above the reach of man's capacity, which we could neither invent nor understand, unless we be enlightened by the Spirit of God; as that three to be one, and one to be three; God to be made man, &c.; these are riddles to a carnal mind. And as it is a rule of faith, still it offereth matter of wonder, the duty of man being represented with such exactness and comprehensiveness: Ps. cxix. 96, 'I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.'

2. What rare effects it produceth: where it is entertained it maketh a Christian become a wonder to himself and others.

[1.] A wonder to himself: 1 Peter ii. 9, 'He hath called us out of

darkness into his marvellous light.' There is no man converted by the word of God but hath cause to wonder at his own estate, at the condescension of God in plucking him as a brand out of the burning, or that woful condition wherein he was before, when others are left to perish : John xiv. 22, 'Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?' And then that we are brought into the possession of such excellent privileges as we enjoy in our new estate, peace that passeth all understanding, Phil. iv. 7; joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 Peter i. 8; privileges greater than can be imagined or expressed. So are their hearts ravished in the sense of their reconciliation with God and communion with him. So also in giving them such an undoubted right to an everlasting blessed estate in the heavens : 1 Cor. ii. 9, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' He hath promised them a happiness which they can never think of, but every day they must fall a-wondering anew; and all this wrought by an exceeding great power working together with the word, Eph. i. 19; as Peter wondered at his own deliverance, when chains and gates and bars did all give way to the power of the angel that brought him forth : Acts xii. 9-11, 'And he went out, and followed him, and wist not that it was true that was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth into the city, which opened to them of its own accord, and they went out and passed on through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.' So may every one that is converted to God stand wondering, when he considereth how, from whence, and to what he is called by God; all this is wonderful indeed. There is more of God seen in inward experiences than in outward; in converting, comforting, quickening, and carrying on the work of grace in our own hearts, than in governing the courses of nature; therefore the apostle appealeth to this internal power, Eph. iii. 20, 'Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.' He instanceth in that which God hath done for us in Christ, which is beyond our prayer, conceptions, and hopes; transcending the hopes and apprehensions of the most enlarged hearts. Thus is a Christian a wonder to himself.

[2.] He is a wonder to the world, if he keep up the majesty and vigour of religion : 1 Peter iv. 4, 'Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.' It was strange to them that they should be altered so of a sudden, that of filthy puddles they should become clear as crystal waters; a sink turned into a pure fountain. That men should live above interests of nature, row against the stream of flesh and blood, this is all strange to the world; and this is the fruit of the word; for 'the word of God is perfect, converting the soul,' Ps. xix. 8. Every grace is a mystery and wonder; especially faith, for a man to believe that which he understandeth not, to hope for that he seeth not, to have that which he

wants ; to be tossed with tempests, and yet to enjoy a sweet calm in our own hearts ; to be destitute of all things, and yet be as little anxious as if we indeed had all things ; as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, yet possessing all things ; to be a rock in the midst of a storm ; as dying, and yet we live : 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9, ‘ We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; we are perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed ; ’ 2 Cor. vi. 10, ‘ As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.’ Thus is a believer the world’s wonder, a very riddle to carnal sense. So in other graces ; he can hate father and mother for Christ’s sake, can also love enemies at Christ’s command. He that doth even break his heart for the least sin can bear up against the greatest trouble.

Thus I might exemplify the point, but I must go a little largely to work.

1. God’s testimonies are wonderful in their majesty and composure, which striketh reverence into the hearts of those that consider ; it speaketh to us at a God-like rate. Jesus Christ leaves a character of his divine Spirit upon his words : Mark vii. 28, 29, ‘ And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine ; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.’ There was an impression of his authority upon his word, his hearers were convinced of a sovereign majesty proper to the dignity of his person. Those that went to take him returned this account, John vii. 46, ‘ Never man spake like this man,’ for authority, power, and evidence. Now the scriptures being Christ’s doctrine, why should they not have the same power, authority, and divine character in them ? It is the same doctrine ; the voice could add nothing to it, and the writing take nothing from it. Could not God discover his sovereign majesty in writing as well as speaking ? Look into the scriptures ; are you not even compelled to say, This can be no other but the word of God ? They speak not as conscious of any weakness, or as begging assent, but as commanding it. Thus saith the Lord, hear it, or ye are undone for ever. The wisdom, majesty, authority of the author sheweth itself in every line almost of scripture. Longinus, a heathen, admired the majesty of that passage, *γενέσθω καὶ ἐγγένητο*. Indeed, everywhere there is great authority mixed with simplicity and plainness of speech, such as moveth reverence and awe in the consciences of men. It may be it is not seen in every phrase and clause of a sentence, but it is clearly discovered in the whole frame ; as the majesty of a man’s countenance is not so fully discovered in any one part of the face as in the whole visage taken jointly together. *Scriptura sic loquitur*, saith Austin, *ut altitudine superbos irrideat, profunditate attentos terreat, veritate magnos pascat, affabilitate parvos nutriet*—scripture so speaketh that it laughs proud and lofty men to scorn with the height of it ; with the depths of it it terrifieth those who with attention look into it ; with truth it feedeth men of greatest knowledge and understanding ; with affability and sweetness it nourisheth babes and sucklings. Let a man have but anything of a prepared mind, and he cannot contain his wonder and reverence, but will tremble at the word of God : Isa.

lxvi. 2, 'To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.'

2. It is wonderful for the matter and depth of mystery, which cannot be found elsewhere, concerning God and Christ, the creation of the world, the souls of men, and their immortal and everlasting condition, the fall of man, &c. Here God is set forth to us in the clearest representation that we are capable of in this mortal state. God is in part seen in the creatures: Rom. i. 20, 'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' Everything that hath passed his hand discovereth somewhat of the author and maker of it. But as imperfectly as God is discovered there, we cannot behold him without wonder and reverence, if we use never so little of an attentive mind; those strictures of God that are seen in man's body—Galen wondered when he saw a man's hand—the sun, moon, and stars; yea, a gnat, yea, a pile of grass: but these discoveries are not to be compared with the scriptures revealing the glory of God in the face of Christ: 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.' If we wonder at so much of God as we find in a gnat, shall not we wonder much more at so much of God as we find in his law, in his gospel, in the whole economy and frame of his gracious dispensations? Besides that, the scriptures help us to interpret the book of the creatures: they show forth more of God than all the creatures can do; the book of nature is an imperfect piece in regard of the book of scripture. You cannot look upon the book of the creatures, but in every page and line of it you will find this truth presented to your eyes, that there is an infinite eternal power that made all things; this is enough to leave the world without excuse. But in the book of the word, you may see more of God, and the way how to enjoy him. In the 19th psalm David doth first admire the glory of God by the beauty of the heavens, then by the light of the word. By reason the heathens found out *πρώτου αἰτίου τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῆς ταξέως πάσης*, a first mover and a first cause; but when and how the world was made they were left in uncertainties, which was first, the egg or the hen, the oak or the acorn: Heb. xi. 3, 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things that do appear.' A child is taught more than they could find out by their profound researches. So concerning the fall of man, conscience will inform us of a distinction between good and evil; and heathens, by the light of nature, could speak of virtue and vice as moral perfection and a deordination; but nothing of sin and righteousness relating to a covenant; and whence this mischief began they knew not. They complained of nature as of a stepmother, observed an inclination to evil more than to good, that vices are learned without a teacher, that man is born into the world crying, beginneth his life with a punishment; but the first spring and rise of evil was a secret to them, but clearly discovered to us: Rom. v. 12, 'Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have

sinned.' Man's restitution and redemption by Christ is wonderful indeed: 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.' This could not be found by man; how could they know the free purposes of God's grace unless God revealed them? This is the mystery of mysteries, which angels desire to pry into. 1 Peter i. 12. So excellent and ravishing a mystery is this plot of salvation of lost sinners by Christ incarnate, that the very angels cannot enough exercise themselves in the contemplation of it. So union with Christ, and communion with him, a mystery that nature could never have thought of. God's keeping a familiar correspondence with his creatures, God's dwelling in us, our dwelling in God: 1 John iv. 13, 'Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.' Words we should not dare to have used if God had not used them before us; it would have looked like blasphemy to speak so, if we had not the warrant of scripture. So the resurrection of the body, and life eternal, they are all wonders: 2 Tim. i. 10, 'But is now made manifest by the appearance of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.' Heathens might dream of a life after death, but could never understand it distinctly. It is brought to light. Their wise men saw it, like the blind man who saw men walking like trees, or a spire at a distance, no clearness, no certainty: Lord, 'thy testimonies are wonderful.'

3. It is wonderful for purity and perfection. The decalogue in ten words compriseth the whole duty of man, and reacheth to the very soul and all the motions of the heart. All the precepts of morality are advanced to the highest perfection. Those fragments and sorry remainders of the light of nature, that have escaped out of the ruins of the fall, will show us the necessity of a good life. But the word of God calleth for a good heart, a regeneration as well as a reformation, not only abstaining from acts of sin, but lusts: 1 Peter ii. 11, 'Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, that ye abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' Not only the outward work, but the spirit, that is weighed in the balance of the sanctuary: Prov. xvi. 2, 'All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.' It mightily establisheth faith, fear, and love to God, as the essential graces. When we consider duty in the lump, we have no admiring thoughts; but when we look abroad into all the parts and branches of obedience whereunto the law diffuseth itself, then the holiness which the law requireth is admirable; then we see it no easy matter to serve this holy and jealous God; it is no easy matter to go to the bottom of this perfection.

4. It is wonderful for the harmony and consent of all the parts. All religion is of a piece, and one part doth not interfere with another, but conspireth to promote the great end of subjection of the creature to God. The law hath a mighty subserviency to the gospel, and the first covenant shutteth up the sinner immediately under the curse, that mercy may open the door to him. The gospel is first darkly

revealed, and still it groweth as the light doth till noonday. At first an obscure intimation, 'The seed of the woman;' to Abraham, 'In thy seed,' which after was repeated to Isaac to cut off Ishmael; then to Jacob, to cut off Esau; yet not what tribe: Gen. xlix, 10, 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, till Shiloh come;' yet not what family of Judah; to David: 2 Sam. vii. 13, 'I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever;' then Isa. vii. 14, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel;' then John the Baptist, John i. 29, 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,' points with a finger to Christ. Thus while in short the scriptures do so set forth the mercy of God as that the duty of the creature is not abolished, so offers grace as not to exclude our care and use of means; justification and sanctification promote one another, all is ordered with good advice: 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, 'Although my house be not so with God, he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.' Thus the wonderful harmony, order, and consent of all the parts with respect to the great end, which was the glorifying of God and the subjection of the creature, demonstrates the wonderfulness of God's testimonies, the glorifying of God's grace and mercy in those that are saved, and his justice in those that are damned. With respect to this, God made man upright, furnished with abilities to do his will; but mutable, and, in case of a fall, to begin with a new covenant. He will have his mercy honoured without prejudice to his justice; the comfort of the creature established, so as duty not abolished; not all of commands, nor all of promises, but these interwoven, that they may serve one another. A promise at the back of a command, to make it effectual; command besides a promise, to cause humbling; neither looseness nor rigour. If the covenant had been left to our ordering, it had been a confused business. Now it is wonderfully suited; God keepeth up his dominion and sovereignty, notwithstanding his grace and condescension; justice hath full satisfaction, yet grace glorified.

5. Wonderful for the power of it. There is a mighty power that goeth along with the word of God, and astonisheth the hearts of those that consider it and feel it: 1 Thes. i. 5, 'Our gospel came to you not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost.' By this power it doth not only fill the head with notions, but pierceth the heart, alarms the conscience, awakens the affections: Heb. iv. 12, 'The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' This power was seen in the wonderful success of that doctrine and religion which the scriptures do establish. It hath diffused and spread itself like leaven in the mass and lump, throughout all parts of the known world, within the space of thirty or forty years or thereabouts. *Hesterni sumus*, saith Tertullian, *et tamen omnia vestra implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum, forum; sola vobis relinquimus templa*—We are but of yesterday, and yet how are we increased! Christians are found in all places, cities, villages, isles,

castles, free towns, councils, armies, senate, markets; everywhere but in the idol temples. Such a wonderful increase and success was there in a short time! The apostle: Col. i. 6, 'The word of the truth of the gospel is come unto you, as it doth to all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you.' The doctrine itself is contrary to nature; it doth not court the senses, nor woo the flesh; it offereth no splendour of life, nor pleasures, nor profits; but biddeth deny all these things, and expect persecution: Mark xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' It only telleth us of spiritual comforts, and the recompenses of another world. Mahomet allures his followers with fair promises of security and carnal pleasure; there wind and tide went one way. Man is credulous of what he desireth; but Christ telleth us of denying ourselves, taking up the cross, cutting off right hand, and plucking out right eye, rowing against the stream of flesh and blood, bearing out sail against all the blasts and furious winds without: here is nothing lovely to a carnal eye. This was the doctrine. It taught the proud world humility; the uncharitable world love of their enemies; the unchaste world that a glance is adultery: Mat. v. 25, 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart;' the revengeful world to turn the other cheek to the smiter; the covetous man to be liberal, not to cark and take thought for worldly things, but to lay up treasures in heaven; the dissolute world to walk circumspectly in all godliness and honesty. The persons and instruments that were to manage the doctrine were in the world's eye contemptible: a few fishermen, destitute of all worldly props and aids; of no power, wealth, secular wisdom, authority, and other such advantages as are apt to beget a repute in the world; yet they preached, and converted many nations, though they had no public interest, were not backed with the power of princes, as superstitions are wont to prevail by their countenance and example: 'Every one seeketh the ruler's face;' but the gospel had gotten firm footing in the world long ere there was a prince to countenance it; there were many to persecute it, none to profess it. As the instruments were poor, so the persons that received their message: James ii. 5, 'Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?' 1 Cor. i. 26, 'Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.' When destitute of worldly succours and supports, it held up head. *Ne videretur autoritate traxisse aliquos, et veritatis ratione, non pompæ gratia prævaleret*, saith Ambrose. It was much it should hold up head; yea, the powers of the world against it, bonds and sufferings and deaths did abide for them everywhere that professed this way. Horrible tortures; never did war, pestilence, and famine sweep away so many as the first persecutions; poor Christians were murdered and butchered everywhere; yet still they multiplied, as the Israelites did in Egypt, under oppression; or as a tree lopped sends forth more sprouts. As without worldly interests; they had not such gifts of art, eloquence, and policy as the world with whom they had to deal; all was carried on in a plain way,

without pomp of words. Paul was learned, but he laid aside his ornaments, lest the cross of Christ should be of none effect: 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5, 'And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.' They were to deal with men of excellent parts and learning, some of which received the gospel. This plain doctrine was set afoot in that part of the world where arts and civil discipline most flourished at that time, and were in their ἀκμή. Thus as Aaron's rod devoured the magicians' serpents, so was the gospel too hard for the wisdom of the world: it prevailed not by force of arms and the power of the long sword, as all dotages do, and superstitions are planted; but 'overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death,' Rev. xii. 11. Christ's sword is in his mouth: Ps. viii. 2, 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.' This way seemed to the world a novel way; they were leavened with prejudices, and bred up by long custom, which is a second nature, in the worship of idols: 1 Peter i. 18, 'Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers.' Men keep to the religion of their ancestors with much reverence. Christ did not seize upon the world as a waste is seized upon for the next owner. The ark was to be set up in the temple that was already occupied and possessed by Dagon. Before Christ could be seated in the government of the nations, first Satan was to be dispossessed, and superstitions received by a long tradition and prescription of time were to be removed, the wolf hunted out. Thus the power great.

But this is past and gone. There is a wonderful power that goes along with the word.

[1.] A power to humble and terrify those that scoffed at the miracles: Acts ii. 37, 'When they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?' The word can do that which a miracle cannot; make the stoutest hearts relent and yield. One instance more: Acts xxiv. 25, 'And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.' Mark the disadvantage; the prisoner maketh the judge tremble, the man none of the tenderest, a pagan, and to boot an obdurate sinner; but Paul by his power caused these. Terrors of conscience, which are raised by the word, all wicked men feel not, but soon may; they fear them that feel them not: John iii. 20, 'For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' Conviction in one of these spiritual agonies exceeds all natural passions; fears of the wrath of God scorch more, and breed more restlessness and disquietness to the soul, their thoughts become a burden to them: 'He is convinced of all, and judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth,' 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. His sins revived, the poor creature lieth grovelling.

[2.] There is a converting and transforming power in the word of God: Rom. i. 16, 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;' 1 Thes. i. 9, 'For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God;' from a false to a true, a bad to a better. Men brought up in a false religion, there is much ado to take them off: 'Have any nations changed their gods?' Though their worship be never so vain and foolish, yet this power the word hath, even over those that have been rooted and habituated in superstitious customs. The gods they had prayed to in their adversities, praised in their prosperity, deprecated their anger when any judgment upon them, magnified their goodness when any good received, built them temples, offered them gifts; must they break those images, destroy those temples, deny those gods? How dear idols are, Rachel's stealing away her father's images clearly showeth, Gen. xxxi. 34. She was one of them that built God's Israel, yet she hath a hankering after her father's idols. No humours so obstinate and stiff as those that are found in religious customs. They accused Stephen for changing the customs Moses delivered, Acts vi. 14; and Paul, that he taught customs which were not lawful for Romans to observe, Acts xvi. 21. Certainly it is a very hard thing to bring men out of an old religion into a new one. Again, the converting of man from a state of nature to a state of grace, so that they are, as it were, born again: James i. 18, 'Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth; that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creation.' It is a hard matter to change natures, to turn a lion into a lamb: Isa. xi. 6, 'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.' Yet this will the gospel do, make him that resembleth the devil in his contempt of God, envy, revenge, to be like Christ; I say the gospel doth it: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'But we all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' To bring us to love what we naturally hate, and to hate what we naturally love; that the heart should be turned from all creatures, himself and all, to God; that they should be induced to turn from the creature to God, to seek out happiness in him; from self to Christ, from sin to holiness; that God's desires should be our desires, his will our will, his delights our delights; the natural heart is averse from this: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' That the hearts, spirits, dispositions of men should be turned upside down: 1 Cor. vi. 9-11, 'Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;' Isa. lv. 13, 'Instead of the thorns shall come up the fig-tree; and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree.' A mighty change wrought, to be changed not only in their lives, but natures.

[3.] In comforting poor distressed souls. Their sore runneth upon them, and their soul refuseth comfort, when they have all things in the world; but yet as there are no sorrows like wounds of conscience for degree, so no comforts: groans unutterable, so joys unutterable: nothing left that will comfort; it is as the whole of their joy. The reviving of poor wounded spirits is one of the greatest wonders in the world. Creatures can do nothing, reason and human discourse can do nothing; it proceedeth from the apprehension of God's wrath provoked by sin: Job xxxiii. 23-25, 'If there be an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom: his flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth.' Nothing but the covenant of his peace will still such a soul; a scripture wound will only be cured 'by scripture plasters. He that puts the soul on the racks of conscience can only release us: 'I create the fruits of the lips to be peace;' Jer. vi. 16. 'Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls;' Mat. xi. 28, 29, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'

[4.] The confirming and strengthening power of the word, that we may despise the world, encounter all difficulties and discouragements, and to be cheerful as the martyrs were in the midst of flames, all the oppositions of Satan: 1 John ii. 14, 'I have written unto you young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one;' Acts xx. 32, 'And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.' In the word of his grace God hath assured us of the great privileges of Christianity, support and defence here, and glory hereafter; and that is a mighty strengthening to the soul, and maketh a Christian also glorious and becoming all those hopes and promises that are given him.

SERMON CXLII.

Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore doth my soul keep them.—VER. 129.

USE 1. Reproof to several sorts.

1. Of those proud carnalists that scorn the simplicity of the word. Many wit themselves into hell by lifting up the pride of reason against the word of God; think all respect to the word to be fond credulity. To them the gospel seemeth a base and a mean doctrine, whereas it is indeed wonderful. They never studied it, and therefore think nothing but plain points in it, have no spiritual eyes, and are looking on what is uppermost. There is nothing vulgar. The angels prize

what they condemn: Eph. iii. 10, 'To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' They despise the word, as if it were too low a discipline for their wit and parts, scoff at that as mean which a gracious heart findeth to be mystery; they see none of this sublimity that we speak of; this pearl of price seemeth to them but as a common stone. This is pride not to be endured, for the foolishness of man to condemn the wisdom of God. The excellency of scripture can never be sufficiently understood; they never pierced the depths of scripture, else they would find it sublime and subtle enough; but they are ignorant of what they seem to understand so well: 1 Cor. viii. 2, 'If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.'

2. Others that give up themselves to the itch of curiosity must have mysteries made more mystical, and therefore fly from the letter of the scriptures to ungrounded subtleties and spiritualities, as if all the written word were an allegory: Rev. ii. 24, 'But to you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan.' Men must have *βάθη*, but *βάθη τοῦ Σατανᾶ*, are loath to be tethered, and tied up to a few common truths. The bait to our first parents was the fruit of the tree, it is good for knowledge: Gen. iii. 5, 6, 'God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat.' If any be of such a rigid temper and constitution as not to be moved with the pleasures of the senses, Satan draweth them to nice and ungrounded speculations; they would be wise above the rate which God hath allowed, run into strange and uncouth notions; and so many, otherwise of a sober life, have an unsound judgment.

3. Those that would fathom these mysteries by the line and plummet of their own reason, believe God's word, and the things contained in it, no further than they can see natural reason for it, these are not disciples of the doctrine of Christ, but judges, and set a prince at the subject's bar; the scantling of their own private senses and reason is made the standard for the highest mysteries to be measured by. They come to judge the word rather than to be judged by it. Mysteries are to be admired, not curiously searched and discussed by mere human reason. Every light must keep its place; sense, reason, faith, light of glory. If sense be made the judge of reason, there is wrong judgment. Some things we apprehend by reason that cannot be known by sense, as that the sun is bigger than the earth. So faith corrects reason. Shall we doubt of that to be true which droppeth from God's own mouth, because it exceedeth our own understanding?

4. Those that prostitute their wonder to every paltry, carnal vanity. Oh, what trifles are these to the wonders of God's law! If we see a fair building, we cry out, Oh wonderful! as the disciples: Mark xiii. 1, 'Master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are these.' Oh! there are God's testimonies; a more noble nature, the person of Christ: Col. ii. 9, 'In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead

bodily.' Oh, wonderful! at an heap of money: what are these to the unsearchable riches of grace? Rare plot! μέγα μυστήριον: all in and about Christ is rare; his name is Wonderful. He that found out the causes of things by philosophy could say, *Nihil admirari*; but he that hath the most knowledge of religion as to divine things may say, *Omnia admirari*—the transcendent goodness of God in the pardon of sins, riches of everlasting glory, purity of divine commands; but as to the world, *Nil admirari*. You know better things in God's testimonies.

5. Those that find more favour and more matter to wonder at in other books, in Plato, in Aristotle, or heathen writers, they have a savour there, a wonder there; but are not affected with those mysteries and those notions which are in the gospel. They like those books where they find flowers of rhetoric, chemical experiments, philosophical notions, maxims of policy, but they slight the word.

6. Those that admire more what man puts into an ordinance than the word of God. The further off anything is from the majesty of the scriptures, the more it taketh with unregenerate men, taken with toys and baubles of delight more than the substantial goodness of Christianity. We are apt to say of the labour of man, excellences of man, admirable! but we little regard the truths of God; as in a field of corn, prize the poppies and well-coloured weeds, but slight and overlook the more valuable corn.

Use 2. Instruction. To instruct us how to entertain the word of God. We never entertain it rightly till we entertain it with wonder.

Considerations.

1. We have not a true sight and sense of the word if we admire it not. There is such transcendent love, admirable depths of wisdom, unsearchable treasures of happiness, raised strains of purity, a harmonious coincidence of all parts. What would we admire but that which is great and excellent? Why are not we then transported and ravished with those wonderful felicities, as the favour of and fellowship with God, everlasting enjoyment? Nothing is of such weight and importance as this is; all is nothing to this: Phil. iii. 8, 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' Would we admire what is rare and strange? As the object of wonder is *inauditum et insperatum*, it could not enter into the heart of man to conceive what God hath done for us in Christ; unheard of, unlooked for: 2 Sam. vii. 19, 'And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come; and is this the manner of man, O Lord God?' If we wonder at what is wise and deep, the terms upon which salvation is dispensed and propagated are with excellent wisdom: 1 Cor. ii. 2, 'We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world, to our glory.' These are mysteries that lie out of the road of vulgar understandings.

2. Upon every new looking, it argueth some distemper unless we wonder. Either carelessness of soul-necessities, or stupidity, and inattentiveness, or else carnal savour, prevailing too much.

3. It is a great help to practice. The more the word is admired,

the more reverence it striketh into the conscience; the more it is submitted unto, the more should we frame our practice. In the text, 'Therefore doth my soul keep them.' The word must be kept; not only affected with it, but our esteem must last, and we must ever be tender of doing anything contrary to it. It must be kept by the soul; there is the directive and commanding power; it must be preserved or kept there, not confined there. If not kept there, it will not be kept elsewhere. There understanding is clear, conscience awful, heart ready. Human authority reacheth no further than to bind men to conform to order in the course of their practice; but divine authority bringeth under the heart and thoughts to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5. It bindeth the conscience to approve of God's commanded will, to choose it with affection, to embrace it with the whole man, to follow on with strength and constant endeavours. Therefore wonderful, partly because a renewed esteem is the beginning of a pure and entire subjection to it. Why did any give up themselves to the discipline of it? Plato and Zeno's doctrine was admired. So to God; reverence is the mother of obedience. If we have not a slight esteem of the word, we shall look more after keeping of it. And partly because wonderfulness of promises evidenceth them to be of God; it commendeth itself to the consciences of men.

Means.

1. A spiritual gust to relish knowledge and spiritual things. A brutish soul admires the sweetness of carnal things; the sober part of the world, that prize intellectual food, the perfections of the mind, they have a taste and relish for those things: Ps. cxix. 103, 'How sweet is thy word to my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.' A sensual heart is not affected with these things.

2. A diligent search: Eph. iii. 9, 'And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.' The more diligently we search into these things, the more we admire them. A superficial view satisfieth and contenteth sooner than a deep search. Herein they differ from other things, for the more they are searched into, the less they are admired; imperfections which formerly lay hid then come in view.

3. A thorough insight or spiritual illumination: Ps. cxix. 18, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;' and ver. 27, 'Make me to understand the way of thy precepts; so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.' The testimonies of God have more in recess than in open view.

4. Experience; if we have felt the wonderful power, majesty, and authority of the word: John viii. 32, 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' Where there is no such effect they have no experience.

5. Show forth the wonderfulness of God's testimonies by the raisedness of your conversations. They disparage the word that live at a mean rate: 2 Tim. iii. 5, 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power;' 1 Peter iv. 14, 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.'

SERMON CXLIII.

The entrance of thy word giveth light ; it giveth understanding to the simple.—VER. 130.

IN the former verse, David had commended the word from the wonderfulness and mysteriousness thereof; here from its clearness and perspicuity, ‘Thy testimonies are wonderful;’ yet they give light, ‘The entrance giveth light to the simple.’ The one property doth not hinder the other, upon a twofold account:—

1. Because the truths revealed in scripture are of two sorts: some are plain doctrines, fit for the entertainment of novices, and may be called the porch and entrance; others are deep mysteries, to exercise the wits of the strongest. In the waters of the sanctuary in some places the elephant may swim, in others the lamb may wade. The penmen of the scripture acknowledged themselves to be debtors to wise and foolish, learned and unlearned: Rom. i. 14, ‘I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise.’ And accordingly were made use of to discover truths of all sorts. There are *δυσνόητά τινα*, not all things, nor the most material, but some things hard to be understood, 2 Peter iii. 16. God hath expressed his mind in some points so, that the sharpest-sighted will not at first glance easily take up the meaning of it. Other things are plain and easy and obvious, so that the very entrance or first sight of them giveth understanding.

2. From the manner; because though there are mysteries, and things naturally unknown to us, yet they are not obscurely delivered, so as that we should despair to understand them; but in a plain and familiar style, depths of mystery in plainness of words. Therefore the simplest who desire to know so much as may comfort and save their souls, ought not to be hindered and discouraged in the study of the scriptures. The sum is: some things are open and clear, other things dark and mysterious; but though hard to be understood, yet not impossible to be understood; most things plain, none impossible: ‘The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.’ In these words—

1. What, or the benefit we have by the scriptures, set forth by two words, the one metaphorical, *giveth light*; the other literal, *it giveth understanding*. That is it which is meant by light.

2. How or whence we have this light, from *the entrance of the word*.

3. To whom, *to the simple*.

The first thing is explained in the text; it giveth light, that is, it giveth understanding. Two questions then remain by way of explication:—

1. What is meant by ‘the entrance of thy word’? Some render it *ostium*, the door, as Jerome; the Septuagint, *δήλωσις*; the vulgar, the declaration; we, the entrance. The word *petack* signifieth door, gate, or opening. The expression giveth us occasion—

[1.] To distinguish of truth in scripture. There is *ostium* and *penetrale*, the porch of knowledge and the secret chambers of it. The

porch I should take for the first vital essential necessary truths that concern faith and practice : those are obvious to every one that looketh into the scriptures. The inner chambers are those more abstruse points, that do not so absolutely concern the life of grace, but yet conduce *ad plenitudinem scientiar*, serve for the increase of knowledge. Those that are in the porch, and have not as yet pierced into the depths of scripture, may yet have so much light as to direct them into solid piety.

[2.] Every door hath a key belonging to it, so hath this a key to open it, which Christ hath in his keeping : Rev. iii. 7, 'He hath the key of David, which openeth and no man shutteth ; and shutteth, and no man openeth.' The officers of the church are in part intrusted with it for the good of the church. Christ saith, Luke xi. 52, 'The lawyers had taken away the key of knowledge, and entered not into the kingdom of God themselves, and them that were entering in they hindered.' Such unfaithful ones hath every age almost afforded ; that shut the door of knowledge against the people. Papists, that lock up the scriptures in an unknown tongue, are grossly guilty of it. Others that hinder plain and powerful preaching, cannot excuse themselves from being accessory to this guilt ; yea, those that obscure the plain word of God by philosophy, traditions of men, or careless handling : Tertullian complained long ago of those, *qui Platonium et Aristotelicum Christianismum procedunt Christianis*.

[3.] By this door opened there is entrance, and so cometh in our word. This entrance may be understood actively or passively ; when the word entereth into us, or we enter into it.

(1.) Actively, when the word entereth upon a man's heart, and maketh a sanctified impression there ; as the expression is, Prov. ii. 10, 'When wisdom entereth into thy heart, and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul.' This entrance of the word bringeth light with it. The first creature God made was light, so in the new creature ; therefore it concerns us to know what manner of entrance the word had upon us : 1 Thes. i. 9, 'For they themselves know of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.'

(2.) Passively, when men do first enter upon the study of the word. It may be read 'the entrance into thy word,' as well as 'of thy word.' When once acquainted with it, and the first rudiments of knowledge, we should soon discern the Lord's mind in the necessary truths that concern faith and practice.

2. The other question is, what is meant by the simple ? The word is sometimes used in a good sense, sometimes in a bad.

[1.] In a good sense. (1.) For the sincere and plain-hearted : Ps. cxvi. 6, 'The Lord preserveth the simple : I was brought low, and he helped me ;' 2 Cor. i. 12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-wards.' (2.) For those that do not oppose the presumption of carnal wisdom to the pure light of the word : so we must be all simple, or fools, that we may be wise : 1 Cor. iii. 18, 'If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this

world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise;’ that is, in simplicity of heart submitting to God’s conduct, and believing what he hath revealed. The Septuagint in the text, *φωτίζει καὶ συνετίζει νηπίους*, it enlighteneth and giveth understanding to the babes; and so they often translate this word, babes or little ones: thence Christ’s saying, Mat. xi. 25, ‘I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.’ Not to worldly wise, but babes in comparison; not to conceitedly wise, but those that are sensible of their own ignorance.

[2.] In a bad sense, for the ignorant. (1.) In the general, every man is naturally dull and ignorant in divine things: Job xi. 12, ‘Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass’s colt;’ for grossness as well as untamedness. So every man is simple. (2.) Those that are naturally weak of understanding, or of mean capacity: Prov. i. 4, ‘To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion;’ Prov. viii. 5, ‘O ye simple, understand wisdom, and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.’ In all these senses may the text be made good. I take the last chiefly intended.

Observations.

1. Observe somewhat from that word ‘the entrance.’

Doct. 1. That in getting knowledge there is a porch and entrance that we must pass through before we can attain to deeper matters.

As in practice there is a gate and a way: Mat. vii. 14, ‘Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to life.’ An entrance and a progress. An entrance by conversion to God, and a progress in a course of holy walking. So in knowledge there are *τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν λογίων τοῦ Θεοῦ*, ‘the first principles of the oracles of God;’ or some elements and afterwards deeper mysteries, milk for babes as well as meat for stronger men: Heb. v. 12–14, ‘For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe: but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.’ There is an order in bringing men to knowledge.

[1.] There is something obvious and lies uppermost in all truths, that is soon understood, and this we put into catechisms. We must teach as able to bear: Mark iv. 33, ‘And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.’ Indeed, afterwards we come to dig into the mines of knowledge, and to dive deeper, as choice metals do not lie on the surface, but in the bowels; therefore we should not content ourselves with a superficial search, but dig as for treasure in a mine: Prov. ii. 4, ‘If thou diggest for her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures.’ So Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2, ‘And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ: I have fed you with milk, and not with strong meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear

it, neither yet now are ye able.' By milk, he meaneth the plain handling of the doctrines of Christian religion, according to the capacity of those that are weak in knowledge; and by meat, the more exact and curious handling those points. Our weakness enforceth that we begin with the one, but we must go on to the other, for several reasons. Partly because we are to grow in knowledge, as well as other graces: 2 Peter i. 5, 'Give all diligence to add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge.' Besides that knowledge that maketh way for faith and virtue, there is a knowledge to be added to it, a great skill in divine things. Partly because those obvious truths will be better improved and retained when we look more into them: after notions do explain and ground the former. First we receive the truth, and after we are rooted and grounded in it: Col. i. 23, 'If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.' A half light makes us very unsettled in our course; but when we grow judicious, have a fuller and clearer apprehension of truths, we are the more confirmed against the error of the wicked; whereas otherwise light chaff is carried about with every wind. Partly because the more we understand a truth, the more dominion it hath over our faith and practice; for God beginneth with the understanding, and grace is multiplied by knowledge: 2 Peter i. 2, 'Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.' A truth simply understood hath not such operation and force as when it is soundly and thoroughly understood. Love aboundeth with judgment: Phil. i. 9, 'And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment.'

[2.] There are first principles and fundamental doctrines that must be first taught in a plain and easy way. I say, some things are initial and fundamental, others additional and perspective; we must regard both—the one in our entrance, the other in our growth. The one are called the first principles of the oracles of God, Heb. v. 12, &c., partly because they are first in order, and first to be taught and learned; partly because they are chief and fundamental truths of the gospel, upon which the rest depend, most conducing to salvation: the foundation laid well, the building will stand the stronger. They are reckoned up, Heb. vi. 1, 2, 'Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptism, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.' In the general he calls them the principles of the doctrine of Christ. The doctrine of Christ is the sum of religion; he that hath learned it well hath learned all. In particular, repentance from dead works is made the first, or that a sinful creature must turn to God by Christ before he can be happy. The next is faith towards God, believing the promises and privileges of the gospel, and depending on him till they be accomplished. Indeed, in these two is the sum of religion sometimes comprised: Acts xx. 21, 'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.' So Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God raised up to be a prince and

a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.' Doctrine of baptism is the initiating ordinance, what it signifieth, to what it obligeth. Laying on of hands, the way of Christ's officers entering the church. Resurrection and last judgment bindeth all. Again, because the prime truths are few and clear, ignorant and unlearned people may know them; they are milk, babes and ignorants may swallow them, as most easy of digestion, God's end in the scripture being to guide his people to true happiness. Those truths that are necessary to this end are few and clear, and plainly set down, that he that runneth may read them. Though we reach not other points, yet if we get but to this door, there is a great deal of profit.

[3.] They which do not first learn these, cannot profit much. Some confused knowledge they may acquire, but distinct, clear, and orderly understanding they never grow unto. When men run before they can go, they often get a knock. They that were never well grounded are always mutable; therefore before we are brought into the chambers of knowledge, we must stay in the porch, begin with most necessary things, which are most clear and plain, and thereby we are made capable of higher mysteries.

2. Though all Christians must come to this pitch, to know what is necessary to salvation, yet we must not stay here, nor always stay in the porch, nor always keep to our milk, nor be always infants in understanding: 1 Cor. xiv. 20, 'Brethren, be not children in understanding.' Other things must be regarded, or why hath God revealed them? No part of scripture is expressed in vain, or at random, but all by divine direction; though the first points are most necessary, yet the rest are not superfluous, but have their use: 2 Tim. iii. 16, 'All scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;' one part of scripture as well as the other, and maketh much for the increase of spiritual knowledge, comfort, and godliness. One part is milk, another stronger meat; but all is food for the soul. The grown are more ready to every good work, more strong in the resistance of sin, more steadfast in the truth; therefore we should improve our knowledge. If a man layeth the foundation, and doth not carry on the building, he loseth his cost; therefore let us go on to perfection.

Use 1. Let us bless God for this door and porch, that the scriptures are so plain and clear in all things necessary to salvation. Many complain of the difficulty and obscurity of religion, and the many controversies that are about it, and they know not what to choose, nor where to find the truth, till the world be more of a mind. It is true, in some things there is difficulty, but not in the most necessary things. *Pascimur apertis, exercemur obscuris; ibi fames pellitur, hic fastidium.* God has made his people's way clear and sure in necessities, for which we have cause to bless his name, for exercising our diligence and dependence. Something is difficult: if those that complain of this difficulty would enter into the porch that standeth open, other things would soon be understood. Whatever differences there are in Christendom, all agree that there is one God, Jesus Christ his only Son, who died for the world, and accordingly must be owned by his people; that a man must be converted to God, and become a new creature, and

walk holily, or else shall never see God ; all are agreed in this. Prepare thy heart for entertaining the light and power of these truths, and in due time God will show thee other things. In the meantime bless God that whatever is necessary is plain to them that are docile and heedful, and willing to do the will of God. As in the world, the most necessary things are at hand, the less necessary are hidden in the bowels of the earth ; so in scripture, necessities are facile and easy.

Use 2. Let us use this method in learning, and teaching of others. In learning ourselves, first, be sure to get a clear understanding of, and firm assent unto, the main plain truths of scripture ; that there is one God : Heb. xi. 6, 'He that cometh to God must believe that he is ;' that Jesus Christ is the Son of God : John xvii. 3, 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' It is a corner truth, that enliveneth all religion : Mat. xvi. 16, 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God ;' then, 'Upon this rock will I build my church ;' John vi. 69, 'We believe and are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.' This is the great enlivening truth, that hath influence both on faith and obedience. We must believe that he is able to bring us to God, John xiv. 6, Heb. vii. 25, and must be obeyed, Heb. v. 9 ; that every man needeth this Christ to bring him to God, Acts iv. 12. There is a necessity of his merit, that God may be propitious ; of his Spirit, as the foundation of a new life, that we may be reconciled to God ; that we should live holily, because there is a day of account when every one shall receive according to his works. We should bestow more cost upon the main truths, to get a clear distinct knowledge of them ; there must be a removing of rubbish, and digging, to lay the foundation of the knowledge of the principles of the doctrine of Christ, before there can be any safe building or going on unto perfection, Heb. vi., and firm assent to them ; for he is the best Christian that doth most clearly understand and firmly believe these things, not the opinionist, the disputer, he that best promotes the interest of his party or side, which are the distempers now afoot in Christendom. Those truths well accepted would so purify the heart as we should sooner discern God's interest in other things, and be able to find out that. So for teaching our children, God reckons on it from his people : Gen. xviii. 19, 'For I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment ;' Deut. vi. 6, 7, 'And these words that I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' Train them up in wholesome truths, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Eph. vi. 4 ; how to carry themselves towards God in matters of religion ; how towards men, in righteousness, civility, and good manners ; chiefly that they may be instructed in the knowledge of Christ, and salvation by him.

Use 3. Let the entertainment we have upon our first entrance into the study of religion encourage us to follow on to know the Lord, that we may see more into his mind and counsel concerning us. When we are first serious, we have notable experience of light and comfort and

power; this is a bribe to draw us on further; more light, for it is a growing thing: Prov. iv. 18, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day;' more taste, 1 Peter ii. 3, 4, 'If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to whom coming as to a living stone,' &c. It should sharpen and put an edge upon our desires; more power: James i. 18, 19, 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creation; wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.' You saw the entrance, and your first acquaintance with the word succeeded well.

Doct. 2. By the word of God we get light, or our understandings are enlightened: Prov. vi. 23, 'For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.'

1. Light is a great benefit. This is the perfection of the rational nature, the benefit that we have above the beasts: 'He teacheth us more than the beasts of the field.' They are guided by instinct, ruled by a rod of iron; we have reason, and in it more resemble God, who is light, and in him is no darkness at all, 1 John i. 5; we come nearest to our happiness in heaven; it is called 'The inheritance of the saints in light,' Col. i. 12. Our knowledge is perfected, and the vision of God is our happiness: 1 Cor. xiii. 12, 'For now we see through a glass darkly, then face to face; now I know in part, then I shall know even as also I am known.'

2. This light hath excellent properties.

[1.] It is *lux manifestans*; it manifesteth itself and all things else. How do I see the sun but by the sun, by its own light? How do I know the scripture to be the word of God, but by the light that shineth in it, commending itself to my conscience? So it manifests all things else. By this light a man may see everything in its own colours; it layeth open all the frauds and impostures of Satan, the vanity of worldly things, the deceits of the heart, the odiousness of sin: Eph. v. 13, 'All things that be reprov'd are made manifest by light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.' It sets out the odiousness of sin as a breach of God's most holy law, enmity against the great God, the procurer of his eternal wrath. Nothing manifests things as this light doth.

[2.] It is *lux dirigens*, a directing light, that we may see our way and work. As the sun lighteth man to his labour, so doth this direct us in all conditions: Ps. cxix. 105, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' It directs us how to manage ourselves in all conditions, in prosperity, adversity; in all affairs, paths, steps; in all the particular actions of our life; it filleth us with spiritual prudence; the wayfaring, the fool, the man of parts that is a stranger, the man of mean parts, all may meet with plain and clear directions hence to guide them in the way to heaven.

[3.] It is *lux vivificans*, a quickening light, *lux est vehiculum influentiarum*: John viii. 12, 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life;' Eph. v. 14, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' That light was the life of men, so is this

spiritual life; it not only discovereth the object, but helpeth the faculty, filleth the soul with life and strength.

[4.] It is *lux exhilarans*, a comforting, refreshing, cheering light: Eccles. xi. 7, 'Light is sweet, and it is a comfortable thing to behold the sun.' It is so in two respects:—

(1.) It presents us with excellent grounds of comfort, not only against afflictions, but against distress of conscience, which is the greatest trouble that can befall the creature, such as the sense of God's love in Christ; so it rejoiceth the soul: Ps. xix. 8, 'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes.' It doth good to the heart. Others tickle the senses, but are not affliction-proof, stead us not when God rebuketh us for sin. The light of God's countenance is displayed in the word: Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased.'

(2.) Because it is a soul-satisfying light, as light easeth of trouble and restlessness of mind, which we always lie under till we find a safe way of salvation, which we never do till we give up ourselves to the conduct of the word: Jer. vi. 16, 'Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls.' There we find enough to satisfy conscience, though, it may be, not to satisfy curiosity, which is *libido intellectus*—thirst of a sober man and thirst of a drunkard, the one satisfied, the other mortified.

Use 1. Information.

1. That without the word men lie in darkness, whatever learning they have, if they want the gospel. As the Ephesians, before it came to them, though given to curious arts, the apostle telleth them they 'were sometimes in darkness,' Eph. v. 8. The wisest heathens could only grope and feel about for happiness. If they neglect the light, though it be among them, it is not excusable: John i. 5, 'And the light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not.' But if they refuse the light, and this carelessness groweth obstinate, their condition is the worse: John iii. 19, 'This is the condemnation, that light is come, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.'

2. If we get not understanding of the mysteries of salvation, we may blame ourselves: 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, 'But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' If thou miss the way to heaven, accuse thine own blindness; thou canst not accuse the gospel, plead its darkness. The true cause of their non-proficiency is unbelief, they believe not; the superadded cause is spiritual blindness.

Use 2. Exhortation to look after this light, without which we shall be in the dark as to comfort: Isa. l. 10, 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and seeth no light?' Either under actual horrors or

doubtfulness and uncertainty. Every wicked man is troubled, as the leaves of the trees of the wood are shaken with the wind. Now who would live in such a condition, to be at the mercy of the tempter? You are in the dark as to duty; our own reason, the counsels and examples of others, will mislead us; and we shall be unsteady, carried away with every deceit of sin, at least unsatisfied whether in God's way or not: 1 John ii. 11, 'He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.' Oh! study the word.

But who have this light? He that heartily desireth knowledge: Prov. ii. 3, 'If thou criest after wisdom, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;' he that diligently labours for it: Ps. i. 2, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' That propoundeth a right end, to be Christ's disciple, to do God's will: John vii. 17, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' That humbleth himself for his ignorance. John got open the book with weeping: Rev. v. 5. 'And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not; behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book.' Those Bereans were *πρόθυμοι*: Acts xvii. 11, 'They received the word with all readiness of mind,' *εὐπειθής*; James iii. 17, 'Easy to be entreated.' The opposite on the one side is slowness of heart: Luke xxiv. 25, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!' Or obstinacy on the other, a sluggish easiness, when light of belief, to believe anything without searching into the reason of it, or given up to a foolish credulity: Eph. iv. 14, 'That ye be not as children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;' like a reed shaken with every wind. But he that is endued with this light is one that doth not depend on his own wit, but submits his reason to God: Prov. iii. 5, 6, 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' Well, then, this earnest desire in the next verse, 'I opened my mouth and panted: I longed for thy commandments.' This painful seeker will find out this treasure; this humble trusting soul will have it.

Doct. 3. That the scriptures are written so that plain and private men may get this light and spiritual understanding by them: Ps. xix. 7, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.'

1. From the author, God, who is the fountain of light; and surely he was able and willing conveniently to express his mind to his creatures. Cannot God speak plainly? *Deus et mentis, et lingue, et vocis artifex*, as Lactantius calleth him. He that is so wise, so loving of mankind, our supreme judge and king, would he hide this light under a bushel? Would he conceal his mind, and leave thee in the dark? Micah vi. 8, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'

2. For whom the scriptures were written; not for ministers or professed students. God speaketh to all sorts of men in the scripture, and

therefore would have all understand them. He wrote the scripture that it might be read of all, young and old: Deut. xxx. 11, 12, 'This commandment which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off: it is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it,' &c. Rich and poor; the king was to read in it all the days of his life: Deut. xvii. 18, 19, 'It shall be that when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, he shall write him a copy in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life.' Every good man is to meditate in it: Ps. i. 2, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night;' Deut. vi. 6, 7, 'These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' The apostles wrote epistles to the whole church, spake to old men, youth, little children: 1 John ii. 13, 'I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.' To kings, judges, men, women, husbands, wives, fathers, children, masters, servants, was it written for their use; nor must it be taken out of their hands, nor is it above their reach.

3. The end why it was written, to be a sure and infallible direction to guide us to eternal life, and make us wise unto salvation: 2 Tim. iii. 15, 'And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.' Not only so, but it is our food and means of growth: 1 Peter ii. 2, 'As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.' Every life hath food convenient for it. It is our weapon in temptation: Eph. vi. 17, 'And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.' To be read by all in this spiritual warfare they are all engaged in. It is God's testament, therefore should be viewed by his children; the epistle of the creator to his creatures, therefore to be read by them to whom it is sent. God's letter must not be intercepted upon all these reasons. There is enough to make wise the simple in scriptures.

But is there nothing difficult in scriptures? *Ans.* Yes, to subdue the pride of man's wit, to quicken us to wait and depend upon him for knowledge, to prevent contempt, to exercise our industry and diligence, and to fasten truths on our minds. There is some difficulty, but not such difficulty as that the people neither can nor ought to read them with profit, which is the dispute between us and papists. There is no difficulty but what is conquerable by that grace that God ordinarily dispenseth, and the means of explaining or applying; not a whole loaf, but a *dimensum*, his share; for it distributes to every man his portion.

Use 1. For the confutation of them that forbid the simple use of the word. The papists say, God's word is dark and hard to be under-

stood; therefore they lock it up from the people in an unknown tongue, as if none could profit by it but the learned sort. Yea, many among us are ready to say, What should simple men do with scripture? and think that all the confusions and troubles of the world come from giving people this liberty. *Ans.* Though in the word there are mysteries to exercise the greatest wits, yet there are plain truths to edify the simple. This text is a notable proof against them. It is good to have a text against every error of theirs. They are injurious to God; as if he had revealed his mind so darkly, or his word, that it were so doubtful and harmful that there were danger in reading it: injurious to the scriptures, while they tax them with obscurity; injurious to the people of God, while they despise those whom the Lord inviteth with their pharisaical pride: John vii. 49, 'But this people who know not the law are cursed;' hinder them of their comfort; the simple have souls to save, therefore have need to see with their own eyes, to consider God's charter. They pretend they do it in mercy to the people, lest by their mistakes they should ruin themselves, and introduce confusion into the world. They should as well say all must be starved, and deny meat and drink because some surfeit. But certainly they do it for their own interest; they have false wares to vend, and to keep the people from discovering the errors they impose upon them, they would conceal the scriptures from them. Ignorance is a friend to the devil's kingdom. The blind go as they are led. They are afraid of the scriptures as a thief of a candle or the light which would discover his villany and hinder his design, John iii. 20.

Use 2. Of encouragement to poor Christians that have a sense of weakness. Before Plato's school was written, 'Let none but the learned come in hither;' but Christ inviteth the simple. That none might be discouraged, he speaketh to all sorts: Prov. viii. 4, 5, 'Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men: O ye simple, understand wisdom; and ye fools, be of an understanding heart.' That which is spoken to all is thought to be spoken for none. Christ speaketh to men under their several distinctions, noble, base, young or old, rich or poor. If any earthly profit be offered to any that will take it, who will exempt themselves? None are so modest. But in spiritual things persons are more stupid. Let none be discouraged by weakness of parts; all are invited to learn, and here they may be taught, of any capacity. Oh! but how many will say, I am so weak of understanding, that I shall make no work of such deep mysteries as are contained in the scriptures. I answer—

1. Many times this objection cometh from a sluggish heart; to ease themselves of the trouble of a duty, as meditation or prayer, they pretend weakness, they would have a rule that would make knowledge.

2. If it be serious, God is able to interpret his own book unto thee. He must indeed open the door, or we cannot get into the knowledge of truths there. If you had better parts you would be but groping about the door. He that hath not the right key is as far from entering the house as he that hath none. If the Spirit of God be thy master, thou shalt learn, though never so blockish.

3. Wisdom stands upon the threshold, or at the door of God's word, as ready to open the treasures of knowledge: 'The entrance of thy

word giveth light.' No sooner is a soul entered into the Spirit's school but he becometh a proficient; on first acquaintance with scriptures he seeth great light. Yea, she sendeth abroad to invite comers: Prov. ix. 3-5, 'She hath sent forth her maidens, she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple let him come in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.' Therefore go on with thy duty. He that sent an interpreter to the eunuch to guide him, when reading part of Isaiah's prophecy which he understood not, will direct and guide thee in the knowledge of all necessary truths, Ps. xxv. 8, 9; Prov. ii. 2-5.

4. It is a good advantage to be sensible of our blindness: Rev. iii. 17, 18, 'Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thee thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see.' The first thing a man seeth is his own blindness, nakedness, and wretchedness: John ix. 39, 'And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.' Many times they which conceitedly think they see are made blind. Those that are ignorant and humbled under the sense thereof, Christ will open their eyes; but they that are conceited of their own parts and knowledge, their hearts are darkened more and more, and they are given up to follow their own fancies. The simple may see further than others, because they swell not with the presumption of their own wit. *Surgunt indocti, et rapiunt cælum, cum nos doctrina nostra detrudimur in gehennam.* Sometimes simple people are more forward and earnest than others, and men of weak parts and small breeding may have strong affections. A blunt iron, when heated, may enter deeper into a board than a sharp tool when cold. Great doctors and rabbis are proud and careless, and poor broken-hearted sinners are warm and serious. Your labour will not be in vain.

SERMON CXLIV.

I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.
—VER. 131.

HERE is the use that the Psalmist maketh of the former commendation of the word; it is wonderful and mysterious, clear and perspicuous; now he declareth his great affection to it. These words were used by Nazianzen when his father committed to him the care of the church of Nazianzum; he beginneth his speech with it, Orat. viii., as being a word of more than ordinary comfort and grace and direction. David was in a fainting condition through the passionateness of his desire, 'I longed;' and that longing caused a languor, as all strong desires

do. His affection wrought upon his body, or else affected his soul, as bodily refreshments desired and wanted do the body, 'I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.' In the words there are—

1. The vehemency of his passion, *I opened my mouth, and panted.*

2. The reason or cause of it, *for I longed for thy commandments.*

First, 'I opened my mouth, and panted;' a metaphor taken from men scorched and sweltered with heat, or from those that have run themselves out of breath in following after the thing which they would overtake. The former metaphor expressed the vehemency of his love, the other the earnestness of his pursuit; he was like a man gasping for breath and sucking in the cool air. Judea was a hot country, and therefore such expressions are frequent. The like expressions, that come somewhat near it, are those: 2 Cor. vi. 11, 'O ye Corinthians, our mouth is opened to you, our heart is enlarged;' when he did vehemently desire their profit. And Job saith, 'They waited for my speech as the rain; they opened their mouth wide, as for the latter rain,' Job xxix. 22. A vehement, passionate desire affects the mind as an insatiate thirst the body. Thus will they be affected that are sensible of the wonders of the law, and enlightened by it. The reason of this passion: 'I longed,' noteth a high degree of desire. What did he long for? God's commandments; that is, the saving knowledge of the doctrine of salvation, or to find the use, benefit, light, comfort, and power of the word of God.

Doct. That God's children have strong and vehement affections and desires after the comfort and benefit of the word of God.

Here is—(1.) Opening the mouth; and (2.) Panting, as for fresh air; and (3.) Longing for the commandments. All three expressions imply an intensiveness of affection. Surely David prized holiness at a greater rate than we do, or else he would not use expressions so strange to us! See the like, Ps. cxix. 20, 'My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy judgments at all times.' Desire is the stretching forth of the soul to the thing desired. Now his soul did so stretch towards these spiritual comforts, that it did even break and crack again in the stretching. So Ps. xlii. 1, 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.' Harts are thirsty creatures, especially when chased, or having eaten serpents.

Considerations.

1. The soul never worketh better than in the strength of some eminent affection. In all things that we take in hand we do but so-so, act but chilly and weakly, while we have a listless and remiss will; but when the force of affection is upon us, the soul is carried on strongly, either in abomination or prosecution; for affections are the forcible and vigorous motions of the will. Now the soul never doth well but under such an affection. Were it not for affections, our nature would be sluggish and idle; as Plutarch, *ὡς περ κυβερνήτης πνεύματος ἐκλίποντος*, like a pilot at sea without a wind. The ship moveth slowly when there are no winds stirring to fill the sails; or like a chariot without wheels or horses, or a bird when her wings are clipped. They spur us on to what we affect. Men are heavy and lazy because they have no affection: Exod. xxxvi. 2, 'And Moses

called Bezaleel and Aholiab and every wise-hearted man, in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it.' Man findeth a force within himself, his heart maketh him willing; the stronger the affections, the better the man acteth, with greater strength and vivacity; for they are the vigorous motions of the will.

[2.] Of all affections, desires are most earnest and vehement, for they are the vigorous bent of the heart to that which is good, the motion and endeavour of the soul after it. As to good, the will chooseth it, and the heart affects a union with it, or desires to obtain it. This affection of union, simply considered, is love, which is an inclination of the soul to good, it presseth the heart to it; but as it is an absent good, it is desire, which exciteth to pursue it earnestly. Desire doth all that is done in the world, for it lifteth up the soul to action, that we may possess those things that we desire; I desire it, and therefore I labour for it. Therefore the main thing that God craveth is the desire: Prov. xxiii. 26, 'My son, give me thy heart,' which is the soul of desires; and therefore the people of God plead their sincerity: Isa. xxvi. 8, 9, 'The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee; with my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.' Get but a desire to good things, to God, to his word, and it will be a great help to you in spiritual things: Prov. xi. 23, 'The desire of the righteous is only good.' It is well when the soul is set right; this is a strong, active, commanding faculty.

3. Of all desires, those which carry us out to holy things should bear sway, and be the greatest; for affections are not rationally exercised unless they bear proportion to the objects they are conversant about. Now the word and things contained therein are the most noble objects, and so most suitable for our desires, if we would act rationally. That appears upon these accounts:—

[1.] Spiritual things are more noble; partly because they concern the soul, whereas carnal things concern only the outward man. Our liveliest affections should be exercised about the weightiest things. Can we desire riches and honours and pleasures, which only concern the body, and shall we not desire comforts and graces, which are necessary for the soul? It is irrational, for by this means we grow brutish and sensual. If our appetite desire only food and good pastures, and propagation of our kind, these desires soon exceed, and grow tempestuous and hurtful to the soul: Rom. xiii. 14, 'Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' There is a lawful care for the body, but this desire should not be chief, because the body is not the chief part of a man: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added unto you.' The ennobling of the soul with grace, the settling of our conscience, the assuring of our everlasting estate, these things deserve our chiefest care. Partly because these things are only useful to us in our passage, and so for a time; they are not useful to us in our home, and so for ever: Dent. xxiii. 24, 'When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel.' We have these things for our

use when here, but we carry nothing with us when we go hence. They who did occasionally pass through their neighbour's vineyard, might take for their necessity, but they must carry none home; and therefore as to these things all our acts must be non-acts: 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31, 'Rejoice as if we rejoiced not,' desire as if we desired not. Affections here need a great deal of guiding, and a great deal of curbing, lest we sin in these less noble things; but in spiritual, heavenly things we can never do enough.

[2.] Common and ordinary affection will not become God, or any thing that cometh from God, or concerneth our enjoyment of him, or our communion with him. Surely 'we are to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and with all our might, and with all our souls,' Dent. vi. 5. And as we are to love God, so in proportion his word, which is the means to enjoy him; therefore here we should stretch our desire to the utmost.

[3.] An earnest bent will only do us good, and make us hold out in the pursuit of heavenly wisdom. It doth us good for the present, as it fits us to improve the word, as an appetite to our food. To eat with a stomach maketh way for digestion: 1 Peter ii. 2, 'As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.' And it is zeal will only bear us out. Besides the difficulties and oppositions from without, our hearts are full of contrary qualities and desires, 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit;' so that nothing but a strong affection is for our turn. The greatest vehemency is but enough to bear us up in the prosecution of what is good; a weak desire will be soon chilled. Herod had some good desire; so have many, but not strong desires. He that affects grace, should affect nothing so much as grace. A carnal man may be affected with what is good, but there is something that he affects more, vanities, profits, pleasures. Well, then, spiritual desires should be drawn out to the utmost, because the object is more noble. These desires cannot degenerate, nor this affection be corrupted, and a common and ordinary affection doth not become these things. Nothing else will serve the turn.

[4.] Wherever these desires bear sway it will be sensibly discovered by the effects, both to ourselves and others. A man may have a little joy, or a little grief, or a little anger, and nobody see it; but none of these affections can be in any strength and vigour but we shall feel it and others will observe it; for strong affections cannot be hid. Can a man carry fire in his bosom and hide it? So there will be some expression of what thy heart affects. Can a man be under terrors, and not show it in his face? A concealed affection is no affection. Men may hide their hatred, but cannot hide their love: Prov. xxvii. 5, 'Open rebuke is better than secret love.' These things tie body and soul together, move the spirits. So desire will show itself, yea, spiritual desire. What desire doth in other things, it will do in this. If there be longing, there will be fainting, gaping, breathing; for strong desires are hasty and impatient of satisfaction. Ahab's eager desire of Naboth's vineyard cast him upon his bed. The spouse was sick of love: Cant. v. 8, 'I charge ye, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love.' What! desire, and nobody see it? What! desire, and you never feel such a strong

urging affection? Surely there will be secret, deep, and frequent sighs, there will be a striving with God in prayer, and constant attendance upon God. Such an active affection cannot be hid. Most men desire so little, it cannot be known whether it be desire or no.

[5] God's children have these desires, because they see more in the word than others do or can do. Spiritual discerning is a help to spiritual affections. They whose eyes are anointed with spiritual eyesalve see wonders in the law, and so are wondrously affected with them. But why should God's children see more?

(1.) They look through the spectacles of faith, they believe the commands to be the commands of the great God, the promises to be the promises of God, and therefore as good as performance; and so what to others seem fancies and fine dreams, to them are the chiefest realities: Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' Who would, having the promises, be so strangely transported, but they that are strongly persuaded? Faith, that looketh upon the things promised as sure and near, maketh them more active and lively. They that have not faith, or do not exercise faith, have but cold affections; but they who believe these wonderful felicities which the word of God speaketh of, long to enjoy what they are sure is true.

(2.) They look into it with an eye of love, and love sets a price on things: they see more of the loveliness of spiritual things than others do. Men's affections are according to the constitution of their souls, or the end they propound to themselves. They that are carnally disposed know all things after the flesh, and value them by the interests of the flesh, as that is gratified; and they that are spiritually disposed are affected accordingly as men's genius lieth. And that is the reason why eminent grace hath strong affections, which carnal men are not competent judges of. It seemeth improbable to them that a man should have such fervent desires of holiness, and be able to speak thus to God, 'I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.' The constitution of their souls is quite otherwise, and their hearts hang world-ward; they have not such a sense of their duty, and do not make it their business to please God; and so, having no deep sense and conscience of their duty, they do not see such a need of the word as their guide and help. They have no love to these things, therefore no passionate desire; for this is the order—the will chooseth, love desireth the union, desire presseth to endeavours after it. But now a godly man, that maketh it his business to please God, the principal desire and choice of his will is to be what God would have him to be, and to do what God would have him to do.

(3.) Because they have experience. Two things quicken our affection to anything that is good, viz., the knowledge of the worth and use of things, and our want of them. And the children of God know both of these by experience, in the course of that life wherein they are engaged; and nothing is known so intimately and pressingly as what is known by experience. By experience they see the want of the word of God, and its comforts and helps; not only when God first touched their hearts with care of saving their souls, and they were humble,

and parched with a sense of sin and wrath; all things were then unsavoury, as the white of an egg; then they longed, they panted for one comfortable word from God, one passage of scripture to give them ease; and the word becometh as necessary as meat to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty, and cool air to the weary: Mat. xi. 28, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and ye shall find rest to your souls.' But still they are sensible of their spiritual necessities, so as they cannot breathe without it, nor thrive without it, they find such a necessity of it. It is the food of their souls, the seed and principle of their being, the rule of their lives, the means of their growth, the charter of their hopes, their defence and strength in temptations and assaults. Christ himself guarded himself with the word when he was assaulted. Now, being practically convinced of this, they must needs have vehement longings after it; and after a more full understanding of it, they find by experience that the soul is apt to faint as well as the body: Heb. xii. 3, 'Lest ye be weary, and faint in your minds;' and that in all these things nothing relieveth them but the comfort and direction God giveth them in his word.

[6.] The more godly any are, the more they feel these strong affections. All that have life, their pulses do not beat alike strongly; some are weak, others more robust. So it is in grace; some have larger souls than others, and so, as they are more in action for God, they must have more supplies, and a greater measure of spirit and grace; these long and pant. In others there is a greater sluggishness and narrowness of mind, and they rest satisfied with what they have, their spiritual affections are not so raised; and therefore every one that is godly is not acquainted with this panting and breathing and longing; they have so much appetite as is necessary to maintain the new creature, but not these enlarged desires. I confess you are to judge by your willingness rather than the passionate stirrings of your affections. It is the heart which God requireth, and if he hath the will he hath the heart. But yet affectionate workings of the soul towards spiritual and heavenly things are very sweet, and such as all Christians should strive for, but not the best marks by which to judge of our estate. There may be a solid and sincere intention and choice, when there is little stirring perceived in the affections. If the will be fixedly set for God, the man is upright. Yet you are to endeavour to raise your affections to that height which is suitable to the excellency of the object; especially when it is movingly represented to us, our desires should be upon the wing. It is a duty; as far as we can reach it, we should. The more the soul is refined from the dregs of carnal longings and worldly lusts, the more are they enlarged towards God; and as their passionate desires of earthly things are abated, so their spiritual desires are enlarged. David saith, Ps. cxix. 36, 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.' And the apostle, Col. iii. 2, 'Set your affections on things above, and not on things on earth.' The more the heart is given to the one, the more it is taken off from the other. Riches, honours, and pleasures, as these are loved, they hinder this noble working of the soul, this breaking, longing, panting for better things. Worldly things have a great advantage over our affections, because they are sensible and near us, and

our knowledge of them is clear, and by the senses obtrude and thrust themselves upon the soul. Therefore use them with a guard and restraint.

[7.] Though this desire should always continue in some degree, yet there are some seasons when it is more vehement, and more notably stirred and raised. In some degree it should always continue, for our necessities and work are ever the same; and if it be only a qualm or fit, it is not right: Ps. cxix. 20, 'My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy judgments at all times.' Appetite followeth life; but at special times it is more notably raised, as when we are to meet with God in solemn duties; it is whetted when disappointed, and stirred upon some restraint or delay, when we meet not with what we expected, that light and comfort and strength that we looked for, but are kept off from satisfaction. When some deep distress makes spiritual comforts more seasonable, or in some great affair or temptation, we need more than ordinary strength, or in some doubt we need light and direction; in all these cases, spiritual desire is more stirring, and a strong affection is kindled in us. David panted as an hart: Ps. xlii. 1, 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.' It was when he was in some distress. So Ps. lxiii. 1, 'O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.' Oh! the sighs and groans that are sent up at such a time! Troubles will sharpen our appetite and rouse us out of security. We cannot always subsist under strong affections; they are very mutable, yet something of them should continue.

Use 1. For reproof.

1. Many are acquainted with the passionateness of sin, but know little of the passionateness of spiritual desire: 1 Thes. iv. 5, *μη ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας*, 'not in the lust of concupiscence.' Some think it should rather be rendered thus, Not in the passion of lust. Many times lust groweth to violence, men neigh like fed horses after their neighbours' wives; they feel an ardency and a burning heat in their evil passions and lusts, but none of this gasping and panting for spiritual refreshings and the comforts of the soul. They are acquainted with passionate wrath and fury, passionate envy and spitefulness, passionate lust and filthy desires, passionate covetousness, as Ahab after Naboth's vineyard; the boilings of sin they know, but were never acquainted with these gaspings after grace, as Amnon lusted for Tamar: Rom. i. 27, 'They burned in lust one towards another.' When any sin groweth so headstrong as to admit of no restraint, but men are wedded to their own inclination, that is the passionateness of sin.

2. Some that have affectionate desires for worldly things, and their souls are pained and grieved, and are sick within them if they have them not. These differ from the former, for there the object was sinful, but here the object is lawful, but the desire is irregular; they are sick of pleasures, their hearts run on them, and they cannot refrain: 'As the fool's heart is in the house of mirth,' Eccles. vii. 4. All their longings are for balls and dancings and plays and merry meetings; these are suitable entertainments to the hearts of fools, vain and sottish epicures, that know no higher delights than the tickling

of the senses; their love runneth that way, and their hearts are wholly estranged from God. So some sick of riches and wealth, they gape and gasp for them with an impatient longing: 1 Tim. vi. 9, 'They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, that drown men in destruction and perdition.' The more they have, the more they covet, as the laying on of more fuel increaseth the flame; they are impatient, making haste to be rich, run themselves, yea, their consciences, out of breath, to overtake the prey. The world is their element, out of which they cannot live, but spend their time, wit, strength of their souls upon it. They are sick for honour, credit, esteem; as Mordecai's stiff knee cast Haman upon his bed: Esther iii. 5, 'And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not the knee, nor gave him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath;' chap. vi. 12, 'Mordecai came again to the king's gate, but Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered. How do men tire their spirits, waste their strength, to compass honour and esteem in the world! and if they find it not, how are they troubled! Ambition is a restless thing; how doth Absalom court the people, sick for rule and government!

3. It reproveth them that have only a cold approbation, but no earnest affection to the things of God. Oh, how this instance should shame us that we have no more affection! David speaketh of longing and panting; we thirst not, we pant not; their fervency reproveth our lukewarmness, we are indifferent whether we have this light, comfort, and grace, yea or no. God's children thirst for it as dry ground for rain. We have some loose and straggling thoughts about holy things, or weak and ineffectual glances of desire, some lukewarm motions; but for these strong affections, admire them we may, feel them we do not. Wicked men may have slight apprehensions of spiritual things, which may produce some slight desires and wishes, which yet are so feeble and weak that every carnal desire overcometh them.

Use 2. Information why the people of God press through so many difficulties to enjoy his word. They are urged and pricked on by a strong desire; they would fain enjoy more of God, and therefore press after the means, where it is most clearly and powerfully revealed: John xi. 12, 'From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' Where the gates of heaven stand open they will break through hindrances to get in.

Use 3. It should quicken our dulness, and exhort us to get this affection. If the heart were as it should be, a little bidding would serve the turn.

1. These good desires discover a good frame, for a man is as his desires are. Such motions, when they are in their strength and liveliness, are signs of heroic grace, when your hearts are sick of love; yea, in a more temperate degree, where there are strong and prevailing desires, they show truth of grace, where there is such an affection as is industrious and unwearied, and keepeth us hard at work: Acts xxvi. 7, 'Unto which promise the twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.' Such an affection as is troubled when we are interrupted in our main design of bringing the heart into complete

subjection to God, or being capable of the fruition of him : Prov. xiii. 12, 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life.' If you come for grace, and are troubled and grieved when you are interrupted, if you are refreshed when you have tasted anything of God's graciousness, any increase of light and grace is as welcome to you as bodily refreshment to a weary, panting traveller, or water to one that is in a great thirst ; this is that the heart mindeth most, studieth most, remembereth most, that you never have enough of it, and are longing for more ; if there be such an affection, it is a good sign, for sensitive stirring is not so great an evidence as a settled constitution of spirit.

2. These holy desires, as they have something of burthen, so something of pleasure in them. Though the absence of the thing desired be a trouble, yet the exercise of holy desire is a pleasure to us, because it is an act of love ; the more our hearts are enlarged in them, the greater it is, even before satisfaction. While we are hungering and thirsting we are blessed. It is a blessed thing to be a desirer : Mat. v. 6, 'Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.'

3. This is a desire which God will satisfy : Ps. lxxxi. 10, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it ;' Isa. xlv. 3, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.' This insatiate thirst of grace and comfort shall be satisfied : John vii. 37, 38, 'In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' The soul is prepared by it for fruition : Isa. lv. 1, 'Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.'

If we would get it—(1.) We must get a new heart, which is the soul of these desires, and is God's promised gift in the covenant : Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 'A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.' (2.) Mortify and moderate your affections to the world and worldly things, and meddle sparingly with the comforts thereof ; otherwise your hearts will be apt immoderately to leak out after them, to the interruption of the spiritual life.

SERMON CXLV.

Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.—VER. 132.

THE prophet having praised the word, and expressed his affection to it, presents his petition to God for a favourable look from him, upon the account of his grace and mercy, according to the manner and law of his dispensations towards others of his people. They that love the

word may with the like confidence expect the grace of God. Observe in the words—

1. The petition or favour asked, *look thou upon me.*
2. The ground of asking, or the cause of that favour, *and be merciful unto me.*
3. The terms according to which it is dispensed, *as thou usest to do, secundum judicium*, according to the law, or according to thy custom towards those that love thy name.
4. The description of God's people; they *love his name.*

These are the especial objects of grace and favour. I shall explain the words as I go over the several branches.

First, I begin with the petition, 'Look thou upon me.' The Septuagint reads it, ἐπιβλεπε ἐπὶ ἐμέ. Other translations, *aspice me*, or *respice me*. Ainsworth, Turn thy face unto me: Ps. xxvi. 16, 'Turn thou unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.' God seemeth now and then to turn away from his people in their distresses, to turn the back upon them, and not the face; as it is, Jer. xviii. 17, 'I will scatter them as with an east-wind before the enemy; I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.' They had dealt so first with God: Jer. ii. 17, 'Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God when he led thee by the way?' So David, God might have seemed to have turned the back upon him. Our translation cometh to the same effect, 'Look upon me.' God's looking implieth two things, viz., his favour and his providence.

1. His favour; as Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To this man will I look, that is of a contrite heart;' that is, I will be gracious unto him, smile upon him, give him evidences of my love.

2. His providence. The providence of God is usually set forth by his eye: Prov. xii. 3, 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.' Now God hath a double eye—an avenging eye and a gracious eye. The avenging eye: Amos ix. 4, 'I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.' The other: 2 Chron. xvi. 9, 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.' Accordingly this act of looking is either—

[1.] With a revengeful eye. So upon their enemies: 1 Chron. xii. 17, 'The God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it;' 2 Chron. xxiv. 22, 'The Lord look thereon, and requite it,' said Zachary the son of Jehoiadah the priest. This is the look of anger. But—

[2.] There is the look of love and benign aspect, as astrologers speak. So Exod. iii. 7, 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows;' and Lam. iii. 50, 'Till the Lord look down and behold from heaven.' So doth he beg here that God would look upon him with a gracious eye. In this gracious aspect two things are notable, viz., his observation and his compassion.

(1.) His observation. He taketh notice of their condition and oppressed innocency: Neh. i. 6, 'Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now day and night.' What have eyes to do with

hearing? To behold their pitiful and desolate condition. So 2 Sam. xvi. 12, 'It may be that the Lord will look upon mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.'

(2.) His compassion. God doth take to heart the distresses of his people, and hath a tender pity and compassion over them: Ps. xxv. 18, 'Look upon mine affliction, and my pain.' He doth not only take notice of, but take to heart their sorrows, as appeareth by some gracious effect and deliverance wrought for them. So looking implieth both his affection and actual providence for them.

Doct. The children of God apprehend it as a great favour if he will but look upon them.

So saith David, 'Look thou upon me.' Which request expresseth his modesty; one short glimpse of God's favour, a look of kindness, would be a great matter to him in this vale of tears. A look is welcome to a broken and contrite heart; they are thankfully affected with the least discoveries and manifestations of God's love to the soul. If they could have but the least glimpse of his love, it would be very reviving: Ps. lxxxvi. 17, 'Show me a token for good.' The returning prodigal could go no higher than, 'Make me as one of thy hired servants,' Luke xv. 19, any place in the family, so he might be no more absent from his father. God's people would have a nail in his holy place. This shows—

1. His necessity. God seemed to look from him, no sign of his favour appeared. Thus it is often with God's children here in the world; the sense of his love is gone and lost, we sometimes have not so much as a look from him: Isa. lix. 2, 'Your sins have hid his face from you.' In heaven our communion is more full, and it is uninterrupted: 1 Cor. xiii. 12, 'For now we see through a glass darkly, then face to face.' Here God often hideth his face, and we 'walk in darkness, and see no light;' Ps. civ. 29, 'Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.'

2. His value and esteem of God's favour: Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.' Esteem of spiritual privileges is a great means to continue them to us. We feel no more of God's love, because we are not thankful for the enjoyment of it. It must be a practical esteem, such as moveth us to to seek it earnestly, as David professeth here it would satisfy him if God would look upon him. We count ourselves most miserable in the want of it; but if we have it, it allayeth all worldly discontents, abateth our desires of worldly comforts.

3. His confidence. One look from God is enough, it is all he beggeth; as the saints in like cases, if their God would but look upon them: Deut. xxvi. 15, 'Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel.' So Isa. lxiii. 15, 'Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory.' Without any labour, only by this look thou canst help all our evils; and will not God cast a look upon us, especially when we call him by his name?

Reason 1. Because in our distresses the main thing we should look on is not so much the removal of God's anger, and the removal of the evil, as the renewed sense of his love, to be reconciled to them: 2 Chron. vii. 14, 'If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wickedness, then will I hear from heaven, and forgive their sins, and will heal their land.' It is a part of the prescribed remedy to seek the face of God, or a favourable look from him; that is put in among the conditions, otherwise we are not affected with our true misery, and the cause of all our trouble, though we may seriously enough desire to be rid of the trouble, or the effects and the strokes of God's anger. The brute creatures can feel pain as well as we, and howl when they find anything inconvenient to that nature which they have, as well as we cry to God: Hosea vii. 14, 'And they have not cried unto me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds.' God accounts it as howling when we do not seek God's favour and grace, as well as the supply of our outward necessities. It is an easy matter to be sensible of the evil of trouble; nature will teach us that.

2. Because that bringeth other things along with it. If God look upon us he will help us; his love and power are set a-work for us, for his eye affecteth his heart. When his heart is affected, he will 'stir up his strength, and come and save us.' So that, go to the fountain-head of all mercies, when you beg a favour, look for it from God, for God's favour is the fountain of all blessings, and without it all your other comforts will do you no good: Ps. lxxx. 19, 'Turn us again, O Lord of hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.' When God once sheweth the evidences of his favour and reconciliation to them, other mercies come of their own accord. Oh! then, be assured of the favour of God.

3. If we continue in our misery, a look from God will sweeten all: 'We glory in tribulation also, because of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by his Spirit given to us,' Rom. v. 3-5. To be in favour with God is enough, and sweetens the bitterest of all our troubles. The comfort of the creature may be supplied with this greater comfort, that if affliction be not removed, it is made light to us.

Use 1. Beg earnestly for God's look. It is an ill sign to be careless and regardless of it. Surely the heart is too much carried to earthly comforts, if you care not how God standeth affected to you. God deliver us from such a sottish spirit, that we should neither care for God's frowns nor smiles, nor be sensible of his coming and going. David said, 'Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord,' Ps. xxv. 15, to observe him and his postures; but most men, their eyes are ever towards temporal accidents, how the times smile or frown upon them; or if they think of God, they judge of his respect to them by outward things, but have not any regard to his favour, whether God be reconciled to them or angry with them.

2. Improve it to hope: Ps. lxxx. 14, 'Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts, look down from heaven, and behold and visit this vine.' Will God love his people, and take notice of their sorrows, and not help them? God will manifest his respects and kindness to his people by some visible deliverance, when it shall be good for them.

3. Be such as God will regard, and have an eye unto. Such are—

[1.] The broken-hearted, that have a tender conscience, affected deeply with what the word speaketh concerning their everlasting condition : Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.' The word of God passeth sentence upon men ; most regard it not. Now whilst they look not after God, they have no promise God will look after them. Indeed by his preventing grace he is found of them that look not for him ; but then before they have any smiles from God's countenance, they are first humbled and brought to trouble : Isa. lvii. 15-18, 'For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirits of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth ; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him, I hid me and was wroth ; he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him ; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him.' When the spirit is softened by a deep and serious remorse for sin, and a tender sense of their condition, with these will God dwell, to comfort, relieve, restore them.

[2.] The believer : Ps. xxxiii. 18, 'Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.' They that look for God shall find him.

[3.] The sincere : Ps. xi. 7, 'His countenance doth behold the upright.' He hath a singular care of them, to manifest his love to them, both inwardly and outwardly. A good conscience presents itself to God ; none but such will say, Look upon me. Adam hid himself upon his transgression. Hypocrites cannot trust him.

[4.] Such as love his name. It is the description and mark of God's people in the text, they love God, and all that by which God is especially made known. To these God will look, that he may bless them, and comfort them with his love : Eph. vi. 24, 'Grace be with them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.' God's grace and free favour is to them : they love the name of God that rejoice to see God honoured, known, and had in request in the world, to be owned to be such as he is by themselves and others : Isa. xxvi. 8, 'The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.' Their great desire is, that God may be exalted in their own hearts, and in the hearts of others. To these God will look, who take care to honour God, love Christ, and keep his commandments : John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of the Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.'

Secondly, The ground and cause of that favour he expects, 'Be merciful unto me.' David begs what he begs upon terms of grace.

Doct. God's mercy is the cause of all his favour to us, or gracious dealing with us.

All that we have or would have cometh only and wholly from his mercy, and mere mercy. If God cast but a look upon us, or visit us

with one glimpse of kindness, we can ascribe it to no other cause. Only mercy, and never a word of merit should be in the mouth of a believer.

1. Because there was nothing in us to move him to be thus gracious to us: Gen. xxxii. 10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant.' Let us ask the reason, and debate the cause with ourselves. Why doth or should God do this for me? What moveth him? Is he necessitated? Then he could do no otherwise, and should be kind to all. Would he be unjust if he did not? Whereby have I obliged him? 'Who hath given to God first, and it shall be recompensed to him again?' Rom. xi. 35. Could you enter your action and plea against him? Before what bar and tribunal? And with what arguments will you manage your cause? How will the beam plead against the sun, the stream against the fountain? Is it a debt to your kind and rank of being? How many of the same flesh and blood are equal in nature, but unequal in condition? nay, in the same vicinity and neighbourhood, not only Americans, but of your own nation and country? What did God see more in you than in them of the same calling and profession? 'Two grinding at a mill, one shall be taken and the other left,' Luke xvii. 35. Of the same parentage? 'Was not Jacob Esau's brother?' Indeed, what did God see to move him to give you the first grace? Rom. ix. 16, 'So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.'

2. There is much to the contrary, a manifest unworthiness and contrary desert to what God bestoweth on us.

[1.] A general unworthiness in all the sons of Adam. Man was left as a condemned malefactor in the hands of the law, without all hope and possibility of recovery, under sin: Rom. vii. 14, 'I am carnal, sold under sin.' Under a curse: Eph. ii. 3, 'We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' And that God should regard such!

[2.] A particular unworthiness, before conversion and after.

(1.) Before conversion: Titus iii. 3, 'For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,' &c. We deserve to be abhorred and cast out of God's presence, and might justly expect his vengeance rather than his bounty and goodness, his anger and frowns rather than the light of his countenance.

(2.) Since conversion: James iii. 2, 'In many things we offend all;' Eccles. vii. 20, 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.' There are mixtures of evil, imperfections of holy things. Well, then—

1. Let mercy be all your plea when you have any favour to seek from God. We cannot claim any good upon any other right and title. Justice will except against you, and conscience will take its part. What have you to say but on that: Dan. ix. 18, 'We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.' We have no other motive that will become God, nor bear weight in our own consciences, but only God hath set up a court where grace taketh the throne, and giveth out pardons and blessings to sinners.

2. When you have once tasted one pledge of God's love vouchsafed to you, let this kindle coals in your bosoms, and warm your hearts with love to God. It is not only his condescension to take notice of you, but his mercy to show any favour and kindness to you: 2 Sam. vii. 19, 'Is this the manner of men, O Lord God?' Is this the manner of men, to requite good for evil? Who am I?

3. Be contented with your measures. Where nothing is deserved, anything should be kindly taken. Grace communicateth itself to whom and in what measure it will: Mat. xx. 15, 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?' If we are kept under, and in great extremities, he might have dealt worse with us: Lam. iii. 22, 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.' If we had a price in our hands to procure better, we might complain. Now all is free and undeserved, we should admire and submit.

SERMON CXLVI.

As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.—VER. 132.

HERE you have—

Thirdly, The terms of the dispensation, 'As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.' The word is—

1. According to the law and right.

2. According to the use and custom, according to the mercy promised, and usually bestowed upon those that love thee. Both senses not improper.

First, The first sense, according to the law and right. *Prout est jus diligentium nomen tuum*, so some. The vulgar, *Secundum judicium*. Amyraldus glosseth thus, *Pro illa misericordia quam inter te et timentes nomen tuum constituisti*. Others, *Secundum jus, et fœdus illud*. Take it thus, and it beareth a good sense; for there is the obligation of justice, and the obligation of grace; a judgment of righteousness, and a judgment of mercy. This merciful judgment the saints appeal unto. I cannot exclude this; for otherwise this verse would not have one of those ten words which express the word or law of God.

Doct. That there is a gracious way of right established between God and his people, according to which they may expect mercies.

This will be best understood by comparing the two covenants, their agreement and disagreement, not in all things, but such as are pertinent.

1. Let us see how the two covenants agree.

[1.] They agree in their author. God appointed both, and man is only to accept or take hold of what is offered. Man was not thinking of any such thing when God instituted the first: Gen. ii. 17, 'But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;' or revealed the second: Gen. iii. 15, 'It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise

his heel.' For God to enter into a covenant with the creature, either of works or grace, was an act of condescension; and who is he that could bid the Almighty humble himself, and prescribe conditions and laws of commerce between God and us, but only God alone? Man did not give the conditions, or treat with God about the making of them, what they should be; but only was bound to submit to what God was pleased to prescribe. In the covenant of works God gave forth the conditions of life, and a law and a penalty; and in the covenant of grace, man is bound to submit to the conditions without disputing. They are not left free and indifferent for us to debate upon, and to modify, and bring them down to our own liking and humour; but to yield to them, and take hold upon them, not to appoint them: Isa. lvi. 4, 'Thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant;' Rom. x. 3, 'For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.'

[2.] They agree in the moving cause, which in both was the grace of God. The first covenant, it was grace for God to make it. It was the grace of God to accept of man's perfect obedience, so as to make him sure of eternal life on the performance of it. Though the last covenant hath the honour by way of eminency to be styled the covenant of grace, yet the first was so, though the condition of it was perfect obedience, and the reward had respect to personal righteousness. It was of grace also that God would at all covenant and enter into bonds with man, who was not his equal, and give his word to any of the works of his hands. It was grace that endowed man with original righteousness, and fitted him, and enabled him to keep that covenant. His absolute sovereign owed him no more than the rest of the creatures which he had made. Grace engaged the reward, there was no more merit in Adam's obedience than in ours: Luke xvii. 10, 'So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.' Nor did his work bear proportion to the eternal reward.

[3.] They agree in the parties, God and man in both covenants, not any other creatures superior or inferior to man, rational or irrational; the principal contracting parties were public persons, Adam, Jesus: Rom. v. 18, 'Therefore as by the offence of one man judgment came upon all to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life;' 1 Cor. xv. 47, 'The first man is of the earth earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.' The first and second Adam, for them and all their heirs.

[4.] That God giveth sufficiency of strength in both these covenants to the parties with whom he made them to fulfil the conditions thereof. To Adam: Eccles. vii. 29, 'Lo this only have I found, that God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.' To Adam natural, to us supernatural strength: Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them;' Heb. viii. 10, 'This is

the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.'

[5.] In both God kept up his sovereignty, and by his condescension did not part with anything of his dominion over man. In the covenant of works he ruled by a law written on men's hearts : Rom. ii. 15, 'Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.' So by grace the believer is not freed from the law of nature, which being almost obliterated and blotted out of the heart of man, and become very illegible, it pleased God to set it forth in a new edition, and to write it over again in the heart of a renewed man : Heb. viii. 10, 'I will put my law into their minds, and write it in their hearts ;' Eph. iv. 24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' Though God admitted us to new conditions of favour, yet he still requireth subjection on our part, and that we own him as Lord and sovereign, requiring obedience and service at our hands, or else he taketh a liberty to visit our transgressions with rods : Ps. lxxxix. 31, 32, 'If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.'

[6.] In both covenants there is a mutual obligation on both parties ; this ariseth from the very nature of a covenant. *Contractus est consensio ad constituendam obligationem, qua alter alteri fit obnoxius.* In every covenant there is a tie on both sides, and some reason of right. There is no obligation of debt between God and us, but an obligation of grace. *Deus non est debitor, saith Aquinas, quia non est ad alia ordinatus ; reddit debita, nulla debet.* His covenant doth infer a debt of favour, not of justice. We may challenge him upon his promise : Ps. cxix. 49, 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' But God doth it not with respect to our work, but his own promise. In covenants of justice between man and man, there is a proportion and correspondence between the conditions on the one part and the other. In the covenant between God and us is a deed of favour, containing large grants of privileges, and noble conditions, upon terms and re-stipulations, which had no proportion to the favours granted. As if some prince or person of honour should, out of pure love to a poor mean virgin that hath no portion, covenant to give her a rich dowry and jointure, suitable to his own degree ; so doth God with us in the covenant of grace : Ezek. xvi. 8, 'Now when I passed by thee and looked on thee, behold thy time was a time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness, yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine ;' Jer. xxxi. 3, 'The Lord hath appeared of old unto thee, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' Indeed, in the covenant of works, justice hath a greater predominant influence than grace ; though in exact justice, God is not bound to remunerate us there neither.

[7.] The conditions in both covenants were suitable to the ends and

scope appointed. In the first covenant God would show forth justice in rewarding man's works and his own obedience. Now what more suitable condition than works, without the least indulgence in case of failing? Gal. iii. 10, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' And what more suitable to show forth grace than the condition of faith required by the covenant of grace? Rom. iv. 16, 'Therefore it was of faith, that it might be of grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.' So he would make it full of comfort to the creature, and honour to his justice.

2. The differences between these two covenants.

[1.] They differ in the ends, both as to man and God.

(1.) As to man. The end of the first covenant was to preserve and continue man in that happiness wherein it found him, and in which he was created; but the covenant of grace was for the reparation and restitution of mankind to that happiness which he had lost, and from which he had fallen. The law saith to man in his best, his pure and perfect estate, Continue in it. It speaketh to the innocent, that they may continue in their original happiness. The gospel saith, Be ye reconciled and renewed: 2 Cor. v. 20, 'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God;' for it speaketh to the fallen and miserable: it is a restitution of what was lost, and redeeming us from misery and sin. The one was made with man *in statu instituto*, as he came out of God's hand, in his primitive integrity, when he was a lively resemblance of God, and his abilities for obedience not yet broken. The other covenant was made with him *in statu destituto*, when at the worst, sinful and wretched, in his fallen estate, disabled for obedience to God: Rom. viii. 3, 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.' In the one there was perfect amity between the confederates, God and Adam, and this covenant was made for the continuance and standing thereof; but there was enmity and distance between the parties when the new covenant was set afoot; and this was to be taken away, and the breach made up; and therefore it is called a covenant of peace: Isa. liv. 10, 'For the mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.'

(2.) As to God. In the one, God is considered as a gracious and merciful redeemer, who being displeased with them for the breach of the first covenant, did enter into a new covenant to show the riches of his grace and mercy: Eph. i. 6, 'Unto the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.' Man fallen was not a suitable object of God's love, as man in innocency; he was then lovely, and an alluring object, because of the beauty God had put upon him; but now he was loathsome, like an infant in his blood and filthiness: Ezek. xvi. 6-8, 'When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy

blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxed great; and thou art come to excellent ornaments; thy breasts are fashioned, and thy hair is grown, whereas thou wert naked and bare. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine, saith the Lord.' Therefore God had a different end as to himself. The glory of his creating bounty was the end in the old covenant, the glory of his redeeming grace and pardoning mercy was the end in the new covenant, showed in the recovery of lost sinners. In the one, he intended the advancement of those attributes that were known to man by the law and light of nature, as wisdom, power, goodness, bounty, and justice: Ps. viii. 9, 'O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!' The end of the covenant of grace was to set forth redeeming mercy: Rom. v. 21, 'That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' If the creature had never been in misery, mercy had never been known, and grace had not been so glorious, as in giving Christ. All the natural attributes of God receive a new lustre in Christ.

[2.] They differ in their nature. The covenant of works stood more by commands, and less by promises; but the covenant of grace standeth more by promises, and less by commands: therefore called the promise, Gal. iii. 18, 'For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.' The commands and promises were not commensurate. There was not a promise in that covenant for every command of the law of nature, but in the gospel God promiseth what he requireth. In the covenant of works, justice is the rule of God's dealing; for though he entered into that covenant, and promised a reward out of grace; yet being entered into it, justice holdeth the balance, and weigheth the works of men, and giveth to every man according to his works, what is due to him: Rom. ii. 6-8, 'Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for life, and glory, and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,' &c. But the rule of God's dealing in the new covenant is grace. The covenant of works was more independent on God and grace without man, and more dependent on man and grace within himself. In it man was left to stand by his own strength, to be justified upon his own righteousness, God having furnished him with a stock at first, or a sufficiency of power to keep that covenant. But the covenant of grace findeth us without strength; therefore we are kept in dependence upon another: Ps. lxxxix. 19, 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty;' and Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' Man was to keep the first covenant, but here in effect the covenant keepeth us: 1 Peter i. 5, 'Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;' Jer. xxxii. 40, 'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not

turn away from them to do them good ; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.'

[3.] In the terms. Unsinning obedience is the condition of the covenant of works. The covenant of works is wholly made void, and the promise thereof of none effect, by any one sin, without any hope of cure or remedy. Once a sinner, and for ever miserable ; as the angels for one sin were thrown down from heaven, and 'reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day,' Jude 6. It admitteth of no such thing as repentance, neither doth it offer any provision for such ; it speaketh much to the whole, nothing to the sick ; it maketh a promise to the righteous, but none to sinners. But the covenant of grace is otherwise : Mat. ix. 13, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice ; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance : Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' Every failing doth not make void the covenant, no not every grosser fault : Ps. lxxxix. 33, 34, 'Nevertheless my loving-kindness I will not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail : my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.' The first covenant is an uncomfortable covenant to a sinner, and can be only comfortable to a perfect righteous person ; for in case of the least failing it speaketh nothing but wrath and the curse. But the covenant of grace is comfortable to sinners, it offereth pardon to them. As to the first covenant, it is impossible to be fulfilled by man in the state of corruption : Rom. viii. 3, 'What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh.' Since the day that Adam fell, never did nor could any man fulfil this covenant. Well, then, the demands of this covenant cannot be satisfied without a continuation in all things written therein, in height of exactness and perfection. But the gospel admits of a sincere, uniform obedience as perfect : 2 Cor. viii. 12, 'But if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.' There is a merciful lenity as to acceptance, though the rule is as strict : Mal. iii. 17, 'And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels ; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son, that serveth him.'

Use 1. Then enter into this covenant. You have no benefit by it till you personally enter into the bond of it. The covenant of works was made with man generally, universally considered, with Adam as a public person, representing all his posterity ; but the covenant of grace is made with man particularly, and personally considered, and his consent is expressly required, or else it can convey no benefit to us. That was a law, and so did bind whether man did consent or no. This is a privilege, Christ draweth to consent to him, doth not force us against our will : John i. 12, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' Will you own him as the Son of God, and Redeemer of the world ? Every man must consent for himself. The effects of the first covenant are uncomfortable for the present, the spirit of bondage : Heb. ii. 15, 'And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' But dreadful hereafter : James ii. 13,

'He shall have judgment without mercy.' When none to mediate for them, they have to do with justice, strict justice. The least sin is enough to ruin you, it will pass by no transgression, remit no part of your punishment, it will have satisfaction to the utmost farthing, admits of no pardon, no advocate, regardeth no tears. What justice can give you, that you may look for. If justice speak no good, promise no good, you are to look for none; for justice doth all in the covenant, under which you stand: Ps. cxxx. 3, 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' What you may claim as a due debt, that you may look for; that covenant gives no gift. Oh! then, give the hand to the Lord: 2 Chron. xxx. 8, 'But be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever, and serve the Lord your God.' Receive God's condition: Acts ix. 6, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' You have not leave to choose and refuse.

Use 2. Let us bless God, and admire his grace in bringing about this new covenant.

1. Man irreparably had broken the first covenant, fallen from his state of life; so that all the world is lost under guilt and a curse: Rom. iii. 19, 'That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.'

2. Upon this fundamental breach, the Lord was acquitted and absolved from the promise of life, in this way of works; for man could never stand in that court: Rom. viii. 3, 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,' &c. Then—

3. God taking occasion by this miserable estate, opened a door of hope by Christ: 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' God hath set up a new court of righteousness and life, where sinners may appear, where grace taketh the throne, and the judge is Christ, and the gospel the rule, and faith and sincere obedience accepted.

4. The Lord giveth notice to fallen man, and sendeth him word, that if he will come to this court, and put himself under the laws thereof, he shall be delivered from the curse: Luke i. 77-79, 'To give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercies of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace.'

5. Because men are backward, he hunteth and pursueth them by the curse of the law, and the sense men have of it, to take sanctuary at his grace: Heb. vi. 18, 'That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.'

6. When a poor creature cometh, he receiveth him graciously: Jer. iii. 12, 13, 'Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever: only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God;' 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' If he had not set up another court of righteousness, no tears, no repentance could

have helped us ; there had been no help that way. Now he is willing to receive you, he standeth with his arms open. From first to last he dealeth with us upon terms of grace.

Secondly, Judgment is put for manner and custom or course : Gen. xl. 13, 'Thou shalt deliver Pharaoh his cup after the former manner, כְּמִשְׁפָּט. So Josh. vi. 15, 'They compassed the city after the same manner.' The same word again : 1 Sam. ii. 13, 'The priest's custom with the people was,' &c. ; 1 Sam. viii. 11, מִשְׁפָּט הַמֶּלֶךְ, 'This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you ;' 1 Sam. xxvii. 11, 'So did David, and so will be his manner.' So in other places.

Doct. 1. That it is God's constant method to encourage all those that serve him, by showing to them all manner of expressions of favour and mercy.

The proposition is often expressed in scripture : Ps. xxv. 10, 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies ;' Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'For the Lord God is a sun and a shield ; the Lord God will give grace and glory ; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly ;' Ps. xxxiv. 10, 'The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger ; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.' David presumeth it : Ps. xxiii. 6, 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.' And many other places.

Object. But it seemeth to be contradicted by sense. They that love God most are most calamitous, and have many afflictions.

Ans. 1. These belong to God's covenant, and are expressions of his good-will and faithfulness : Ps. cxix. 75, 'I know, Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.' God were not faithful nor merciful if he did not now and then take the rod in hand ; our need, our good requireth it : Heb. xii. 10, 'For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' Discipline is necessary for a child as food, winter as necessary as summer, rainy days as fair days, to curb the wantonness of the flesh, and to withdraw the fuel of our lusts.

2. He useth to show mercy to people in their afflictions, to cause light to rise to them in darkness : 2 Cor. i. 5, 'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.' We are not capable of taking in spiritual comforts till we are separated from the dregs of worldly affections.

3. God will sanctify afflictions : Rom. viii. 28, 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' And he will finally deliver when the season calleth for it : 1 Cor. x. 13, 'There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man ; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.'

Object. But he dealeth more hardly with them than others ; he doth not punish the gross iniquities of his adversaries, when the lesser failings of his people are severely chastised.

Ans. It is meet 'judgment should begin at the house of God,' 1 Peter iv. 17, that it may be known God doth not favour any in their sins: Amos iii. 2, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.' Their sins, though small, have more aggravations, being committed against clearest light, dearest love: Ezra ix. 13, 'And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, should we again break thy commandments?' Isa. xxvi. 10, 'Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.' God is jealous over his people, and careful to have them reclaimed from every evil course: 1 Cor. xi. 32, 'But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.' In the bitterness of the rod God discovereth the vileness of their sin; for he will reclaim them when he suffereth others to walk in their own way.

4. His enemies shall in time taste the dregs of the cup, whereof his own people taste a little: Ps. lxxv. 8, 'For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup; the wine is red, it is full of mixture, he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out and drink them;' Jer. xxv. 29, 'For lo, I begin to bring evil on this city that is called by my name, and shall ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts.' They shall have the bottom.

5. In the meantime God's people have his love, their sins are pardoned, they are admitted into communion with him; and God's mercy and favour to his people must not be judged by temporal accidents: Ps. xvii. 14, 15, 'From men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, whose bellies thou fillest with thy hid treasures; they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.' Christ gave his purse to Judas, but his spirit to the other disciples.

Object. But God deserteth them; his people complain of it: Isa. lix. 14, 'But Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me,' Yea, Christ himself, Mat. xxvii. 46, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

Ans. 1. There is a distinct consideration of Christ, for he was to bear our sorrows: Isa. liii. 4, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows;' to be forsaken for a while, that we might be received for ever.

2. God's people are mistaken; the saints complain without a cause. Sense maketh lies of God: Ps. xxxi. 22, 'For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication when I cried unto thee;' Ps. lxxvii. 9, 10, 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? And I said, This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.' The disciples had Christ near them when they knew it not: Luke xxiv. 16, 'Their eyes were holden, that they could not know him.'

3. Though they are forsaken for a while, yet not for ever: Isa. liv.

7, 8, 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee. In a little wrath I have hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.'

Use. Do not say God is a hard master. When the compute is rightly made, and you trace his providence through all the passages of your lives, there is more good than evil. Jacob giveth an account of his life: Gen. xlviii. 15, 16, 'God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.' So may others say.

Doct. 2. God's accustomed goodness and gracious dispensations to his people throughout all ages should encourage us in waiting upon him and praying to him.

This emboldeneth me, that all thy servants in all ages have found thee gracious and merciful unto them.

1. From God's unchangeableness. He will not leave his old wont; he is where he was at first: Isa. lix. 1, 'Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that he cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear;' Mal. iii. 6, 'For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' He is the same that ever he was.

2. All his people stand upon the same terms; therefore what he will do for one, he will do for another. God's love is the same; he is alike affected to all his children; his saints now are as dear to him as ever: Ps. cxlix. 4, 'For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people; he will beautify the meek with salvation.' They have the same covenant, it is a common charter: Acts ii. 39, 'For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' The same Redeemer: 1 Cor. i. 2, 'To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours;' Rom. iii. 22, 'Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference.' One hath not a more worthy Christ than another; faith is as acceptable as ever: 2 Peter i. 1, 'To them that have obtained like precious faith.' They are interested in the same privileges, promises, gifts, and rewards.

Use 1. Examples and instances of God's mercy should confirm us. It is not agreeable to God's nature and practice to forsake his people, or to be deaf to their prayers: Ps. xxii. 4, 5, 'Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them; they cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.' None of his people ever sought him in vain. From the beginning of the world to this day, God hath been gracious: Ps. ix. 10, 'For they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.' No age can give an instance to the contrary; therefore mark the usual dealings of God with his children: What was said to them was for the establishment of our comfort and hope: Rom. iv. 23, 24, 'Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the

dead;’ compared with Gen. xv. 6, ‘And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness.’ God’s word is a book of precedents, as a painter’s masterpiece is hung out to invite custom.

2. Let us be sure we be of this number. If there be conformity to them in affection, there will be in consolation; if in grace, then in privileges: Ps. cxlv. 18–20, ‘The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He shall fulfil the desire of them that fear him, he also will hear their cry, and will save them. The Lord preserveth all them that love him.’

Doct. 3. We should beg the favour of God’s people.

Common things should not satisfy a child of God. He must have what is peculiar to the saints: Ps. cvi. 4, 5, ‘Remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest unto thy people; O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.’ Nothing will satisfy the people of God but his special love; they have a new nature that must be pleased, a great, noble, and divine end to be promoted, which is to enjoy God; the creatures serve not for that. Common men are put off with common mercies; these they may have and perish.

Use. Let us be of this temper. Men commonly think that God looketh upon those whom he blesseth with a large increase of temporal things, that he is merciful to those that never see evil, nor feel pain or want. David was not of this mind; he would have God deal with him as with his friends and favourites; he leaveth it to God how to express his mercy, who only knoweth what is best for us; only he beggeth the fruits of his special love. The heart is earthly and worldly when spiritual things are not valued above all the glory and plenty of the world. Our condition is under a curse without these; in these Christ showed his love: Acts iii. 26, ‘Unto you first God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.’ He died not to make us rich, honourable, great, but for remission of sin. This is a solid ground of rejoicing; this abideth for ever.

Doct. 4. We must not affect singularity of dispensations, but be content to be dealt with as others of God’s children have been dealt with before us.

We must not expect to go to heaven without difficulties: 1 Peter v. 9, ‘Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.’ We are not alone; our lot is no harder than others of God’s holy ones. All have gone to heaven this way. God will so manifest himself to us, that still there may be room for faith and patience.

SERMON CXLVII.

Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.—VER. 133.

IN the former verse the prophet had begged for a comfortable look from God, and some renewed taste of his mercy; he now amplifies his

request, and as he there prayed for pardoning mercy, so now for sanctifying grace. Many that seek mercy to deliver them from the guilt of sin, do not desire grace to deliver them from the power of it; and yet the one is as necessary as the other, that we may not offend God, as well as that sin may not hurt us. To pray only for pardoning mercy would seem to be a praying only for our own interest, and not for God's. God's interest lies in our subjection, our interest lies in impunity and freedom from the curse of the law and the flames of hell; and let me tell you that our interest is not sufficiently provided for till the heart be sanctified as well as sin pardoned; for an unholy creature can never be happy, that is clear against the course of all the Lord's wise proceedings. He hath settled everything, and put it into its proper place, and a sinful creature can never enjoy impunity; therefore, as we need to pray, Lord, be merciful to us, so, Lord, 'order my steps in thy word,' &c.

In this prayer there are two branches:—

1. A petition for grace for the regulation of his life, *order my steps according to thy word.*

2. A deprecation of the contrary evil, *and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.*

The first part of his prayer is by way of prevention, the second is by way of reserve; and the connection of both doth in effect speak thus, Lord, if thou dost not order my goings, surely iniquity will have dominion over me. Therefore he first prays that God will not permit him to err; or if the Lord should by his righteous providence permit him to fall, that he might return again to his duty, that sin may not wholly and clearly carry it in his heart, and have a full power over him: Lord, 'order my steps according to thy word;' but if I should fail, 'Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' The same method is used Ps. xix. 13, 'Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.' He doth desire absolutely to be kept from presumptuous sins; but then he adds by way of supposition and reserve, that if he could not by reason of his naughty heart be kept from them, yet that they might not have full power and dominion over him. Rabbi David Kimchi indeed refers the former branch to the affirmative precept, 'order my steps according to thy word;' and the latter branch to the negative precept: and so he makes the meaning to be this, Let me neither break thy laws by omitting any duty or committing any sin. You may take that division of the words if you will.

In the former branch observe the act of grace, *order*; the subject, *my steps*; the rule, *thy word*.

In the latter branch observe the evil deprecated, the dominion of sin, the universality or degree of the deprecation, *let not any iniquity*, neither great nor small sins, take the throne by turns.

To explain these circumstances, the act of grace, 'order.' The Septuagint, *κατευθυνον*, direct or set straight my steps. Junius hath it, *institute*, frame or appoint; and Ainsworth hath it, *firmly direct*; for indeed the word signifies to instruct, order, and establish. We are ignorant and apt to err, therefore God must instruct us; we are various and uncertain in our motions, therefore God must order us in a way of obedience, and reduce us into a settled course and method, that

all may be done in a subordination to our great end ; for order respects that. And we are soon discouraged, therefore God must support and establish us : so firmly direct, that thou mayest establish our steps according to thy word.

The subject is, 'my steps.' Because the affections are the seat of the soul, by which it walks out after the object represented, the understanding represents and the will chooseth ; therefore some would limit these steps to the affections. I think it compriseth all the actions of the reasonable creature, that no thoughts, no deeds, no counsels, no enterprises of his might transgress the limits of God's word.

For the rule, 'In thy word.' The Septuagint, *κατὰ τὸ λόγιόν σου*, according to thy oracle. However the phrase is to be noted, 'In thy word ;' not only according to this rule, but in this path. The sum is this : Lord, thou hast invited me to walk in thy word ; now direct me, strengthen me to walk in it, and let all my motions and my actions keep within the compass of it.

For the other part, 'Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' Because the Septuagint reads, *μὴ κατακυριεύσῃς μου πάντα ἁνομία* ; and out of them the vulgar, 'Let not all iniquity tyrannise over me,' some have conceived the sense to be, let me not be trampled upon, not oppressed by all kind of wrong and all kind of injustice ; as if he pleaded here to be kept from the tyranny of his enemies. But this is not probable, and other scriptures that are parallel to this, where the like expression is used, will not permit such a sense ; and therefore he saith, Let not any or every iniquity have dominion over me. Why ? Because sins take the throne by turns. Sometimes a man finds this sin and sometimes that sin in the throne, and sometimes strange sins that we little think of may get a great power over the heart, even those that we fear least many times may steal into the throne.

From the first branch observe—

Doct. 1. That there is a constant daily necessity of grace to direct and order our motions and actions according to the word of God.

Now, that there is a daily and hourly necessity of grace, is a point that frequently offereth itself in this psalm. I shall briefly dispatch it, therefore, in these propositions :—

1. It appears from the strictness of Christianity. He that would please God had need of a tender conscience, that he may wholly frame himself to do the will of God ; and not only take care to be right for the main of his course, but that every particular action should be orderly and regular : for the man of God does not beg grace here to choose a right path, but that his steps may be ordered. This is the strictness of Christianity, that a man should make conscience of every step, that every action should be under the power of grace, and fall within the rules of the word. It needs to be so. Why ? Because the word of God is not only a general rule to show us our path, but a particular direction to order our steps : Ps. cxix. 105, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path ;' to my feet as well as my path. Every action or step of ours is morally considered in its own tendency, either a step to heaven or hell ; if good, a step to heaven ; if evil, a step to hell : therefore we had need make conscience of our steps. Besides, if we do not make conscience of our steps, we shall

not make conscience of our way; for he that is not faithful in a little, will not be faithful in much. Every wry step is so far out of the way, and the more we persist in it the more we wander. Therefore see what is required of Christians: 1 Peter i. 15, 'Be holy,' *ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ*, in every creek and turning of your lives, 'In all manner of conversation.' A man that would approve himself to God, must be good in all conditions, in all his businesses, affairs, all ages of his life, young or old, in actions civil, sacred; if his condition be prosperous or adverse; when in adversity or prosperity, he must carry himself as a Christian; he ought still to approve himself to be a hater of sin, and a lover of what God loves. In all his affairs, not only in his religious actions, but in his civil and common actions. Godliness is not a holiday suit, but an apparel that is of constant wearing; and therefore a Christian is to show himself a Christian in all things, though especially in those things which are solemn and most weighty; a Christian in his prayers, a Christian in his business, in his recreation, in his meals, a Christian in the disposal of himself and condition, a Christian in all his converses. I lay this for a foundation. Certainly here are steps spoken of. The holy man would have them ordered, and that by the strictness of Christianity; so that no one particular action must allowedly be sinful. You see what need there is of direction. Careless and slight spirits, that only look upon Christianity in the lump, they think that truths are few and easy, and that the art of holy living, is soon learned, and they do not see a need of this ordering our ways, and to be willing to please God in all things. But those that count the least sin to be a very heavy burthen, a greater evil than the greatest temporal loss, that make it their business to approve themselves to God in all things they put their hands unto, will be earnest and importunate with him for his grace.

2. The necessity of the word of God. Whoever will please God in all things, and will purge his own soul and his life from sin, must take the word of God for his rule and direction. Our lives are not to be framed according to our own fancies, but God's word, where the genuine holiness is recommended to us, and which is the only proper means to work the heart to it. I shall prove that the word of God is the great rule both to warn us of our dangers and to instruct us in our duties; and so it is the great means to sanctify the heart. I say it is the great rule to warn us of our dangers: Ps. xix. 11, 'Moreover, by them is thy servant warned.' This discovers temptations, inconveniences, snares, which otherwise we should never discern. There are many dangers that wait for us on every side. So Ps. xvii. 4, 'Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.' It is the only proper means to keep us from the paths of the destroyer. Alas! otherwise if we do not strictly consult with his statute and rule, we shall cry up a confederacy with those that cry up a confederacy against God; we shall embrace the temptation which opportunity offers, if he follow the guidance of his deceived and deceiving heart. And the word of God doth only discover our duties to us: Prov. vi. 23, 'For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.' Mark, whatever condition we are in, whether in the

night, or whether in the day, whether in this or that condition, here we have a lamp and light; here is that which will show us what God requires of us in every state and condition. Now, as this is the only rule, so it is the only appointed means with which God will associate the operation of his grace for the converting and curing of the souls of men; for when God had stated a rule for the creature, it is fit the knowledge of that might be a means of sanctification; so the word is commended to us: John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth;' if the Holy Ghost will sanctify, if he will beget not an apocryphal and bastardly holiness (that may be by the institutions of men, and rules men prescribe), but a genuine, true holiness, which is acceptable to God; put them into a capacity to serve, love, and enjoy God: Ps. cxix. 9, 'Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.' A young man, that is in the heat of his lusts, and in the ruff of his sin, is impetuously carried away. How shall he do to break this boisterous violence, and bring his heart into some competent way of obedience to God? Why, the word of God is the only means; the Lord interposeth by his word, and blesseth his word. Let a man read Seneca, Plato, Plutarch, all the philosophers, he will have but cold and faint respects to holiness and to better things, until he come to be exercised in the word of God. Man is not a vessel that comes newly out of the potter's shop, but he hath a smatch of the old infusion of sin; and he cannot have this taste and tang put out but by the word of God sanctifying his heart and breaking the power of his lusts: Ps. xix. 7, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' We are out of joint, unfit to please and serve God. Now, how shall a man do to get his soul set in joint again, that he may be in a capacity to serve and enjoy God? Why, this restores the soul to a capacity; the Lord blesseth this institution and this means; for it is not bare truth, but instituted truth, with which God will associate the operation of his Spirit. By this word of his, that was indited by the Spirit, and penned by holy men that were moved by the Holy Ghost, he doth join his virtue and power and efficacy of his Spirit to sanctify the souls of men.

3. They that make it their scope and business to please God in all things, and take his word for their rule, their souls will soon see a need for divine direction, and the establishment of his grace. This reason is taken from the temper of the persons that are to walk in this strict way, according to his strict rule; they are such as are naturally blind, and naturally opposite to God: now certainly such need to go to God for direction. I gather that from these words, 'Order my steps.' Every man is a poor blind creature, and hath a heart opposite to the ways of God; he need beg this grace of God, Lord, incline my heart. Every man is a blind creature, partly because our own spirits are blind, crooked, and unstable, that we shall neither consult our rule nor understand our duty, nor like it when it is represented to us, until the Lord doth enlighten us. A man's heart is naturally blind: 2 Peter i. 9, 'He cannot see afar off,' he hath no skill in spiritual things, 1 Cor. ii. 14. The heart is naturally full of darkness, and then this darkness grows upon us, partly by prejudice

or custom, and many evil habits: 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'The god of this world hath blinded men's eyes.' There are many inordinate affections that increase upon us. So it is then that a man is blind by nature, more blind by custom and inordinate affection, is exceedingly blinded; which have a great influence upon our judgments in all practical cases. Though we should know general rules, yet to bring them down to every particular action is very grievous, and hard to bring the heart to. But you will say, When we have received the Spirit, God hath put his law into our minds, this blindness is cured; therefore why should such as David pray, 'Lord, order my steps,' &c.? Yes, we are cured, but in part, *non totaliter*. Grace doth heal us but in part, much of the matter that clouded the mind before is yet upon us; and when lusts are awakened by temptations, we strangely forget ourselves, our own reason, our senses, and examples of others; we are misled, so that we know not what to do, unless the Lord order our steps. Well, as we are blind, so we are opposite too. When we know our way, what we should do, yet we are apt to stumble at every stone. Naturally the wisdom of the flesh is opposite: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God.' And so much as the wisdom of the flesh still remains, we are apt to be discouraged from walking with God according to his strict rule, and in the way that he hath given us, and we are extremely slack, that unless we be quickened by the lively and strengthening light of the Spirit, alas! how soon shall we miscarry! Therefore this ordering is a strengthening against the reluctances of the flesh: Ps. xvii. 5, 'Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.' Alas! when a man finds a good way, he is either apt to lie down out of laziness, or to stumble and fall, and we cannot keep our footing against temptations. Every man of experience seeth the need of this. Therefore, Lord, direct me, 'Order my steps.'

4. The reason is taken from the value of the blessing here asked. It is one of the chiefest blessings of his grace and favour to have his illuminating. After he had said, 'Lord, be merciful unto me,' presently follows, 'Lord, order my steps.' To prove this must needs be a great blessing and favour. It will appear out of the words of the text; partly from the word 'order;' it makes our lives orderly and regular. Alas! what a confused, disproportionable thing is a man that is half in and half out with the ways of God! His conversation is not all of a piece, sometimes right and sometimes wrong; there is not that beauty, that harmony, that holiness to be found in them. Solomon tells us, Prov. xxvi. 7, 'The legs of the lame are not equal; so is a parable in the mouth of fools.' Baines on the place saith thus, The man hath knowledge to speak well, but he lives ill; so his conversation is halting, like the legs of the lame. Sometimes his speculative light will incline him to do easy things, but his practical endeavours will carry him another way; there is no even and uniform strain of godliness. Then is a man's conversation ordered, when all is carried on with a fair respect to his last end; for it is the last end that fixeth a man's mind, and cuts off impertinences and inconsistencies, and makes a man's conversation beautiful; otherwise the man is tossed up and down in a various uncertain motion, distracted by a multiplicity of ends and

objects that his will is in no composed and settled frame. I remember David prays: Ps. lxxxvi. 11, 'Unite my heart to fear thy name.' It is a blessed thing when a man is united, when his conversation is all of a piece; and James i. 8, 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' A divided mind will beget an uncertain life. I say, the last end of our lives doth unite all the parts of it, and there is a regularity and harmony between them. But others, their life is a mere lottery; the fancies by which they are governed are jumbled together by chance, and they live at peradventure and haphazard, and there is not a comely, entire, uniform order to a blessed end. Again, partly, too, from the reason here, 'Order my steps according to thy word; and let no iniquity have dominion over me.' This will prevent the dominion of sin. Perverse affections are apt to sway us, but when the Lord supplies fresh directions, the tyranny and dominion of sin is prevented and crushed in the egg. Sin usually steals into the throne by insensible degrees; temptations and occasions reduce us to some evil practice. Well, and that produceth another, then do multiplied acts get strength, then they ensnare us; and when once the soul is ensnared then this bondage daily increaseth, and is hard to be broken; for by multiplied acts custom creeps upon us, and that is another nature, and that which was but indifferent at first grows more difficult. As diseases looked to at first are easily cured, otherwise they grow desperate; so sins when they come to a slavish tyranny and custom, they cannot help it. All this is prevented by the seasonable warnings of the Holy Spirit. Partly, too, because this is only vouchsafed to God's special people. God, as he loves any, so he manifests himself to them. This appears out of the text; for in the verse before the text the words run thus, 'Look upon me, and be merciful unto me; as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name;' and what then? 'Order my steps in thy word.' Oh! this is to do good to us, as he useth to do good to them that fear his name. Mark, some have only providence and natural conscience; there are others that have the word, and have an enlightened conscience, that plead God's interest in them; but there are others are honoured so far that they are his people, that have not only his word, but Spirit, to enforce his word upon their hearts. How did Christ declare his love to his people? John xv. 15, 'I call you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.' There is God's love declared, when he shows us his whole will, when he doth guide us in all his ways; this is the favour of his people: Ps. xxv. 14, 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.' There is the great privilege that God vouchsafes to his peculiar people; they know the mind of God more than others do, and in all doubtful debates and uncertain controversies they are not left in the dark: Mark iv. 11, 'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.' David surely found such direction to be a very special blessing. Again, another argument from the text that this must needs be a very great blessing, partly because it helpeth us in our way to true happiness. I gather that from the word 'steps;' for all motion hath a term to which it tends, and every journey hath its period. Now, whither doth the path of the word lead us, but to God, and to the everlasting

enjoyment of him? Oh! here they have an infallible direction that they cannot miscarry in so great an affair as this is, as the getting home to God. Surely that is a great blessing. I remember David saith, Ps. lxxiii. 24, 'Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me unto glory.' They that wait upon God's direction are sure to be received into his heavenly glory; their steps are directed for the present, and they may be confident that at length they shall get home to God; for God will accept of what he hath ordered. You are sure God will take pleasure in you when you walk according to his direction. So you see the need from the value of this blessing.

5. Consideration, that the children of God are sensible of their need of it, that they cannot choose but pray for it. I take this from the very form of the words: 'Lord, order my steps.' It is a prayer from the man of God. They seek it humbly and earnestly, therefore they shall find it. They that make their bosom their oracle, and wit their counsellor, God is disengaged from being their guide; they need him not, but the snares they run into will soon show how much they need him. But the children of God need him, therefore they shall find it: Prov. iii. 6, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' You should ever go to God for the direction of your way, then God will not disappoint you, nor defeat your expectations: Ps. lxxxv. 13, 'Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.' Sometimes we wander, turn aside, and walk out of the right way; at other times we fall and stumble in the right way; but the Lord will set us in the paths of his steps.

Use. To press us to seek this great privilege of God, beg of the Lord continually to order your steps according to his word. Alas! evil may surprise you before you are aware. Little did David think danger was so near him when he walked upon his terrace; he gave leave to his eye to wander, and his eye fired his heart. Every morning be with God about this business: Ps. v. 3, 'O Lord, in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.' You need not only protection against dangers, but direction against evils and snares. As we seek for protection in the night, so in the morning, prayer is for the direction of the day. Nay, we need not go to God in the morning, but all the day long: Ps. xxv. 5, 'On thee do I wait all the day.' Beg of him that you may not miscarry, but carry yourselves humbly and prudently, and may do nothing that is contrary to the will of God and his grace, but that the Lord would support and guide you continually. There is one argument that may mightily encourage you in praying. Consider your covenant interest in God doth establish this blessing, as the saints always plead the relation: Ps. xxv. 5, 'Lead me in thy truth, and teach me; for thou art the God of my salvation;' Ps. cxliii. 10, 'Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God;' Ps. xlviii. 14, 'For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.' To be a God to any is to be a guide; for to a people in covenant, God makes over his whole self. Now in God there are considerable these three great attributes—his wisdom, power, and goodness. Look, as God by virtue of his power is all-sufficient against all dangers, and by virtue of his goodness is a fountain of ever-

lasting happiness, so also by his wisdom is a fountain of all goodness to guide and direct us. Now as God hath engaged all his goodness to make us as happy as heart can wish, and his power to defend and maintain us, so all his wisdom to guide and direct us.

SERMON CXLVIII.

And let not any iniquity have dominion over me.—VER. 133.

FOR the second branch of the prayer I observe—

Doct. 2. That the dominion of sin is a great evil, and ought earnestly to be deprecated, even by the children of God.

1. What is the dominion of sin.
2. That it is a great evil.
3. Why the saints should deprecate this evil.

First, What is the dominion of sin? It may be known by some distinctions.

1. There is a dominion of sin that is gross and sensible, and a dominion of sin that is more secret and close.

[1.] More gross and sensible. For though sin do reign in every one by nature, yet this dominion more sensibly appears in some than others, who are given up to be visibly under the dominion of sin, as the just fruit of their voluntary living under that yoke; and usually these are set forth as a warning to the rest of the world; God hangs them up in chains of darkness in the sight of men, as an instance of this woful slavery, that every man that seeth them, and is acquainted with their course of life, may say without breach of charity, There goes one that declares himself to be a servant of sin. This is either to sin in general, or to some particular sin.

(1.) To sin in general. He, whosoever he be, that, instead of trembling at God's word, scoffeth at it, and maketh more account of this world than of the will of God, of the fashions of men than of God's word, and thinketh the scorn of a base worm that would deride him for godliness a greater terror than the wrath of God, and the love of his carnal company a greater happiness than communion with Christ, and instead of working out his salvation with fear and trembling, runneth into all excess of riot, and carelessly neglecteth his precious soul, while he pampereth his frail body, and doth voluntarily and ordinarily leave the boat to the stream, give up himself to serve his corruption without resistance or crying to Christ for help, this man is without dispute, and in the eye of the world a slave to sin: Rom. vi. 16, 'Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?' It is an apparent case. A man that giveth up himself to go on in the ways of his own heart, restraining himself in nothing which it affects, he is one of sin's slaves. So saith our Lord Christ: John viii. 34, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.' He needeth no further doubt nor debate about the matter. He that goeth on in a trade of

sin, and maketh that his work and business in the world, without serious looking after the saving of his soul, is one in whom sin reigneth.

(2.) So some particular sins. As we have instances of carnal wretches in general, so of some poor captive souls that remain under the full power and tyranny of this or that lust, and are so remarkable for their slavery and bondage under it that the world will point at them and say, There goeth a glutton, a drunkard, an adulterer, or covetous worldling, a proud envious person. Their sin is broken out into some filthy sore or scab that is visible to every eye, either their covetousness or gluttony or ambitious affectation of worldly greatness, one whose god is his belly, who is a slave to appetite: 2 Peter ii. 19, 'For of whom a man is overcome, of the same he is brought in bondage.' They grow proverbial for giving up themselves wholly to such a conquering and prevailing lust. As in the natural man several men have their distinct excellences, some are famous for a strong sight, some for a quick ear, some for a nimble tongue, some for agility of body; so these for notable excesses in some corruption. Or as the saints of God are eminent for some special graces, as Abraham for faith, Moses for meekness, Job for patience, and Joseph for chastity, and Paul for zeal, Timothy for temperance; so these have their notorious and contrary blemishes.

[2.] There is a more secret and close dominion of sin, that is varnished over with a fair appearance. Men have many good qualities and no notorious blemishes; but yet some sensitive, good, and created thing sitteth nearest the heart, and occupieth the room and place of God, that is loved, respected, served instead of God, or more than God. That which is our chiefest good and last end is our god, or occupieth the room of God. So our Lord telleth us, Mat. vi. 24, 'No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or will hold to the one and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon;' and John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, that seek honour one from another, and not the honour that cometh from God only?' and Luke xiv. 26, 'If a man come to me, and hate not father and mother,' &c. We must be dead not only to carnal pleasure but to credit, estate, yea, life and all. It must not sit nearest the heart, nor bring it under its command and power: 1 Cor. vi. 12, 'All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.' We are besotted and bewitched with some created thing, that we cannot part with it, or leave it for God's sake, or notwithstanding all the mischief it is to the interest of his soul. Though a man serveth it cunningly, closely, and by a cleanly conveyance, yet all his religion is but either to hide or feed his lust.

2. Distinction. There is a predominancy of one sin over another, and a predominancy of sin over grace. In the first sense, renewed men may be said to have some reigning corruption or predominant sin, namely, in comparison of other sins. That such predominant sins they have appeareth by the great sway and power they bear in commanding other evils to be either committed or forborne, accordingly as they contribute to their advancement; as a wen or a strain draweth all the noxious humours to itself. So it appeareth by the violent and frequent relapses of the saints into them, or their unwillingness to

admit of admonition and reproof for them, or their falling into them out of an inward propensity, when outward temptations are none, or weak, or very few; some sins that are less mortified than others, or unto which they are carried by a natural inclination, constitution, or education. Thus David had his iniquity, Ps. xviii. 23, whether it were hastiness or distrust of the promise, or an inclination to revenge himself. Some sins that men favour most, and are most urgent and importunate upon them, and steal away their hearts most from God; the great pond into which other rivulets or streams of iniquity do empty themselves; that sin that outgroweth all the rest, as the tall tree taketh away the nourishment from the under shrubs; that which is loved and delighted in above other sins; and when other sins will not prevail, the devil sets this a-work; as the disciples looked upon the disciple whom Jesus loved; when Christ told them that one of them should betray him, Simon Peter beckoned to him that he should ask who it was of whom he spake, John xiii. 23, 24. Well, then, in regard of other sins, one may reign and sit in the throne of the heart, be beloved more than another, but not in regard of predominancy over grace; for that is contrary to the new nature, that sin should have the upper hand constantly and universally in the soul: for any one thing, though never so lawful in itself, habitually loved more than God, will not stand with sincerity, Luke xiv. 26. If not our natural comforts, certainly not our carnal lusts. To love anything apart from Christ, or against Christ, or above Christ, is a dispossessing Christ, or casting him out of the throne.

3. Distinction. There is a twofold prevalency and dominion of sin—actual or habitual; actual is only for the time, habitual for a constancy. Though a regenerate man be not one that lets sin reign over him habitually, yet too often doth sin reign over him actually as to some particular act of sin.

[1.] The habitual reign of sin may be known by the general frame and state of the heart and life, where it is constantly yielded unto, or not opposed, but breaketh out without control, and beareth sway with delight. Men give the bridle to sin, and let it lead them where they will. That is *peccatum regnans, cui homo nec vult, nec potest resistere*, so Coppen. The sinner neither can nor will resist, *non potest*, because usually after many lapses God giveth up men unto penal or judicial hardness of heart. But he is willingly taking these bonds and chains upon himself. Such are said, 2 Peter iii. 3, 'To walk after their own lusts;' to 'live in sin,' Rom. vi. 2; to be 'dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. ii. 1; to 'serve divers lusts and pleasures,' Titus iii. 3; to 'draw on iniquity with cart ropes,' Isa. v. 18. Such as addict and give over themselves to a trade of sin with delight and full consent.

[2.] Actually, when we do that which is evil against our consciences, or yield *pro hic et nunc* to obey sin in the lusts thereof; when it gaineth our consent for the time, but the general frame and state of the heart is against it. In short, when sin is perfected into some evil action, or (in the apostle's speech) when lust hath conceived and brought forth sin, James ii. 15; that is, some heinous and enormous offence. At that time, no question it hath the upper hand, and carrieth it from grace, and the flesh doth show itself in them more than the spirit. A

man may please a lesser friend before a greater in an act or two. Every presumptuous act doth for that time put the sceptre into sin's hand. Note, that both predominants spoken of in the former distinction, and the actual reign of sin in this, do much prejudice a Christian, waste his conscience, hinder his joy of faith; and if not guarded, and we do not take up in time, or if often, cannot be excused from habitual reign. They are rare by the violence of a great temptation, unlikely acts, as for a hen to bring forth the egg of a crow.

4. The next distinction is of sins reigning with a full and plenary consent, and with reluctancy and contradiction; as Herod reigned over the Jews for many years by mere force, they opposing him and contradicting him, but afterwards willingly consented to his government: so sin reigneth in some, who readily, willingly obey the lusts thereof, and take its bonds and chains upon them. And on the godly it doth sometimes prevail, yet not quietly and without blows: 'The evil which I hate that do I,' Rom. vii. 15. They are in combat and conflict with it. The virgin that cried out was innocent; it was a ravishment, not a consent, *peccatum patitur, non facit*, as Bernard. The seed of God is disliking and opposing, 1 John iii. 9. They are sometimes foiled, but they keep up their resistance. Sin gets the mastery in some acts, but as a tyrant, not a lawful possessor. They groan under that oppression, ever strive for liberty and freedom, and in time recover it. Chrysostom hath an expression on that of Rom. vi. 12, 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies,' &c., οὐκ εἶπε μὴ τυραννέιτο, ἀλλὰ μὴ βασιλευέτω. Sin will play the tyrant in the best heart, but let it not have a quiet reign. It will take advantage of present distempers and difficulties; it may encroach upon us, but it hath not our hearts: whereas it is otherwise if a man be not in arms against it, but liveth in peace and good contentment under the vigour and life of his lusts; there is no opposition unless it be some checks of a natural conscience, or a few thoughts of fear and shame, or some temporal mischief and inconvenience; no opposition of a renewed heart, no hatred of it and opposition as it is an offence to God; then your condition is evil.

Secondly, That it is a great evil, &c. It must needs be so—

1. Because it is a renouncing of the government of Christ. We transfer the kingdom from him to Satan, and take the sceptre out of his hands, when we give way to the reign of sin. What though we do not formally intend this, yet virtually we do so, and so God will account it. It is *finis operis*, though not *operantis*. Look, as the setting up of a usurper is the rejection of the lawful king, so the setting up of sin is the setting up of Satan, John viii. 44, and by consequence a laying aside of Christ; for every degree of service done to him includeth a like degree or portion of treason and infidelity to Christ. For a man cannot serve two masters, Mat. vi. 24, cannot have two chief goods at the same time; therefore he that cleaveth to the one refuseth the other. If you cleave to sin, you renounce Christ; and though we profess Christ to be our Lord, that will not help the matter, Mat. vi. 21; we are, for all that, as true bondmen to Satan as the heathen that offered sacrifice to him. A drunken or wanton Christian giveth the devil as much interest in him as those that sacrificed to

Bacchus or Priapus or Venus; for he doth as absolutely dispose and command your affections as he did theirs: you are his by possession and occupation; the bond of your servitude to Satan is altogether as firm and strong as their rites of worship. Now we that know Christ's right both by purchase and covenant, cannot but know what a great sin this is. By purchase we are his: 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, 'Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price.' The buyer hath a power over what he hath bought. We were lost and sold; we sold ourselves against all right and justice, and Christ was pleased to redeem us, and that with no slight thing, but with his own blood, 1 Peter i. 18, 19. How can you look your Redeemer in the face at the last day? If you have any sense and belief of Christian mysteries, you should be afraid to rob Christ of his purchase: 1 Cor. vi. 15, 'Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.' He hath bought you to this very end, that you may be no longer under the slavery of sin, but under his blessed government and the sceptre of his Spirit: Titus ii. 14, 'He hath redeemed us from all iniquity.' This was his end, to set us at liberty, and to free us from our sins; therefore, for us to despise the benefit, and to count our bondage a delight, yea, to build up that which he came to destroy; this is as great an affront to Christ as can be. But we are not only his by purchase, but his by covenant: Ezek. xvi. 8, 'I entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine.' This was ratified in baptism, where we dedicated ourselves to the Lord's use and service; and shall we rescind our baptismal vows, and give the sovereignty to another, after we have resigned ourselves to Christ, and the hands of consecration have passed upon us? When Ananias had dedicated that which was in his power, and kept back part for private use, God struck him dead in the place, Acts v. 5. And if we alienate ourselves, who were Christ's before the consecration, of how much sorer vengeance shall we be guilty? God's complaint was just: Ezek. xvi. 20, 'Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast born unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured.' And if Satan hath a full interest in you by doing his lusts, as he had in them by that rite of worship, is not the wrong done to God the same?

2. It is a sure note of a carnal heart; for it is not only incongruous that a renewed man should let sin reign, but impossible. *De jure* it ought not, *de facto* it shall not be. The exhortation and promise: Rom. vi. 12, with xiv. 12, 'Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies.' There is the exhortation; while you have these mortal bodies, sin will dwell in you, but let it not reign over you. God suffereth it to dwell in us for our exercise, not our ruin. Then the promise, ver. 14, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' Let not, shall not. It is true sin remaineth in the godly, but it reigneth not there. It is *dejectum quodammodo, non ejectum tamen*. Cast down in regard of regency, not cast out in regard of inherency. Like the beasts in Daniel, chap. vii. 12, 'They had their dominion taken away, though their lives prolonged for a season;' some degree of life, but their reign broken. The Israelites could not wholly expel the Canaanites, yet they kept

them under. There will be pride, earthliness, unbelief, and sensuality dwelling, moving, working in them; but it hath not its wonted power over them. Christ will not reckon men slaves to sin by their having sin in them, nor yet by their daily failings and infirmities, or by their falling now and then into foul faults by the violence of a temptation, unless they make a constant trade of sin, and be under the dominion of it without control, and set up no course of mortification against it.

3. The reign of sin is so mischievous. Sin, when it once gets the throne, groweth outrageous, and involveth us in many inconveniences ere we can get out again. Therefore they that know the service of sin, as we all do by sad experience, should use all caution that it never bring them into bondage again. The work and wages of sin are very different from God's work and wages. The apostle compareth them when he dissuadeth them from the reign of sin: Rom. vi. 21, 22, 'For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had you then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit to holiness, and the end everlasting life.' You have had full experience of the fruits of sin, of Satan's work; what fruit then? Before you had tasted better things, before you had a contrary principle set up in your hearts; you are ashamed now to think of that course, now you know better things. But what fruit then? Satan's work is drudgery, and his reward death. The devil hath one bad property, which no other master, how cruel soever, hath—to plague and torment them most which have done him most continual and faithful service. Those that have sinned most have most horror, and every degree of service hath a proportionable degree of shame and punishment. He is an unreasonable tyrant in exacting service without rest and intermission. The most cruel oppressors, Turks and infidels, give some rest to their captives; but sin is unsatisfiable. Men spend all their means and all their time and all their strength in pursuit of it; yet all is little enough. And what is the reward of all but death and destruction? Now judge you to whom should we yield obedience, and who hath most right to be sovereign? He who made us and redeemed us, and preserveth us every day, none but he can claim title to us; he to whom we are debtors by so many vows, so many obligations; or else Satan, our worst enemy, who is posting us on to our own destruction?

4. It is so uncomely, and misbecoming the new estate, wherein we have so many helps and encouragements to resist sin.

[1.] For helps, you have an opposite principle to give check to it, the seed of God, or new nature. Since Christ hath put grace into your hearts to resist sin, it is your duty not to suffer it to be idle and unfruitful: Rom. vi. 11, 12, 'Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.' You want no ability to encourage; you have an observing witness to give check to it, the Spirit of God, who will help you in this work, Rom. viii. 13. He will be your second; neither we without the Spirit, nor the Spirit without us. There is a life and power goeth along

with every gospel truth. Laziness pretendeth want of power ; but what is too hard for the Spirit? Then—

[2.] For encouragement. In every war are two notable encouragements—goodness of the quarrel, and hopes of victory; as David, 1 Sam. xvii. 36. We have these in our conflict and combat with sin. (1.) Our quarrel and our cause is good; it is the quarrel of the Lord of hosts which you fight. We stand with Christ our redeemer, who came, *ὡς λύσῃ*, that he might destroy the works of the devil. He hath begun the battle; we do but labour to keep under that enemy which Christ hath begun to slay and destroy. Sin is not only an enemy to us, but to him. It is against him, and hindereth his glory in the world, and the subjection of his creatures and servants. Were it not for sin, what a glorious potentate would Christ be, even in the judgment of the world? (2.) Hope of the victory. Our strife will end, and it will end well. Those that are really, earnestly striving against sin, are sure to conquer: Rom. vi. 14, ‘Let not sin reign,’ &c. And it shall not; if there be but a likelihood of victory, we are encouraged to fight. Here a Christian may triumph before the victory. *Non æque gloriatur accinctus, ac discinctus.* 1 Kings xx. 11, ‘Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.’ There will come a good and happy issue in the end, even a conquest of sin. For the present we overcome it in part; it shall not finally and totally overcome us in this world; and shortly all strife will be over: Rom. xvi. 20, ‘The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.’ It is but a little while, and we shall receive the crown, and triumph over all our enemies.

Thirdly, Why the saints should deprecate this evil.

1. Because there is sin still in us all. It is a bosom enemy, that is born and bred with us; and therefore it will soon get the advantage of grace, if it be not watched and resisted; as nettles and weeds that are kindly to the soil, will soon choke flowers and better herbs that are planted by care, and grow not of their own accord, when they are neglected, and continually rooted out. We cannot get rid of this cursed inmate till this outer tabernacle be dissolved, and this house of clay crumbled into dust. Our old nature is so inclinable to this slavery, that if God subtract his grace, what shall we do?

2. It is not only in us, but always working and striving for the mastery; it is not as other things, which, as they grow in age, are more quiet and tame; but, Rom. vii. 8, ‘Sin wrought in me all manner of concupiscence; the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.’ It is not a sleepy, but a working, stirring principle. If it were a dull and inactive habit, the danger were not so great; but it is always exercising and putting forth itself, and seeking to gain an interest in our affections, and a command over all our actions; and therefore, unless we do our part to keep it under, we shall soon revert to our old slavery. Sin must be kept under as a slave, or else it will be above as a tyrant, and domineer.

Once more, the more it acts, the more strength it gets; as all habits are increased by action: for when we have once yielded, we are ready to yield again. Therefore any one sin let alone, yea, that which we least suspect, may bring us into subjection and captivity to the law

of sin, Rom. vii. 23. It doth not only make us flexible and yielding to temptations, but it doth urge and impel us thereunto.

Again, this bondage is daily increasing, and more hard to be broken; for by multiplied acts a custom creepeth upon us, which is another nature; and that which might be remedied at first groweth more difficult. Diseases looked to at first are more easy to be cured, whereas otherwise they grow desperate; so sins before hardened into a custom, before they bring us under the power of any creature or comfort which we affect, 2 Cor. vi. 12; for then afterwards it cometh to a complete dominion and slavery, so that if a man would, he cannot help it. It behoveth, then, every child of God to do his part, that sin may not reign; for where care is not taken, it certainly will reign.

Use 1. To reprove the security and carelessness of many. David suspected himself, else he would never have made this prayer to God: Lord keep me; 'Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' And we should all do so that would be safe: Prov. xxviii. 14, 'Happy is the man that feareth alway; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.' A constant watchfulness and holy jealousy and self-suspicion will be no burden to you, but a blessing. Sin deceiveth us into hardness of heart for want of taking heed. Many that are secure do not consider their danger, and therefore they are not so careful to watch over themselves, nor so humble as to implore the divine assistance, because they do not consider how soon they may be transported by a naughty heart, and brought under the power and reign of sin. Surely were we as sensible of the danger of the inward man as we are of the outward, we would resist the first motions, and not nourish and foster a temptation as we do. The saints do not tarry till the dead blow cometh, but resist the first strokes of sin; they do not tarry till it pines to death, but resist the first inclinations. An evil inclination, if it be cherished and gratified, gets ground; the longer we let it alone, the harder will our conflict be, for sin secureth its interest by degrees.

2. It sheweth the fearful estate of them that lie under the dominion of sin. But who will own it?

[1.] It is certain that all men in their natural estate are in this condition. Sin doth reign where there is no principle of grace set up against it. The throne is always filled; man's heart cannot lie empty and void. If grace doth not reign, sin reigneth. Natural men are under the power of darkness, Acts xxviii. 18, and Col. i. 13; living in a peaceable subjection to sin; till Christ come to trouble it, all is quiet; wind and tide go together.

[2.] It appeareth by your course. Many will say, 'There is not a just man on earth, that doeth good and sinneth not;' you are sinners as well as we. *Ans.* There is a difference; though there be not a good man upon earth, that sinneth not, Eccles. vii. 20, yet there is a difference. Some have not the spot of God's children, Dent. xxxii. 5. There is a difference between sins: Lev. xiii. 24-26. God gave the priest under the law direction how to put a difference between leprous persons. So still there is a great deal of difference between numbness and death, and between dimness of sight and blindness, want of sense and want of life, between stumbling into a ditch and throwing our-

selves headlong into an ocean. And so there is a difference between infirmities and iniquities, a failing out of ignorance and weakness, or some powerful temptation, and a running headlong into all ungodliness. God's children have their failings, but a burning desire to be freed from them, though others wallow in their sin without any care of a remedy. In one there is a failing in point of duty, in the other a rebellion. Take Judas and Peter; both sinned against their Master; the one denied, the other betrayed him; the one denied him out of fear, the other betrayed him out of covetousness and greediness of gain; the one plotted his death, the other was surprised on a sudden. There is a great deal of difference between purpose and a surprise; the one wept bitterly, the other is given up to a raging despair. David did not make a trade of adultery, and bathe himself in filthy lusts. Noah was drunk, but not knowing the power of the juice of the grape. They dare not lie in this estate, but seek to get out by repentance.

[3.] Some things may beget caution, and move you to suspect yourselves; that is, when your souls readily comply with the temptation, you are at sin's beck. If it saith, Go, you go; if it saith, Come, you come. It is of great concernment to know what goes to the determining a man's condition, to know at whose beck he is, whether he is at the flesh's or spirit's beck. Ps. ciii. 20, the godly are described that they hearken unto the voice of his word; so the wicked are those that hearken to the voice of sin. If sin but make a motion, it is a match presently. If ambition bid Absalom rise up against his father, then he will trouble the whole kingdom, it will hurry him to run his father down; if envy bid Cain kill his brother Abel, he will not stick at it; if covetousness bid Achan take a bribe of that which was devoted to the flames, and must be offered as a burnt-offering to God, yet Achan obeys his covetousness; if adultery bids Joseph's mistress tempt her servant, presently she yields. So when a sinner yields, and is led away like a fool to the correction of the stocks. Meadow ground may in a great flood be drowned, but marsh ground is overflowed by every return of the tide; so they cannot cease to sin, every temptation carries them away. When men are impatient of reproof, when they have a privy sore they cannot endure should be touched, if a man speak to them anything to help them on to interpret their condition. Herod must not have his Herodias touched, though he heard John the Baptist gladly in many things. Or when men set up a toleration and court of faculties in their hearts, and they will have a dispensation: if God will be contented with obedience in some things, they will dispense with other things, pardon for some sins, but not break them off; have an indulgence that they may continue in them, or in vain practices. This shows the reign of sin.

SERMON CXLIX.

Deliver me from the oppression of man : so will I keep thy precepts.—
VER. 134.

IN the former verse, the man of God had begged grace with respect to internal enemies, to the bosom enemy the flesh, that no sin might have dominion over him ; now he beggeth deliverance from external enemies. The saints are not only exercised with their own corruptions, but the malice of wicked men. We have to do both with sin and sinners, with temptations and persecutions ; and therefore he desireth first to be kept from sin, and after that from danger and trouble ; first from the dominion of sin, and then from the oppression of sinners. Both are a trouble to us ; they were a trouble to David ; and God can and will in time give us deliverance from both, *deliver me from the oppression of man, &c.*

In the text we have—

1. A prayer for mercy.

2. A resolution, vow, and promise of duty. The one is inferred out of the other, *so will I keep thy precepts.*

First, A prayer for mercy, ‘*Deliver me from the oppression of man.*’ In the Hebrew it is, from the oppression of Adam, the name of the first father, for the posterity. This term is put either by way of distinction, aggravation, or diminution.

1. Man by way of distinction. There is the oppression and tyranny of the devil and sin ; but the Psalmist doth not mean that now. *Hominum non demonum*, saith Hugo.

2. Man by way of aggravation. *Homo homini lupus* ; no creatures so ravenous and destructive to one another as man. It is a shame that one man should oppress another. Beasts do not usually devour those of the same kind, but usually a man’s enemies are those of his own household, Mat. x. 36. The nearer we are in bonds of alliance, the greater the hatred. We are of the same stock, and reason should tell every one of us that we should do as we would be done to. Nay, we are of the same religion. *Eodem sanguine Christi glutinati*. We are cemented together by the blood of Christ, which obliges to more brotherly kindness ; and if we differ in a few things, to be sure we have cords of alliance and relations enough to love one another more than we do. But for all this there is the oppression of man.

3. Man by way of diminution. And to lessen the fear of this evil, this term ‘*Adam*’ is given them, to show their weakness in comparison of God. Thou art God, but they that are so ready and forward to oppress and injure us are but men ; thou canst easily overrule their power and break the yoke. I think this consideration chiefest, because of other places : Ps. x. 18, ‘*Thou wilt judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.*’ The oppressors are but men of the earth, a piece of red clay, earth in his composition, earth in his dissolution, frail men, that must within a while be laid in the dust. But it is more emphatically expressed, Isa. li. 12, 13, ‘*Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as*

grass ; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, which hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy ? and where is now the rage of the oppressor ?' When thou hast the immortal and almighty God to be thy protector and saviour, shouldst thou be afraid of a weak mortal man, that is but Adam, a little enlivened dust ? Within a little while he and all his fury is over and gone.

Secondly, The promise of duty, 'I will keep thy precepts.' Which is a constant observation of all God's commandments, if God would interpose for his rescue. But did David do well to suspend his obedience upon so uncertain a condition ? I answer—No ; we must not understand it so as if he did indent with God upon those terms and no otherwise ; or as if before he had not kept them ; and would then begin. No ; he would keep them, however, and had kept them ; only this would be a new engagement to press him to keep them more constantly, more accurately. Look throughout this psalm, and you shall find David still at his duty whatever his condition be : ver. 51, 'The proud have had me greatly in derision ; yet have I not declined from thy law.' There he is scorned, but not discouraged. Ver. 61, 'The hands of the wicked have robbed me ; yet have I not forgotten thy law.' There plundered, wasted, stripped of all, yet not discouraged. Ver. 69, 'The proud have forged a lie against me ; but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.' There falsely accused, but not discouraged. Ver. 83, 'I am become like a bottle in the smoke ; yet do I not forget thy statutes.' There dried up and shrunk into nothing, yet not discouraged. Ver. 87, 'They had almost consumed me upon earth ; but I forsook not thy precepts.' Ver. 141, 'I am small and despised ; yet I do not forget thy precepts.' So that his meaning was, not that he would serve God no longer unless he would deliver him ; but the meaning is, he should have a new obligation and encouragement : this will engage me afresh. He doth beforehand interpose a promise that he would walk with God more closely. From the words thus opened, we have three points :—

1. Deliverance from oppression is a blessing to be sought from the hands of God in prayer.

2. When God delivereth us from the oppression of man, we should be quickened and encouraged in his service.

3. When we are praying for deliverance, we may interpose a promise of obedience.

First, For the first point, that deliverance from oppression is a blessing to be sought from the hands of God in prayer. I shall show it first by answering the question why, and then show you how.

1. Why ? The point may be strengthened by these reasons :—

[1.] We have liberty to ask temporal things. Many think it too carnal to pray for health, food and raiment, long life, temporal deliverance. What God hath promised we may lawfully pray for ; for a prayer is but a promise put in suit. Now these blessings are adopted into the covenant, as being useful to us in our passage ; and therefore we may ask them. What Christ has taught us to pray for, that we may pray for ; for he said, 'After this manner pray ye,' Mat. vi. 9 ; and one request is, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Protection and

maintenance we ask, as well as pardon and grace. It conduceth to the honour of God that we should ask these things of him, that we may testify our dependence, and acknowledge his inspection and government over the affairs of the world: Ps. ix. 7, 'He hath prepared his throne for judgment.' Courts of justice among men are not always open to hear the plaintiff, but the Lord holdeth court continually; we may come to the Lord every day. No man's petition and complaint is delayed for an hour. He hath prepared his throne for this end and purpose, to hear the complaints of his people when they are oppressed; therefore we may pray for temporal things.

[2.] Our spiritual welfare is concerned in such temporal deliverances, that we may serve God without impediment, and without distraction. (1.) The oppression of man is an impediment; it taketh us off from many opportunities of service and bringing honour to God; and though God will dispense with us at such a time, yet it is uncomfortable; as God dispensed with David when he was hunted up and down the wilderness: Ps. lxxiii., lxxxiv., xlii. As Christ biddeth them pray, Mat. xxiv. 20, 'Pray that your flight be not in the winter, or on the sabbath-day.' Though it was lawful, it was grievous; as grievous to the body to have their flight in winter, and grievous to the soul to have it on a sabbath-day, that might call to mind their pleasant opportunities of conversing with God by prayer. When God denieth liberty and opportunity of enjoying and performing the exercises of religion, we are excused from positive duties. But yet it is a great mercy to have our liberty restored, to serve God in peace without distraction, to have a little breathing-time: Acts xix. 31, 'Then had the churches rest.' The oppressions and persecutions of men are among the temptations, and may weaken obedience to God; and if not altogether drive us from his service, yet clog our spirits and hinder our cheerfulness and readiness in it: Eccles. vii. 7, 'Oppression will make a wise man mad.' It will strangely shake and discompose our spirits, especially as it may be circumstantiated; that is, when we have base indignities put upon us, as when exposed to all manner of insolency and contempt: Ps. cxxiii. 4, 'Have mercy upon us, for we are filled with contempt.' Our friends afraid to pity us, Eccles. iv. 1. Take it at best, it is no small discouragement and trial to a godly man. Therefore it being so that oppression is ever reckoned among the temptations, we may pray not to enter into temptation; as Theophylact observeth well on the place, the rather because one way by which God helpeth his people is by taking away the temptation, as well as ministering a supply of grace: Ps. cxxv. 4, 'The rod of the wicked shall not always rest upon the lot of the righteous;' 1 Cor. x. 13, 'But will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.'

[3.] The glory of God is concerned. His people will honour him more if one, especially an eminent one, be delivered from the oppression of man: Ps. cxlii. 7, 'Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about, for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.' They will be flocking about him, and inquiring what experiences of God and his goodness he hath found: 2 Cor. i. 11, 'Helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us, by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.' Much more when the whole church is deli-

vered: Ps. li. 18, 19, 'Do good in thy good pleasure to Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem: thou shalt be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness,' &c. Every heart will be thinking of honour and praise to God. And besides the honour done to God by his people, God will more discover himself to the world, his justice will be more evidenced: Ps. ix. 16, 'The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth.' The world is led by sense; he will not be taken to be a friend to persecutors and oppressors. In short, it is not for the honour of God that his people should be left under oppression, as if he sought not, and cared not for their welfare. You shall see the afflicted condition of the church is called 'the reproach of the heathen,' Ezek. xxxvi. 30; and Ezek. xxxiv. 29, 'Thou shalt not bear the reproach of the heathen any more.' The heathen would cast this in their teeth, as if their God had no respect to them, or were not able to help them.

[4.] Prayer engageth us to constancy. God's deliverance will be better for us than our own; that is, than those sinful shifts and ways of escape that we can find out. What we ask of God must be had in God's way. It bindeth us to seek no other way of escape than we can commend to God's blessing in prayer. It is said of the saints, Heb. xi. 35, 'That they were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might receive a better resurrection.' Would any refuse deliverance when it is tendered to them? Yes, upon such spiteful conditions: they were commanded to do something contrary to the laws of God; therefore they would have God's deliverance, not their own. Every one of them was offered release in the midst of their torments and tortures, if they would yield to the eating of swine's flesh, or that which was forbidden by God.

[5.] Seeking deliverance at the hands of God doth ease the heart of a great deal of trouble, and deliver it from those inordinate affections and afflicting and tormenting passions which otherwise the oppression of man might raise in us; as fear, grief, sorrow, anger, envy, and despair; fear and dread to suffer more, grief and sorrow for what we suffer already, anger and envy against those oppressors by whom we suffer, and despair and impatience because of the continuance of our molestations and sufferings. All these are mischiefs to the soul, and all these are cured by prayer.

(1.) Fear, because of the mightiness of them that oppress, or threaten to oppress. The fear of man we are told is a snare: Prov. xxix. 25, 'The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.' We are full of distracting and perplexing thoughts, and if we cherish them they will weaken our trust in God and dependence upon his promises; for fear of man and trust in God are there opposed. Nay, the mischief will not stop there; for they that trust not God can never be true to him: it will destroy our trust in God, and then we shall run to carnal shifts, and so fear men more than God, do things displeasing to God for fear of being oppressed by men; so that you may be soon sensible of the mischief of carnal fear. But how shall we ease our hearts of this burden by prayer? Partly because then we use our fear aright when it only driveth us to seek his protection; that is the commendable use of fear: 2 Chron. xx. 3, 'Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord.' When Jacob

feared Esau, he set himself to wrestle with God, Gen. xxxii. And partly because prayer discovereth a higher object of fear: Eccles. v. 8, 'There is a higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they.' And so the fear of God driveth out the fear of man, as a great nail driveth out the less. In God's strength we may defy enemies: Ps. xxvii. 1, 'The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?' We can set God against the creature, and this will quell our fears of them. When we set ourselves against them, our interest against theirs, we may see cause to fear; but set God against them and engage him, and you have no cause to fear. Then—

(2.) For grief and sorrow. It cloggeth the heart, and stayeth the wheels, so that we drive on heavily in the spiritual life. Worldly sorrow worketh death, 2 Cor. vii. 10. It brings on deadness and hardness of heart, and quencheth all our vigour: Prov. xv. 13, 'By sorrow of heart the spirit is broken.' A dead and heavy heart doth little to the purpose for God. Now how shall we get rid of this? The cure is by prayer; for vent giveth ease to all our passions: Phil. iv. 6, 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' As when wind is gotten into the caverns of the earth, it causeth terrible convulsions and earthquakes till it get a vent; so the mind is eased when we can pour out our care into the bosom of God, and wait till deliverance cometh from above. Prayer sheweth there is some life in our affairs, that our right for the present is not dead, but sleeps; there is a God in heaven, that heareth our groans, and is sensible of our sorrows, and then we may say, Ps. xlii. 5, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him,' &c. Prayer is the old refuge of the saints, and the blessed means to pluck up their spirits. Whilst there is a God in heaven, we are not at an utter loss. So ver. 9, 'I will say unto God, my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppressor?' David first reasoned with himself, yet the distemper continued; but when he comes to reason the case with God in prayer, then he gets ease.

(3.) The violent passions of anger, envy, and revenge against oppressors, these are all naught, and do a world of mischief. Anger discomposeth us, and transports the soul into uncomely motions against God and men, makes us fret and malcontent; it tempts us to atheism, Ps. lxxiii., maketh us weary of well-doing, Ps. xxxvii., tempts us to imitation of their wicked course. The devil worketh much upon spleen and stomach and discontent, and we are apt to run into these disorders. Now how shall we do to get rid of these distempers? By prayer, in which we get a sight and prospect of the other world, and then these things will seem nothing to us; acquaint ourselves with God, and the process of his providence, and so we shall see an end of things, Ps. lxxiii. 17; then all is quiet. And as for revenge, too, that is an effect of the former; when we plead before God, we see the justice of what is unjust, and hard dealing from men to be justly inflicted by God; and so the heart is calmed: 'The Lord bid him curse,' 2 Sam. xvi. 11. There is reason enough for this dispensation in the upper tribunal, whereunto when we appeal we should render no man evil for evil,

Rom. xii. 17. We ought not, we need not, it is God's work : Deut. xxxii. 35, 'Vengeance and recompense are mine.' Nay, our very praying is a committing ourselves to him that judgeth righteously, 1 Peter ii. 23. In prayer we vent our zeal, and that hindereth us from venting our carnal passions. It is a resignation of our person and cause to him under unjust sufferings, not out of malice, desiring judgment and vengeance on persecutors ; that is to make God the executioner of our lusts, to establish that which we would prevent in prayer. But saints in prayer labour only to show their faith and meekness, and to leave things to the righteous judge, to do what is for his own glory, and their good.

(4.) For the other evil, impatience and despair, it is a very great evil, and contrary to faith and hope and dependence, which the Christian religion doth mainly establish ; and maketh way for the worst evils, either total apostasy from God, or atheism, or self-destruction. Now this is very incident to us when oppressions lie long upon us : 2 Kings vi. 33, 'This evil is from the Lord : why should I wait on the Lord any longer ?' So Jer. ii. 25, 'But thou saidst, There is no hope.' Desperately ! 'No ; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go ;' I will take my own course ; there is no hope ; it is in vain to wait upon the Lord any longer. And if things do not grow to that height, yet the children of God grow weary and faint in their minds, Heb. xii. 3. Now we keep afoot some hope while we have a heart to call upon God. The suit is still depending in the court of heaven when it seems to be over on earth ; and we see there is cause to wait for God's answer. He that shall come, will come, Hab. ii. 3. God may tarry long, but will never come too late. Thus why.

2. But how is this to be asked ?

[1.] This is not to be asked in the first place, as our main blessing : Mat. vi. 33, 'First seek the kingdom of God.' If we seek our ease and temporal felicity only, that prayer is like a brutish cry : Hosea vii. 14, 'They howled upon their beds for corn and wine.' A dog will howl when he feels anything inconvenient. You will never be freed from murmuring and quarrelling at God's dispensations, and questioning his love, if this be the first thing that you seek, and so your prayers will become your snare. Besides the great dishonour to God, it argues the great disorder of your affections, that you can be content to have anything apart from God : Ps. cv. 4, 'Seek ye the Lord and his strength ; seek his face evermore.' In all conditions that must be our great request, that we may have the favour of God.

[2.] It must be asked with submission. It is not absolutely promised, nor intrinsically and indispensably necessary to our happiness, but if the Lord see it fit for his own glory and our good. We cannot take it ill if a friend refuse to lend us a sum of money which he knoweth we will lay out to our loss and detriment. God seeth it fit sometimes, for his own glory and our good, to continue us under oppression, rather than take us out of it. There are two acts of providence—relieving and comforting the oppressed, and punishing the oppressors. Sometimes God doth the one without the other, sometimes both together. Sometimes God will only comfort the oppressed ; we cry to him in our afflictions, and God will not break the yoke, but give us a supply of strength to bear it : Ps. cxxxviii. 3, 'In the day when I

cried thou answeredst me, and hast strengthened me with strength in my soul.' He giveth you strength to bear the burden, if you continue in your integrity. Sometimes God doth punish the oppressor, yet that is no relief and reparation to you; you must bear it, for you are to stand to God's will, and to wait his leisure to free you from it.

[3.] Your end must be that God may be glorified, and that you may serve him more cheerfully. So it is in the text, 'Deliver me from the oppression of man,' then shall 'I keep thy precepts;' Ps. ix. 13, 14, 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death; that I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Sion: and I will rejoice in thy salvation.' So David beggeth salvation in order to praise. Temporal mercy should not be loved for itself, nor sought for itself; but as we may glorify God by it; that is to be our end. Lord, I seek not my own interest, but thine. If you have a carnal end, you miss: James iv. 3, 'Because you ask to consume it upon your lusts,' that we may please the flesh as sweetly and quietly as we did before, live in the height of pomp and splendour, gratify our lusts without disturbance, or see our revenge; or if a mere natural end, the mere conveniency of the outward man, we bespeak our own denial.

[4.] We must pray in faith that God can and is ready to deliver from the oppression of man, and will do so in due time, when it is good for us.

(1.) God can deliver us. Though our oppressors be never so mighty and strong, God can break their power, or change their hearts, or determine their interests, because the omniscieny of God is a great deep. It is a great relief to the soul to consider the several ways that God hath to right us, either by changing the hearts of the persecutors and oppressors: Acts ix. 31, 'Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and the comforts of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.' They had nothing to do but to build up one another. When was that? When Paul was converted. He was an active instrument against the church, and God turned his heart; then had the churches rest. Or else the Lord may do it by determining their interests that they shall show favour to his people though their hearts be not changed: Prov. xvi. 7, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him.' Enemies, while enemies, may be at peace with us. Please men, and you cannot say God is your friend; but please God, and he maketh your enemies at peace with you. There is much in the secret chain of providence: Dan. i. 9, 'Now the Lord brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.' What was that favour? To wink at him for doing that which was contrary to the law of their religion. Or else he can break the yoke by some apparent ruining judgments, by which he will defeat all their advantages, either by power or law, rescuing his people out of their hands: Isa. xlix. 24, 25, 'Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, The captains of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: he will contend with him that contendeth

with thee, and will save thy children.' Whether they plead might or right, when God goeth that way to work, nothing shall let, no power shall be able to detain what God will have delivered and restored. Or it may be by some secret ways God will bring on some judgment: Job xx. 26, 'A fire not blown shall consume him;' that is, the oppressor; a curse not invented by those he hath wronged, or any man else, but sent immediately by God. It shall come nobody knoweth how. Therefore we should not be discouraged with unlikelihoods when we go to God, who hath many ways which poor short-sighted creatures cannot foresee.

(2.) He is ready. The love which the Lord hath for his afflicted people will not suffer his justice to be long at quiet. That God is ready to help and deliver, three things will evidence:—

(1st.) It is his nature to pity and show mercy to the oppressed, and to revenge the oppressor. He pitieth the afflictions of them that suffer most justly, and far beneath their desert, from his own hand: Judges x. 16, 'And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord, and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel;' and 2 Kings xiv. 26, 'For the Lord saw the exceeding bitter affliction of Israel.' How much more will he pity them that are unworthily oppressed! Isa. lxiii. 9, 'In all their afflictions he was afflicted;' Acts vii. 34, 'I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and have heard their groaning,' &c. And the Lord's pitiful nature doth incline him to deliver his people: 'And when the oppressed cry, I will hear them; for I am gracious,' Exod. xxii. 21–27.

(2dly.) It is his usual practice and custom: Ps. ciii. 6, 'The Lord executeth judgment and righteousness for all that are oppressed.' If for all, surely for his people. He sits in heaven on purpose to rectify the disorders of men. So Ps. xxxiv. 19, 'Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.' God hath a plaister for every wound; God's people plunge themselves into trouble, and his mercy delivereth them out of it.

(3dly.) It is his office as judge of the world: Ps. xciv. 2, 'Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth; render a reward to the proud: shall not the judge of the earth do right?' Look upon him only in that notion, according to our natural conceptions, as the supreme cause and judge of all things. Again, his office as protector of his people; he is in covenant with them, he is their sun and shield, he is the refuge of the oppressed, his people's refuge in time of trouble, Ps. ix. 9; when they have none else to fly to, he will be their refuge.

(3.) He will do it when it is good and necessary; for God hath made promises and repeated promises of deliverance, and surely these are not in vain. If God had spoken but once, we had no reason to doubt; but he telleth us over and over again we should cast our care upon him, and refer all things to him without despondency and distraction of mind: Ps. ix. 18, 'For the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.'

Use. Instruction to teach us what to do when we are oppressed.

1. Patience. It is the lot of God's children to be often troubled by the world, and hardly used. Satan is the ruler of the darkness of this world, the blind, carnal, malicious, superstitious part of the world; and they cannot away with those that would overturn Satan's kingdom.

The good are fewest, and therefore we must look to be oppressed ; if there be any breathing-time it is a mercy : 2 Tim. iii. 12, ' Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution ; ' Gal. iv. 29, ' For as he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now, ' and will be so ; we should want our way-mark without it.

2. Let us be prepared to commend our cause to God : Ps. x. 17, 18, ' Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble ; thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear ; to judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress. ' God prepares the hearts of the humble. How so ? The trouble continueth till we are sensible of the misery of the sin, of the cause : Hosea v. 15, ' I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offences, and seek my face ; in their affliction they will seek me early. ' It is a long time before men can be sensible of the hand of God upon them. Slight spirits are not grieved, but lull themselves asleep, Jer. v. 3. If they have a natural sense of the judgment, they have no sense of sin as the cause ; then they fly to human help to be eased of the trouble : Jer. iv. 14, ' Wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved ; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee ? ' When past human help, then seek the favour of God to take up the controversy, 2 Chron. vii. 14 ; when driven to an earnest attendance upon God, and all probabilities spent ; we have no help but what heaven and a promise can afford, and upon these terms continue our importunity, Luke xviii. 7-18. It is a long time ere men will lay it to heart, to see his hand and seek to him for relief.

3. When you have prayed, then wait. It is a good sign when we are enlarged in prayer, and encouraged to wait. Enlarged to pray ; for when God hath a mind to work, he sets the Spirit of prayer a-work. God will not pour out his Spirit in vain ; the Spirit knoweth the deep things of God : Ps. l. 15, ' Call upon me in a time of trouble, and I will deliver thee. ' So when we are encouraged to wait. How can our prayers be heard when we regard them not ourselves, and expect no issue ? How should God hear when we pray out of course, and do not think our prayers worth the regarding ? Ps. lxxxv. 8, ' I will hearken what God the Lord will speak, ' &c. ; Ps. xl. 1, ' I waited patiently for the Lord ; he inclined unto me and heard my cry ; ' Hab. ii. 1, ' I will watch to see what he will say. ' Look for an answer. God doth not usually disappoint a waiting people.

Secondly, When God delivereth us from the oppression of man, we should be quickened and encouraged in his service.

1. Because every mercy inferreth an answerable duty : 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, ' But Hezekiah rendered not according to the benefit done unto him. ' There must be rendering according to receiving.

2. This is the fittest return, partly because it is real, not verbal. The Lord cares not for words ; he knows the secret springs of the heart, Isa. xxxviii. 9 ; and see Ps. l. 23. It is good to be speaking good of God's name. This is one way of glorifying, but ordering the conversation aright is that which is most pleasing to him. And partly too because our clogs of fear and sorrow and other impediments are taken away : Ps. cxix. 32, ' I will run the ways of thy commandments when

thou shalt enlarge my heart.' This was God's end, to deliver us out of the hands of our enemies, that we may serve him without fear, Luke i. 74, 75. Those wretches that said, Jer. vii. 10, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations,' to return to the practices of their vile courses afresh, did pervert God's end in their deliverance. What use shall we make of such a point in our deep sorrows?

Ans. 1. We are not altogether without this benefit: 2 Chron. vii. 12, 'The Lord said, I have heard thy prayer.' Many times God maketh his love conspicuous to his people in a low condition; they are oppressed sore, but not grinded to powder; it is a blessing we are not quite destroyed. Exod. i. 12, The Israelites, the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied; and the Egyptians were grieved for the children of Israel, that they were not extinguished. God dealeth with us as then he did with them, 2 Sam. xii. 7. But I will grant them some deliverance.

2. We are now under the sad effects of our former unthankfulness, and by remembering our duty we may see our sin, Hosea iv. 3, 4. Ingratitude and walking unanswerably to received mercy is the great and crying sin of God's people; therefore we should humble ourselves that we did so little good in former times of liberty, that God had so little glory and service from us. Now God by his present providence showeth us the difference: Deut. xxviii. 47, 48, 'Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore thou shalt serve thine enemies,' &c.; 2 Chron. xii. 8, 'Nevertheless they shall be his servants, that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.' First we must be humbled for the abuse of former mercies before we seek new.

3. That we may know what to have in our eye, when we are asking for mercies. The end is first in intention, though last in execution. Do not pray to serve thy lusts more freely, nor think how to execute revenge, be quits with those that hate us, nor how we shall be provided for; but what glory and service we may bring to God: Ps. lxxv. 2, 'When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly.' These mercies must not be abused to licentiousness, or to nourish ourselves in sin or stupid security; but in duty and service.

4. It teacheth us how to make our promises, and oblige ourselves to God. When you come to promise duty and obedience to God, be sure to be sincere and holy; make due provision that it may be so by mortifying the roots of such distempers as will betray us. When a people in a low condition have a real inclination to praise and glorify God by their mercies as soon as they shall receive them, it is an argument God will hear and grant.

Thirdly, But when we are praying for deliverance, we should interpose promises of obedience, as David doth here, 'Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.' (1.) To show there is the *ratio dati et accepti*, to show the law of giving and receiving is natural to us; it is an ingrafted principle in men's minds. When we think of God's giving, we should think of returning something. An intercourse between God and us is maintained by mercies and duties: not that God needeth, or that we can oblige him, but this qualifieth

us. Intercourse is lost when we would receive all and return nothing. (2.) A solemn promise is necessary to excite and quicken our dulness, or a bond upon us, or a bridle to our inconstancy. We cannot unbind ourselves again from our strict obligation to obedience.

Use. Well, then, let us make good the vows of our distress; they must be paid, or else God is mocked: Eccles. v. 4, 'When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed;' Job xxii. 27, 'Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee; and thou shalt pay thy vows.'

SERMON CL.

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.—
VER. 135.

THIS verse is wholly precatory. Most of the verses of this psalm have a prayer with an argument, but here both the branches are petitory. Observe in the words—

1. The blessings prayed for.
2. The order of these petitions.
3. The connection that is between them.

1. The blessings he prayeth for are two—(1.) For God's favour; (2.) For his direction in God's ways; spiritual consolation and increase of sanctification. David could not live out of God's favour nor without his direction; therefore he prays heartily for both.

2. The order of these petitions—first, 'Make thy face to shine;' and then, 'Teach me thy statutes.' God's favour is the fountain of all goodness to his children and servants; and until we have that we can have nothing; there we must begin. They that have not the favour of God are left to their own sway, and their own hearts and counsels; but those whom he loves know his secrets and are guided by his Spirit.

3. The connection. He prays not for one, but for both; for God giveth both together, consolation and direction, and we must seek both together; for we cannot expect God should favour us while we walk in a wrong way and contrary to his will.

Let me speak of the first petition. Where I might observe—

1. The matter of the petition, *make thy face to shine.*
2. The person, *upon me.*
3. The character by which he describeth himself, *thy servant.*

1. As to the matter, 'Make thy face to shine.' It is a metaphor taken from the sun. When the sun shines, and sheds abroad his light and heat and influence, then the creatures are cheered and revived; but when that is obscured, they droop and languish. What the sun is to the outward world, that is God to the saints. Or else here is a metaphor taken from men, that look pleasantly upon those in whom they delight; and so the Lord gives a smile of his gracious countenance upon his people: indeed it alludeth to both; for the

allusion to the light and influence of the sun is clear in the word 'shine;' and the allusion to the pleasant countenance of a man upon his child is included in the word 'face.' The phrase may be understood by what is said, Prov. xvi. 15, 'In the light of the king's countenance is life, and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.' That place will illustrate this we have in hand. Look, what the smiling and pleasing aspect of the king is to those that value and stand in need of his favour, that is the favour of God to the saints. The same form of speech is used in other places; as in the form of the priest's blessing: Num. vi. 25, 'The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;' and in that prayer, Ps. lxvii. 1, 'God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us. Selah.' Well, then, the thing begged is a sense of God's love.

2. For whom doth David beg this? For himself, 'Cause thy face to shine upon me;' David, a man after God's own heart. But did he need to put up such a request to God? (1.) Possibly God might seem to neglect him, or to look upon him with an angry countenance, because of sin; and therefore he begs some demonstration of his favour and good-will. David had his times of darkness and discomfort as well as others, therefore earnestly beggeth for one smile of God's face. (2.) If you look not upon him as under desertion at this time, the words then must be thus interpreted: he begs the continuance and increase of his comfort and sense of God's love. God's manifestations of himself to his people in this world are given out in a different degree, and with great diversity. Our assurance or sense of his love consists not *in puncto*, an indivisible point; it hath a latitude, it may be more and it may be less, and God's children think they can never have enough of it; therefore David saith, 'Lord, cause thy face to shine.' If it did shine already, the petition intimates the continuance and increase of it.

3. He characteriseth himself by the notion of God's servant; as Ps. xxxi. 16, 'Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; save me, for thy mercies' sake.' We must study to approve ourselves to be the Lord's servants by our obedience. If we would have his face shine upon us, we must be careful to yield obedience unto him.

The points are four:—

1. The sense of God's favour may be withdrawn for a time from his choicest servants.

2. The children of God, that are sensible of this, cannot be satisfied with this estate, but they will be praying for some beams of love to be darted out upon their souls.

3. They that are sensible of the want or loss of God's favour have liberty with hope and encouragement to sue out this blessing, as David did: 'Lord, make thy face to shine upon thy servant.'

4. God's children, when they beg comfort, they also beg grace to serve him acceptably.

First, The sense of God's favour may be withdrawn for a time from his choicest servants. David puts up this petition in point of comfort. There is a twofold desertion—in appearance and in reality.

1. In appearance only, through the misgivings of our own hearts. We may think God is gone, and hides his face, when there is no such

matter, as through inadvertency we may seek what we have in our hands. Thus a child of God thinks he is cast out of the presence of God when all the while he hath a full right and place in his heart. Thus David, Ps. xxxi. 22. We think God hath forgotten us, neglects us, casts us off, hath no respect for us, when in the meantime the Lord is framing an answer of grace for us. One chief cause is misinterpreting God's providence, and our manifold afflictions. The Lord sometimes frowns upon his children, as Joseph upon his brethren, when his affections were very strong; so the Lord covers himself with frowns and anger, the visible appearance of it speaks no otherwise.

2. It may be really when he is angry for sin: Isa. lvii. 17, 'For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him; I hid me and was wroth.' As the fathers of our flesh show their anger by whipping and scourging the bodies of their children, so the Father of our spirits by lashing the soul and spirits, by causing them to feel the effects of his angry indignation. Or else withdrawing the spirit of comfort, suspending all the acts and fruits of his love, so that they have not that joyful sense of communion with God as they were wont to have. Now the reasons why God's people may want the light of his countenance are these:—

[1.] God out of sovereignty will exercise us with changes here in the world, even in the inward man; there we have our ebbs and flows, that we may know earth is not heaven. He hath an eternity wherein to reveal his love, and to communicate himself to his people; therefore he will take a liberty as to temporal dispensations: Isa. liv. 8, 'In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.' He hath an everlasting love and kindness for us, therefore here in the world he will exercise us with some uncertainties; as David concealed his love towards his son Absalom, when yet his bowels yearned towards him. Here he takes liberty to do it, because he will make it up in heaven. All your changes shall then be recompensed by an uninterrupted comfort.

[2.] To conform us to Jesus Christ. We should not know the bitter agonies our Redeemer sustained for us unless we had some experience of it ourselves. He tasted of this cup, Mat. xxvii. 46. And though it be a bitter cup, yet it must go round; we must all pledge him in it. Conceit will not inform us so much as experience.

[3.] His justice requires it, when we surfeit of our comforts, and play the wantons with them, that he should withdraw them. We ourselves breed the mist and clouds which hide from us the shining of God's favour. We raise up those mountains of transgression that are as a wall of separation between us and God; whence that expression, Isa. lix. 2, 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you.' As the sun dissolves and dispels mists and clouds by his bright beams, so God of his free grace dissolveth these clouds: Isa. xlv. 22, 'I have blotted out thy iniquities as a cloud, and thy transgressions as a thick cloud.' Now there are two sins especially which cause God to hide himself—(1.) Too free a liberty in carnal pleasures and delights; (2.) Spiritual laziness.

(1.) Too free a liberty in carnal pleasures and delights. When we live according to the flesh, we smart for it, these mar our taste; and when our affections run out to other comforts, we forfeit those which are better, Ps. xxx. 6, 7; when we begin to sleep upon a carnal pillow, to compose ourselves to rest, and lie down and dream golden dreams of earthly felicity. Carnal confidence and carnal complacency make God a stranger to us. This carnal complacency hinders a sense of God's love two ways—*meritorie et effective*. Not only meritoriously, as it provokes God to withdraw when we set up an idol in our hearts, but also effectively; as carnal delights bring on a brawn and deadness upon the heart, so that we cannot have a sense of God's love, for that requires a pure, delicate spirit. Our taste must be purged, refined, sensible of spiritual good and evil. Now this will never be except the soul be purged from carnal complacency; for while there is so strong a relish of the flesh-pots of Egypt, we are not fit to taste the hidden manna; but always the more dead the heart is to worldly things, the more lively to spiritual sense ever: Jude 19, 'Sensual, not having the spirit,' *i.e.*, spiritual joys, feelings, operations. When Solomon withheld not his heart from any joy, God left him. When he was trying the pleasures of the creature, and went a-whoring from God, God left him.

(2.) Spiritual laziness is another cause why God hides his face from his people, Cant. v. 6, compared with ver. 2, 3. The spouse neglected to open to Christ upon light and frivolous pretences, and then her beloved had withdrawn himself. If we lie down on the bed of security, and grow lazy and negligent, then Christ withdraws.

[4.] It is necessary and useful for us sometimes that God should hide his face. Cloudy and rainy days conduce to the fruitfulness of the earth, as well as those that are fair and shining; and the winter hath its use as well as the summer. We are apt to have cheap thoughts of spiritual comforts, Job xv. 11, apt to run riot, and to grow neglectful of God and be proud, 2 Cor. xii. 7. Paul had his buffetings to keep down his pride. We have changes even in our inward man to keep us in the better frame, the more watchful, diligent, and waiting upon God.

Use. Well, if it be so, all the use I shall make is to put this question—Is this your case, yea or no? There is nothing that conduceth to the safety and comfort of the spiritual life so much as observing God's comings and goings, that we may suit our carriage accordingly. Our Lord saith, Mat. ix. 15, 'Can the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?' Is God present, or is he gone? When God is gone, not to lay it to heart argues great stupidity. You are worse than that idolater, Judges xviii. 24. He thought he had reason enough for his laments and moans when they had taken away his images, his gods. So if God be gone, shall we digest and put up with such a loss, and never mind to lay it to heart? Job complains of this, chap. xxix. 3, that the candle of the Lord did not shine upon his head as it did of old. Surely they that have any respect to God, any tenderness left in their hearts, will be sensible of God's going. On the other side, if we get anything of God, his grace and favour to our hearts, it should be matter of joy and consolation to us: Rom. v. 11, 'We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,

by whom we have now received the atonement.' Jesus Christ hath made the atonement, but we have received the atonement when we get anything of the blood of Christ upon our own consciences, when we have any sense of reconciliation. A little sunshine enliveneth the poor creatures, the birds fall a singing that were melancholy and sad before in cloudy weather, they are cheered and comforted when the sun shines. How should we observe the least glimpse of God's favour if he but show himself through the lattice ! Cant. ii. There is nothing keeps grace lively, and freeth us from a dead and stupid formality, so much as this. But when men are careless, and do not observe God's accesses and recesses, hardness of heart increaseth upon us presently, and loseth that worship and reverence and invocation and praise that is due from us to him. Therefore our eye should still wait upon the Lord, and as the eyes of servants are on their mistresses, Ps. cxxiii. 3, so should our eye be still on God's hands, and observe what he gives out in every duty, or what of God we observe in this or that ordinance.

Secondly, The children of God, that are sensible of this, cannot be satisfied with this estate ; but will be praying and always seeking the evidences of his favour and reconciliation : Ps. lxxx. 3, 7, 19, three times it is repeated, ' Turn us again, O Lord of hosts ; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.' Their great happiness is to be in favour with God. They can dispense with other comforts, and can want them with a quiet mind ; let God do his pleasure there, but they cannot dispense with this, with the want of his favour and manifested good-will to them. This is the life of their lives, the fountain of their comforts ; this is the heaven they have upon earth, without which they cannot joy in themselves : ' Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.' What are the reasons of this ?

1. Because of the value of this privilege ; the favour of God is the greatest blessing. It may appear in sundry respects. Take but that consideration : Ps. lxxiii. 3, ' Thy loving-kindness is better than life.' The favour of God is the life of our souls, and his displeasure is our death. A child of God values his happiness by God's friendship, not by his worldly prosperity ; and is miserable by God's absence, and by the causes thereof, his sin and offence done to God. Nay, his loving-kindness is not only life, but better than life. A man may be weary of life itself, but never of the love of God. Many have complained of life as a burden, and wished for the day of death, but none have complained of the love of God as a burden. All the world without this cannot make a man happy. What will it profit us if the whole world smile upon us, and God frown and be angry with us ? All the candles in the world cannot make it day ; nay, all the stars shining together cannot dispel the darkness of the night nor make it day, unless the sun shines ; so whatever comforts we have of a higher or lower nature, they cannot make it day with a gracious heart, unless God's face shine upon us ; for he can blast all in an instant. A prisoner is never the more secure, though his fellows and companions applaud him, and tell him his cause is good, and that he shall escape, when he that is judge condemns him. Though we have the good word of all the world, yet if the Lord speak not peace to our souls, and shine not upon our con-

sciences, what will the good word of the world do? 2 Cor. x. 18, 'He is approved whom the Lord commendeth.' A sense of God's love in Christ is the sweetest thing that ever we felt, and is able to sweeten the bitterest cup that ever believer drank of: Rom. v. 3, 'We glory in tribulation.' It will be a blessed thing when we cannot only bear tribulations, but rejoice in them; but how come we to rejoice in them? Why, because 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us;' so he goes on. If we would know the value of things, the best way is to know what is our greatest comfort and our greatest trouble in distress; for when we are drunk with worldly prosperity and happiness, we are incompetent judges of the worth of things; but when God rebukes a man for sin, what is our greatest trouble then? that we may take heed of providing sorrow to ourselves another time; then we find sin and transgression the greatest burden when any notable affliction is upon us, Job xxxvi. 9; and what will be your greatest comfort then? for then your comforts are put to the proof. One evidence of an interest in Christ, a little sense of the love of God, how precious is it! Ps. xciv. 19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.' His thoughts were entangled and interwoven one with another, as branches of a crooked tree; for so the word signifies there. When his thoughts were thus intricate and perplexed, then 'thy comforts delight my soul.' Oh! then, what should we labour for, but to be most clear in this, that God loves us. This will be our greatest comfort and rejoicing in all conditions. It is good for us in prosperity, then our comforts are sweet; and in adversity and deep affliction, to see God is not angry with us. Though we feel some smart of his afflicting hand, yet his heart is with us.

2. They deal with God as worldly men do with sensible things; for as others live by sense, so they by faith. Now worldly men are cheered with the good-will of men, and troubled with the displeasure of men upon whom they depend. The down-look of Ahasuerus confounded Haman, and put him to great trouble: 'He was afraid,' Esther vii. 8. Absalom professes it were better for him to be banished than to live in Jerusalem and not see the king's face, 2 Sam. xiv. 32. Surely it is death to God's children to want his face and favour upon whom they depend. Their business lies mainly with God, and their dependence and hope and comfort is in God; they live by faith. Poor worldlings walk by sense, therefore their souls run out upon other comforts, in the smiling face of some great potentate, or some friend of the world: this is their life, peace, and joy. But they that live by faith see him that is invisible, and value their happiness by his favour, and misery by his displeasure.

3. The children of God have tasted the sweetness of it, therefore they know it by experience. The best demonstration of anything is from sense. Description cannot give me such a demonstration as when I taste and feel it myself: 1 Peter ii. 3, 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' They have an experimental feeling of that which others know only by guess and hearsay. Carnal men know no other good but that of the creature. The spouse did so languish after her beloved, being sick of love; when her desires were disappointed, it

made her faint, Cant. v. 6. They that have not seen and known him, know not what to make of those spiritual and lively affections that carry us out after the favour of God with such earnestness and importunity; but they that have tasted and know what their beloved is, their hearts are more excited and stirred up towards him: John iv. 10, 'If thou knewest the gift of God,' &c. You would more admire the favour of God if you knew it, especially by experience; you would find it is a better good than ever you have yet tasted.

Use. Is this our temper and frame of our hearts? Can we live contentedly and satisfiedly without the light of his countenance? A child of God may be without the light of his countenance, but cannot live contentedly without it. Are we troubled about it, ever seeking after it? Surely this is the disposition of the children of God, they are ever seeking after the favour of God. I shall press to this by this argument.

1. God bespeaks it from you: Ps. xxvii. 8, 'Thou saidst, Seek ye my face.' There is a dialogue between God and a gracious heart. The Lord saith, 'Seek;' he saith it in his word, and speaks by the injection of holy thoughts, by the inspiration of his grace; and the renewed heart, like a quick echo, takes hold of this, 'Lord, thy face will I seek,' Ps. cvi. 4. You should ever be seeking after God in his ordinances, seek his favour and face.

2. The new nature inclines and carries the soul to God; it came from God, and carries the soul to God again. The spirit of the world doth wholly incline us to the world: they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; and the Spirit of God doth incline us to God, and therefore the people of God will value his favour above all things else. David speaks in his own name, and in the name of all that were like-minded with himself; he speaks of all the children of God in opposition to the many, the brutish ones, that were for sensual satisfaction: Ps. iv. 6, 'Many say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.' He doth not say, upon me, but upon us, as the common language of all the saints. The favour of God is so dear and precious to the saints, that they can compare with the affections of carnal men, take them at the greatest advantage. He doth not consider their worldly things in their decrease, but he considers them when they are increased; and he considers them in the very time when they are increased, in the vintage and harvest time. The shouting of vintage and joy of harvest are proverbial; and the comforts of this life, when new and fresh, most invite delight. They that place their happiness in these things cannot have so much joy as they that have a sense of their interest in God. Now, shall we be wholly strangers to this temper and disposition of soul.

3. If we be backward to seek after the favour of God, the Lord whips his people to it by his providence; for sometimes their spiritual disposition may be marred: Hosea v. 15, 'I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face. In their affliction they will seek me early.' The Lord withdraws his gracious presence for this reason, not that we may seek ease or freedom from trouble, but that we may seek his face, and the applying of his grace to our consciences.

4. God is not wholly gone, neither is the desertion total, when there is such a disposition in the heart. He hath left something behind him which draws you after him. The estimation of God's favour keeps his place warm till he come again; it keeps room in the soul: Ps. lxxxviii. 13, 14, 'Unto thee have I cried; in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee: Lord, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?' But when they can digest such a loss with patience, it is an indifferent thing whether they have any sense of God's love, yea or no.

5. We find it to be a sad thing to lose any worldly comfort, and shall we lose the favour of God too, and never lay it to heart, and live contentedly without it? It is a sign we despise that which the saints value, and which is the principal blessing; you will not have cheap thoughts of the consolation of God, Job xv. 11.

6. Unless we seek God's favour, all our labour is lost in other duties: 2 Chron. vii. 14, 'If my people, that are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven,' &c. This is put in among other conditions, and without this the promise is not made good to us. Many seek to the Lord in their distresses, but it is only for redress of temporal evils, or obtaining necessary temporal supplies; but do not seek his face: then their prayers are but like howlings, but like the moans of beasts, Hosea vii. 14. They do not seek reconciliation and communion with God, but only ease and riddance of present trouble. Those are not holy prayers.

7. It is the distinguishing point that will separate the precious from the vile, to have a tender sense of God's favour: Ps. xxiv. 6, 'This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob.' There are many thoughts of interpreters about that place, I find; though they differ in it, yet they all agree in this sense, that they are the true Israelites, the true Jacob's posterity, that cannot brook God's absence, that seek his face, that will not let him go, but strive with him till they get the blessing. These are not Israel in the letter, but Israel in the spirit. Jacob said, 'I will not let thee go unless thou bless me,' Gen. xxxii. 26. Such diligent seekers of God should we be, never to give over till we find him. Or, as Moses said, 'Lord, if thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence;' we will not stir a foot without thy favour and presence.

Thirdly, They that are sensible of the want or loss of the favour of God have liberty to sue for it with hope and encouragement to find it. For so doth David, 'Make thy face to shine.' Whence comes this liberty?

1. Because of God's promise, because of the mercy of God pawned to us in his promises. He hath told us, none shall seek his face in vain, Isa. xlviii. 19; Prov. viii. 17; Ps. xxii. 11, 20. One that seriously and diligently is seeking after God, before he hath done his search, he shall have some opportunity to bless and praise the Lord; some experience of grace shall be given to him, if he conscionably, diligently, and seriously seek it.

2. Because of the mediation of Jesus Christ, you may come in his name and seek the favour of God: Ps. xxxvi. 7, 'How excellent is

thy loving-kindness, O God ! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.' Interpreters upon that place conceive the shadow of God's wings does not allude to an ordinary similitude of a hen that, when vultures and kites are abroad, covers her little ones, gathers her chickens under her wings : no ; but they think the allusion to be to the outstretched wings of the cherubims ; and this is the ground of our trust and dependence upon God. Let the sons of men put their trust under the shadow of his wings, there to find God reconciled in Christ ; for the throne of grace was a figure of that propitiation. He is called the propitiation, God propitiated and reconciled in Christ is the throne of grace interpreted. However that be, it is clear, Ps. lxxx. 1, 'Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.' When they would have God hear, they give him the title of one that sits upon the mercy-seat, reconciled by Christ. Though the cloud of sin doth hide God's favour from thee, he can make it shine again ; and here is our ground, the merciful invitation of God's promise, and then God propitiated in Christ.

Use. Oh ! then, let us turn unto the Lord in prayer, and in the use of all other means, humbling ourselves and seeking his favour.

1. Waiting for it with all heedfulness: Ps. cxxx. 6, 'My soul doth wait for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning ;' and he repeats it again, 'I say, more than they that watch for the morning.' Look, as the weary sentinel that is wet and stiff with cold and the dews of the night, or as the porters that watched in the temple, the Levites, were waiting for the daylight, so more than they that watch for the morning was he waiting for some glimpse of God's favour. Though he do not presently ease us of our smart or gratify our desires, yet we are to wait upon God. In time we shall have a good answer. God's delays are not denials. Day will come at length, though the weary sentinel or watchman counts it first long ; so God will come at length ; he will not be at our beck. We have deserved nothing, but must wait for him in the diligent use of the means ; as Benhadad's servants watched for the word 'brother,' or anything of kindness to drop from the king of Israel.

2. Work for it : for I press you not to a devout sloth. All good things are hard to come by ; it is worth all the labour we lay out upon it. There is no having peace with God, any sense of his love, without diligent attendance in the use of all appointed means : 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless ;' and 2 Peter i. 10, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.' That comfort is to be suspected that costs nothing, but, like Jonah's gourd, grows up in a night, that comes upon us we know not how.

Fourthly, God's children, when they beg comfort, also beg grace to serve him acceptably ; for 'teaching God's statutes' is not meant barely a giving us a speculative knowledge of God's will : for so David here, 'Make thy face to shine,' and, 'Teach me thy statutes.' And why do they so ?

1. Out of gratitude. They are ingenuous, and would return all duty and thankfulness to God, as well as receive mercy from him : therefore they are always mingling resolutions of duty with expecta-

tions of mercy; and when they carry away comforts from him are thinking of suitable returns. And while they take Christ for righteousness, they devote and give up themselves to his use and service. The nature of man is so disposed, that when we ask anything, we promise, especially if a superior: Hosea xiv. 2, 'Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips.' The children of God resolve upon duty and service when they ask favour. So Ps. ix. 13, 14, 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider my trouble; that I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion.' We are thinking of honouring and praising God at that time when we seek his favour.

2. The children of God do know that this is the cause of God's aversion from them, that his statutes are not observed; and therefore, when they beg a greater experience of God's special favour, they also beg direction to keep his statutes. They cannot maintain and keep up a sense of the love of God unless they be punctual in their duty. He knows nothing of religion that knows not that the comfort of a Christian depends upon sanctification as well as justification; and the greater sense of obedience the fuller sense of the love of God; and the degrees of manifesting his favour are according to the degrees of our profiting in obedience, for these go along still. Jesus Christ is king of righteousness and king of peace. He is Melchisedec, king of Salem; he pours out the oil of grace that he may pour out the oil of gladness, Heb. vii. 2. But especially see one place, John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.' Christ was then most sweetly comforting his people, but it was not his mind that they should be emboldened thereby to cast off duty. No; he says, the only way to assure them that they were not delusions, and to clear their right to these comforts, was this, 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.' That is the way to get confirmation and evidence of the love of God.

3. This is a notable effect and evidence of God's favour, to guide you in his ways; therefore it is a branch of the former, for whom the Lord loveth he teacheth and guides: Rom. viii. 14, 'As many as are the children of God, they are led by the Spirit.' Others are left to their own heart's counsels. And Ps. xxv. 14, 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.' The communication of secrets is a note of friendship. Now the secret of the Lord, the knowledge of his covenant, and what belongs thereto, it is to those that fear God. There is the qualification.

4. He sheweth that he does not desire a greater proof of God's love. He would chiefly experience the good-will of God to him in being taught the mind of God. The most slight that which David prizeth. But if our hearts were as they should be, we would prefer this before all other good things, sanctification, to be taught of God. For—

[1.] It is a better evidence of God's favour than worldly comforts. Pardon freeth us from punishment, sanctification from sin and pollu-

tion ; sin is worse than misery, and holiness is to be preferred before impunity. Christ in the work of redemption considered the Father's interest and honour as well as your salvation. The taking away of worldly comforts doth not infringe our blessedness ; yea, when it is accompanied with this benefit, it maketh way for the increase of it : Ps. xciv. 12, 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.' All the comforts of the world are not worth one dram of grace. The loss of them may be supplied with grace, and man be happy, comfortable, and blessed for all that ; but the loss of grace cannot be supplied with temporal things. We cannot say, Blessed is the man that hath lost grace for the world's sake. Again, all the riches and honours heaped upon a man cannot make him better, they may easily make him worse ; but grace can never make us worse, but always better, more amiable in the eyes of God, and fitter for communion with him. These may be given to those whom God hateth, Ps. xvii. 14 ; but this is the favour of his people. Grace is never given but to those whom he entirely loveth. These may be given in wrath, but sanctifying grace never in wrath. The more we have of these things, the more wanton and vain, Deut. xxxii. 15. They are often used as an occasion to the flesh, Gal. v. 13, prove fuel to our lusts, increase our snares, temptations, difficulties in heaven's way, Luke xviii. 25. Our table becometh a snare, Ps. lxxix. 22. But the saving graces of the Spirit make all easy, and help us towards our own happiness.

[2.] Profiting in obedience or sanctification is a greater effect of God's favour. Sanctification is a greater privilege than justification. Perfect and complete holiness and conformity to God is the great thing which God designed, as the glory of God is holiness, Exod. xv. 11. Moral perfections exceed natural ; and of all moral perfections holiness is the greatest. It is better to be wise than strong, to be holy than wise. Beasts have strength, man hath reason, but holy angels, a holy God. Sanctification is a real perfection, but justification is but a relative. It rendereth us amiable in the eyes of God. God hateth sin more than misery. Sin is against God's very nature. God can inflict punishment, but he cannot infuse sin. God's interest and honour is to be preferred before our comfort and personal benefit. In sanctification, besides our personal benefit, which is the perfection of our natures, God's honour and interest is concerned in our subjection to him. Justification is a pledge, but sanctification is not only a pledge but a beginning ; it is *removens prohibens*. We love him for pardoning, but he delighteth in holiness : he delighteth in us rather as sanctified than pardoned. We love much because much is forgiven, Luke vii. 47. But God delighteth in the pure and upright : Prov. xi. 20, 'Such as are upright in their way are his delight.'

Use 1. For reproof of three sorts :—

1. Of those that would have ease and comfort, but care not for duty ; would have the love of God to pacify their consciences, but never mind this, to have their hearts directed in God's ways : Hosea x. 11, 'Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, that would tread out the corn but not break the clods.' It yielded food, Deut. xxv. 4. They would be feasted with privileges, yet abhor service, when they prize comfort.

To these we may argue not only *ab incongruo*—how disingenuous it is to separate duty and comfort; to be so ready to expect all from God, and so unwilling to do anything for him. It is contrary to the disposition of God's children, Titus ii. 11, 12, and Rom. xii. 1;—but *ab impossibili*. Will God ever delight in you till you be conformed to his image? Christ came not to make a change in God, but in us; not to make God less holy, but us more holy. It is not agreeable to the reasonable nature to conceive that God should be indifferent to good and bad, or a friend to those that break his laws. Would you think well of that magistrate that should let men rob and steal and beat their fellow-subjects, and not only connive at them but receive them into his bosom? You that have but a drop of the divine nature cannot delight in the company of sinners, 2 Peter ii. 8.

2. Those that would have the favour of God, but expect it should be showed to them in temporal things. Alas! these things are promiscuously dispensed to all; can be no evidence of his special love. God is behindhand with none of his creatures, Eccles. ix. 1, 2; sometimes evil things to good men, and good things to evil men. Josiah died in wars as well as Ahab. Is Abraham rich? so is Nabal. Is Joseph honoured by Pharaoh? so is Doeg by Saul. Hath Demetrius a good report of all men? 3 John 12, so have false teachers, Luke vi. 26. Hath Caleb health and strength? Josh. xiv. 11, so have wicked ones: 'No bands in their death;' Ps. lxxiii. 4, 'Their strength is firm. Was Moses beautiful? Acts vii. 20, so was Absalom, 2 Sam. xiv. 25. Did God give learning and wisdom to Moses and Daniel? &c., Dan. i. 17, so to the Egyptians, Acts vii. 22. Long life to Ishmael, Gen. xxv. 17, as well as to Isaac, Gen. xxxv. 20.

3. The children of God that murmur and repine at their sufferings when others, ignorant of the mind of God and the strictness of his ways, fare better, Ps. xvii. 14. It is often seen that 'he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow,' Eccles. i. 18. Drones and sots have their ampler revenues, but we should not be thereby discouraged. It is their portion: Prov. iii. 31, 32, 'Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways; for the froward are an abomination unto the Lord, and his secret is with the righteous.' They are hateful to God while they flourish. It is a greater evidence of God's favour and friendship to understand his counsel in the word, and to be acquainted with the mysteries of godliness, than to enjoy all the power and greatness in the world; the knowledge of a despised, hated truth, than to flourish in opposition against the ways of God, through ignorance, obstinacy, and prejudice.

Use 2. Is direction to us:—

1. For strict walking. If we would have a comfortable sense of God's love, we must resolve upon a strict course of holy walking: Gal. vi. 16, 'And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy upon the Israel of God;' and Ps. lxxxv. 8, and Eph. iv. 30.

2. If we would walk strictly, we must go to God for continual direction: Ps. lxxxvi. 11, 'Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name;' Ps. cxliii. 10, 'Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; thy spirit is good, lead me into the

land of uprightness.' Especially when blinded with interest, or apt to be carried away with temptations.

3. God's teaching is not only directive, but persuasive; it prevents sin, Ps. cxix. 133; quickens to duty, Ps. cxix. 33-35. Teach and keep, and make me to go; for that is the difference between literal instruction, which we have from man, and spiritual instruction, which we have from God. God's teaching is drawing, John vi. 44, 45.

SERMON CLI.

Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.—
VER. 136.

Most of the sentences of this psalm are independent, and do not easily fall under the rules of method; so that we need not take pains in clearing up the context; the verse needs it not, the time permits it not: only you may observe this, that often in this psalm David had expressed his great joy, and now he maketh mention of his exceeding grief. There is a time to rejoice and a time to mourn; as times vary, so do duties; we have affections for every condition. Indeed, in this valley of tears mourning is seldom out of season, either with respect to sin or misery, for ourselves or others. David, that did sometimes mourn for his own sins, and watered his couch with tears, Ps. vi. 6, he took also his time to mourn and bewail other men's sins: 'Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.'

In the words observe David's grief is set out by—

1. Constancy and greatness of it, *rivers of tears run down mine eyes.*

2. The goodness of the cause or reason of it, *because they keep not thy law.*

'Rivers of tears.' He compares his tears to a stream and river always running. The same expression is used Lam. ii. 18, 'Let tears run down like a river day and night; let not the apples of thine eyes cease.' When affections are vehemently exercised, the scripture is wont to use such kind of expressions. The will of a godly man is above his performance; it is wont to do much more than the body can furnish him with abilities to express. He had such a large affection that he could weep rivers. 'Because they.' Some refer it to eyes, the immediate antecedent; they are usually the inlets of sin; we are first taken by the eye, and then by the heart: 'She saw the fruit that it was good, and then did eat of it.' But I rather suppose it is to be referred to men. The Hebrews many times do not express a general antecedent. More particularly his enemies, Saul and his courtiers; for so he saith, ver. 139, 'My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy word;' and again, ver. 158, David saith, 'I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved because they keep not thy word.' I have brought these places, because parallel with the text; and principally that you may not think David was troubled because of any injuries done to himself, but because of offences done to

God. 'Keep not thy law.' Keeping of the law is to observe it diligently; not only to maintain it, but to retain it in our eye and practice. It might be matter of grief to David that they of whom he specially speaketh, being persons of power and place, did not maintain the law, and keep it from encroachment and violation, but suffered abuses to pass unpunished; but he speaketh here of retaining the law in their hearts and practice. For it is an expression equivalent with that which is used in ver. 139, 'Because they have forgotten thy word.' The point which I shall observe is this—

Doct. That it is the duty and property of a godly man to mourn bitterly, even for other men's sins.

Here we have David's instance; and it may be suited with the practice of all the saints. Jeremiah: see Jer. xiii. 17, 'But if ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears.' There you have described the right temper of a good prophet, first to entreat earnestly for them, and in case of refusal to weep bitterly for their obstinacy. Mark, it was not an ordinary sorrow he speaks of there, but a bitter weeping, 'Mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears.' Not a slight, vanishing sigh, not a counterfeited sorrow; soul and eyes were both engaged; and this in secret places, where the privacy contributeth much to the measure and sincerity of it. Now this is a fit instance of a minister of the gospel. We cannot always prevail when we plead with you, and shall not be responsible for it. God never required it at the hands of any minister to work grace and to save souls, but to do their endeavours. But, alas! we do not learn of Jeremiah to go and mourn over their ignorance, carelessness, and obstinacy of those committed to our charge. The next example that I shall produce is that of Lot in Sodom, 2 Peter ii. 7, 8, 'Who vexed himself, and was vexed from day to day, in seeing and hearing their unlawful deeds.' Not with Sodom's injuries, but with Sodom's sins. It was matter of constant grief to his soul; the commonness did not take away the odiousness. My next instance shall be our Lord himself; we read very much of his compassion: I shall produce but two instances of it. One is in Mark iii. 5, 'Christ looked upon them with anger, and was grieved for the hardness of their hearts.' They gave him cause of offence, but it doth not only exercise his anger but grief. In our Saviour's anger there was more of compassion than passion. He was grieved to see men harden themselves to their own destruction. So when he came near to Jerusalem, a city not very friendly to him, yet it is said, Luke xix. 41, 'When he came near and beheld the city, he wept over it, and said, If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes.' Our Lord Jesus was made up of compassion; he weepeth not only for his friends but his enemies. As a righteous God he inflicted the judgment, but as man he wept for the offences. First he shed his tears, and then his blood. O foolish, careless city, that will not regard terms and offers of peace in this her day! He bewailed them that knew not why they should be bewailed; they rejoiced, and he mourned: Christ's eyes are the wetter because theirs were so dry. And now he is in heaven, how doth his free grace go a

mourning after sinners in the entreaties of the gospel ! But that I may vindicate this point more fully, I shall give—

1. Some observations concerning mourning for the sins of others.

2. Give you the reasons of it.

The observations are these five :—

1. That it is an absolute duty to preach this doctrine, not only some high and raised effect of grace. When we produce these instances and examples of the word, David, Lot, Jeremiah, and Christ, many think these are rare and extraordinary instances, elevated beyond the ordinary line and pitch of Christian practice and perfection. No ; it is a matter of duty lying upon all Christians. When God goes to mark out his people for preservation, who are those that are marked ? The mourners : Ezek. ix. 4, Go through the midst of the city, and set a mark upon the foreheads of them that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof.' None are marked out for mercy but the mourners. The great difference between men and men in the world is the mourners in Zion and the sinners in Zion ; so that it lieth upon all, if we would have God's mark upon us. And the apostle reproveth the Corinthians for the want of this mourning : 1 Cor. v. 7, 'Ye are puffed up, when ye should rather have mourned.' Possibly many of the converted Corinthians disliked the foulness of the fact, but they did not mourn and solemnly lay it to heart ; therefore the apostle layeth a charge upon them. In all the examples that have been produced, that of Jesus Christ only is extraordinary ; and yet we are bound to have the same mind in us that was in Jesus. We must have the same mind, though we cannot have the same measure of affliction. Christ had the spirit without measure, but we must have our proportion. If David can speak of floods, certainly we should at least be able to speak of drops. Somewhat of David's and Christ's spirit. Nay, the example of Christ in this very thing is propounded by the apostle : Rom. xv. 3, 'For even Christ pleased not himself ; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.' The apostle speaketh there of bearing one another's burdens. Christ would bear the burden of all the world. He was moved with a zeal for the dishonour done to God, and compassion to men ; and so undertook the burden upon him, not to please himself, or seek the ease and safety of the natural life. Well, then, it is not some raised effect of grace, but a necessary duty which concerns all ; a frame of heart which all the children of God have. If you love God, and love your neighbour, if you believe heaven and hell, and have any sense of the truth of the promises or threatenings, you will be thus affected in some measure to mourn and grieve for the sins of others.

2. This duty doth chiefly concern public persons, though it lies upon all Christians, magistrates and ministers and officers of the church, because of their public and universal influence. Public persons must have public affections as well as public relations. You shall see in that type the church of the Jews is represented in their officers, Zech. iii. 1. When the people were corrupted, and in a calamitous condition, Joshua the high priest is brought in standing before the Lord in filthy garments, the priest is accused by Satan. Certainly public persons are more responsible to God than others, and more concerned than others

in the sins committed in the land, or places where they have a charge. Among private persons, a householder is more responsible than a private member of the family, if one under his charge fall into a notorious sin. You are responsible for your children and servants, and so are we for your souls. Under the law, Exod. xxii. 10, God said, if a man did deliver unto his neighbour an ox, or an ass, or a sheep, or any beast to keep, and it did die, or was hurt, or was driven away, no man seeing it, or it did miscarry through his negligence, he was to make it good, because it was delivered into his hand. So I may say here, in quoting this law, Hath God a care of oxen? God hath committed souls to us, he hath put them into the hands of magistrates and ministers to keep them. Now because we do not discharge our duty, he will require their blood at our hands, Ezek. xxxiii. 7-9. Because of our trust and charge, we are bound to have more public affections: Joel ii. 17, 'Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar.' Ministers should be exemplar for spiritual feeling and tenderness and humiliation. Under the law the measures of the sanctuary were double to other measures. I apply it to this very thing. Our portion must be greater, because of the burden that lies upon us. Paul speaketh as one sensible of the weightiness of his charge, in 2 Cor. xi. 29, 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?' Paul trembled to see a weak Christian in the hands of Satan; and when they had taken offence, and begun to stumble, this was his trouble and grief. Mourning and burning is put for the violence of any affection. So Jeremiah the prophet, 'My soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.'

3. That tears are not absolutely necessary for the expression of this grief and tenderness. David saith, 'Rivers of tears.' Why? For grief doth not always keep the road and highway; and many times when water goes out, wind comes in. Many are puffed up with sensitive trouble, and put more upon tears than they do upon the frame of the heart which should engage us to this. All constitutions are not alike moist; a tender heart may be matched with a dry brain. When men are careful to get things reformed, and are affected with the calamity of the church more than their own private loss, this is that which God requires. However, let me tell you, if we find tears for other things, we should find tears for these duties, when we come to remember our own sins, and the sins of others. God did not make the affections in vain. A man that hath a thorough sanctified soul will have affections exercised in some measure proportionable; and therefore, if we can shed tears abundantly upon other occasions, we should remember this water should be reserved for sanctuary uses. David when he is spoken of, is represented as one having a moist eye upon all occasions; yet Lot had a tender heart, being offended with public disorders. It is said, 2 Peter ii. 8, 'His righteous soul was vexed.' Great devotionists are usually very tender. Good men are much given to tears, and these sensitive stirrings of affection are a great help to religion; and therefore should not wholly be neglected. But if there be a serious displacency against sin, a deep laying to heart God's dishonour, though they cannot command tears, the duty is discharged. Humiliation lieth more in heart grief and trouble, than the

sensitive and passionate expression of it. And yet upon religious occasions we should express ourselves as passionately as we can, and not content ourselves with a few cold words and dull thoughts; but our liveliest affections should be exercised about the weightiest things: James iv. 9, 'Be afflicted and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to heaviness.' When we are deprecating the wrath of God, humbling ourselves under the offences done to his infinite majesty by ourselves or others, there should be more tenderness, and we should do it in the most lively affectionate manner that possibly we can.

4. The greatest sinners, when they are once converted to God, have the greatest compassion afterwards towards other sinners. Why? They know the heart of a sinning man, they have had most experience of the power and prejudice of corruption, and also sensibly tasted of the love of God, and his goodness in Christ Jesus; and so their hearts are entended thereby to pity others, and they more earnestly desire others should partake with them of the same grace. As Israel were pressed to pity strangers, because they themselves were once strangers in Egypt, they knew what it was to be neglected and despised in a strange land; so they that are acquainted with the temptations of Satan, with the bitter fruits of sin, with the prejudices that men lie under before they come to take to the ways of God, they have greater compassion towards the souls of others than others have. This is observed to be fulfilled in the apostle Paul, whose zeal lay otherwise more in the active than in the contemplative way; for in his writings we find him mostly doctrinal and rational, yet when he speaketh of sinners, he doth it always with grief and bowels: Phil. iii. 18, 'I tell you weeping.' And still he presseth Christians to a greater tenderness, to be more in grief for than censure of their brother's faults: Gal. vi. 1, 'If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted;' and Titus ii. 3, when he presseth to gentleness to all men, 'For we ourselves,' saith he, 'were sometimes foolish and disobedient, deceived and deceiving, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another; but after the love and kindness of God appeared,' &c. This melted his heart, to consider what he was, and what God had made him by grace. Whereas sullen men, of a severe temper, of a constant, rigid innocence, are wont to be more harsh and carried out with greater indignation than sorrow. Sin and they have not been so much acquainted. Others, that know how cunning this strumpet is to insinuate and entice the soul, pity those that are deceived with its enticing blandishments. Certainly men that profess religion, and do not observe their own hearts, or else have lived in a more equitable course of honesty, without any sensible change, are not touched with such tenderness. But they that once come to remember how obstinate they were in prejudices against the ways of God, how securely they walked in a way of sin, without any sense of God's displeasure, or serious thoughts of the bitter fruit of it, now God hath plucked them as brands out of the burning, they would fain save others also that are heirs of the same promise. The high priests under the law were taken from among

men, Heb. v. 2, that they might have more compassion; so the Lord multiplies these instances of grace, that they might have more compassion towards others. They that have felt the terrors of the Lord, and know the wounds and bruises of a troubled conscience, are more affective in persuading, more compassionate in mourning for others, 2 Cor. v. 7.

5. There must be not only a constant disposition to mourn over the sins of others, but upon some more than ordinary occasions it must with much seriousness be exercised and set a-work. It is said of Lot, 2 Peter ii. 8, 'He vexed his righteous soul' in seeing their filthiness with his eyes and hearing their blasphemies with his ears, these were continual torments to him; he could go nowhere but he heard or saw something that was matter of grief to him. That is a sad prognostic of an approaching judgment when a country is so bad that it is made, as it were, a prison to a godly man. Daily a Christian hath his occasions of sorrow. How can we walk the streets with dry eyes when we here shall see a reeling drunkard, there hear a profane swearer rending and tearing the sacred name of God in pieces, a filthy speaker, theatres and the devil's temples crowded with such a multitude of people, that men may learn more how to please the flesh and hate godliness, and feast their ears with filthy talk? To see people so mad against God, and ready to cast off the yoke of Christ everywhere, this occasions matter of grief and mourning before the Lord. But besides this, there must be solemn exercises, when our eyes must gush out with tears, and we must open the flood-gates. We must wish, as Jer. ix. 1, 'Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!' There are certain times when this is necessary, as times of great sin, and of judgment felt or feared.

[1.] Of great sin, for then things begin to draw to a judgment. As for instance—

(1.) When outward gross sins are frequently committed, such as are against the light of nature: Hosea iv. 1, 2, 'The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, no mercy, no knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood,' &c. God's severity is last mentioned wherein men bewray their high presumption in profaning the name of God and violating his commands without any the least appearance of profit and advantage—lying and falsehood, a sin inconsistent with human society. God, who is the God of truth and the patron of it, cannot endure it. So the lives, goods, chastity of men to be abused, this God cannot bear with: 'Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.' God doth not contend usually for lesser faults or ordinary infirmities, but gross sins, by way of omission or commission.

(2.) These sins are the more odious, and do provoke God when universal: Isa. i. 5, 6, 'The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot, even to the head, there is no soundness in it,' &c. 'Though there be a few secret mourners, yet when the contagion becometh general, and riseth to a head, the Lord will take

no notice of them as to the keeping off a common judgment : Ezek. ix. 4, 5, 'And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in my hearing, Go ye after them through the city, and smite ; let not your eyes spare, neither have ye pity ;' and Ezek. xiv. 14, 'Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God ;' and Jer. xv. 1, 'Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people : cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.' Yet the sentence against Sodom was revocable if but ten righteous persons could be found in it, Gen. xviii. 32. Nay, a larger offer concerning Jerusalem, larger than that which God made to Sodom ; if but a man : Jer. v. 1, 'Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.' Though Jerusalem were a city larger and more populous than Sodom and other cities. When the whole body of a people grows monstrous in sin. If a ruling party be sound, though the body be corrupt and vicious, that iniquity be not established by a law, or countenanced by them ; or if the ruling party be corrupt and vicious, yet if the body of the people, or a considerable number, be serious and holy, and mourn in secret for the sins of the times, God may spare a land. But when all flesh have corrupted their ways, then the flood comes.

(3.) When resolute and incorrigible. Resolute ; we have, and we will : Jer. xlv. 16, 17, 'As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee ; but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers.' And incorrigible : Jer. v. 3, 'They have refused to receive correction, they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return.'

(4.) When bold in sinning : Isa. iii. 9, 'The show of their countenance doth witness against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not.' When men commit sin without shame or fear, break over all banks of love, moderation, or civility.

[2.] In respect of judgments felt or feared. When the day of the Lord is near, or already begun, when the smoke foreshoweth the fire is a-coming, and the decree ready to break forth, these are mourning times.

Secondly, The reasons why this is the duty and property of God's children ; they do it out of obedience, it is their duty ; and they do it out of an innate disposition, it is their property.

1. It is their duty because God hath commanded it. Now all God's commands are equal, and full of reason ; and there is a great deal of reason why God should lay this kind of duty upon the creature.

[1.] That it may be an allay to zeal. That is an excellent and well-tempered zeal when grief is mixed with anger : as it is said of Christ,

he looked about with anger, and was grieved at the hardness of their hearts ; when we are angry at the sin, and mourn for the person, and mourn over him. Zeal against the sin, that shows our love to God ; and our commiseration of the person, that shows our love to man. Samuel spared not Saul in his sin, yet mourned for him. And all the prophets of God you shall find, when they were threatening the people for their sins, were grieved lest their threatenings should be accomplished. False zeal hath malice and mischief ; it mourns not for the person, because it coveteth his shame and destruction. Now it is the great wisdom of God he would have this temper mixed. There must be anger for the offence done to God, and a grief that our brother hath offended. The world is apt to cry out upon the children of God, as persons peevish and rancorous ; but this is a rare vindication, when they see you as apt to mourn as to chide, that all your expostulations with them come rather from conscience than interest ; it is an excellent alloy and praise to public zeal.

[2.] God would have us mourn for the sins of others, to engage us to seek redress and reformation. We should soon neglect the duty that we owe to the age and place where and when we live, were it not for this, that the want of it would be burdensome to us, and the abounding of iniquity will cost us bitter tears upon God's command, and upon zealous endeavours to get a public reformation. Ezra first mourns bitterly, then reforms zealously : Ezra ix. 6, 7, ' I plucked off the hair of my head, and rent my garment, and said, O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, O God ; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens,' &c. Zealous actions, which few practise in their own case ; yet sins of others, you see, work an afflictive grief and shame in those that fear God. These were the actions of Ezra when he was bewailing the sins of others, and this made him so resolute and active in the reformation that is described in the next chapter. Their love begets sorrow, and their sorrow care. Who would not seek to redress the evil which is burdensome to him ? Many times the world is angry, because we are so clamorous for reformation and repentance. You have liberty enough, say they, and may serve God in your own way, and go to heaven quietly ; why should you trouble yourself about others ? But can a man that grieveth for the abominations of the times be silent till they be redressed ? A Christian is troubled about the salvation of others, to see so many thousands of souls carried to hell by droves, and hurried to their own destruction. Can pity and remorse behold this, without care and endeavours with God and man to get it remedied ? Certainly, the children of God are not impertinently active and pragmatial. Public reformation is not only a relief to their souls, but to their bowels. They are troubled, therefore thirst and long to see it redressed : 2 Cor. vii. 11, ' Godly sorrow,' saith Paul, ' what carefulness it wrought in you ! ' He speaketh of their public church sorrow. Till they mourned, they neglected the discipline of the church, and let incest go without censure. O my brethren ! until we mourn for public disorders, we shall not mourn over one another. We think it is enough to keep ourselves free, and to make a little conscience of our own ways. Always private sorrow will beget public

care. If thou hast wept sore in secret places, thou wilt be earnest with God and man to remove the occasion of thy grief.

[3.] The Lord requireth this to keep our hearts the more tender and upright; it is an act God useth to make us more careful of our own souls, to be troubled at the sins of others, at sin in a third person. It keepeth us at a great distance from a temptation. This is like quenching of fire in a neighbour's house; before it comes near us, thou runnest with thy bucket. There is no way to keep us free from the infection, so much as mourning. The soul will never agree to do that which grieved itself to see another do. And as it keepeth us upright, so also humble, fearful of divine judgment, tender lest we ourselves offend, and draw down the wrath of God. He that shruggeth when he seeth a snake creeping upon another, will much more be afraid when he cometh near to himself. In our own sins we have advantage of conscience scourging the soul with remorse and shame. In bewailing the sins of others, we have only the reasons of duty and obedience. They that fight abroad out of love to valour and exploits, will certainly fight out of love to their own safety at home. So God would have us more abroad, more against the sins of others, that our hearts may be more set against those sins with which we ourselves are apt to be foiled.

2. This is their disposition as well as their duty; it must be so, and it cannot be otherwise with the children of God, for several reasons.

[1.] From the tenderness of God's glory, which is more dear to them than all their own interests. A Christian hath a great affection to the glory of God, is very tender of that; he cannot endure it should be violated, for his heart will even break within him. Can a man see an injury done to a person whom he loves, and not be troubled? Jesus wept for Lazarus, because he loved him, and they say, 'Behold how he loved him,' John xi. 36. They that love God can they hear his great name rent with so many blasphemies? so many affronts put upon his grace, the laws of God trampled under foot, and not lay it to heart? God's glory is more dear to them than their own lives. They had neither had any standing in nature nor grace had it not been for the glory of God. God made all things for himself; therefore when the name of God is violated, his authority despised, his laws broken and set at nought, and no more regarded or esteemed than a ballad or a song, they cannot but express their tenderness and great affection to God by mourning for this. Carnal men are hot in their own cause, cold in God's. God's children are quite otherwise, cold in their own cause, and hot in God's. Therefore they are deeply sensible when God's honour is weakened. Moses was the meekest man upon earth, yet he brake the tables. How doth this agree? The injuries that were done to himself he could look upon with a meek, quiet spirit, easily put them up; but when he saw the people bring dishonour to the name of God, then he hath a high and deep affection. They cry out, Josh. vii. 9, 'Lord, what wilt thou do for thy great name?' So Ps. cxv. 1, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy name give glory.' They go to God, not to advance our faction and interest: 'We are brought very low; yet the wrath of

man shall praise thee.' Thy name is dear and precious; they are sorry to see any profane it. God hath abundantly provided for their respect, he hath bid all men love them, when he bid us love one another. So that in effect all the respects of the world are devolved upon one person. And they would have all men love God and honour God.

[2.] It comes from their compassion and pity and love to men. Oh! it grieves them to see so many that do not grieve for themselves; and their eyes are wet because yours are always dry. 'I tell you weeping,' saith Paul, Phil. iii. 18. Compassion over the miserable estate of such teachers, and those that are led by them; they and whole droves run after fancies that endanger their souls. False teachers and their proselytes should not only fall under our indignation, but our pity. They are monsters in nature that want bowels, much more in grace. Religion doth not harden the heart, but mollifies it. Jesus Christ was made up of compassion, and all Christians partake of Christ's spirit: Phil. i. 8, 'God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.' Pray mark, Paul had got some of Christ's bowels, and let me tell you they were tender ones. Compassion towards others, and weeping over their sins, is somewhat like the love of Jesus Christ. He would take our burden upon himself when he was not interested. So the spirit of Christ worketh in all his members, he hath distributed his bowels among them; and therefore they cannot but long for the salvation of others; yea, their heart is broken and mollified with Christ's compassion to them, and therefore long for fellows in the same grace. Though they have received personal and private injuries, yet they pity their case, and mourn for them. It is matter of humiliation and lamentation: 2 Cor. xii. 21, 'When I come again I fear my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, which they have committed.' It is matter of grief to see so many thousands perish, or in a perishing condition.

[3.] This disposition cometh from the antipathy and zealous displeasure that is in their hearts against sin. They know what sin is, the greatest enemy that God and Christ and their own souls have in the world. It was sin that made angels become devils; it was sin that blew up the sparks of hell-fire; it was sin that opposed God, that crucified Christ; it is sin that grieves the Spirit of God; and therefore they mourn when sin gets proselytes. A man cannot endure to see a toad or viper near him; your hearts rise when you see them creep upon another; so do the hearts of the children of God rise, that their enemy and God's should find such respect and entertainment in the world. It is said of the church of Ephesus: Rev. ii. 2, 'That she could not bear those which were wicked.' And David saith, Ps. ci. 3, 'I hate the works of them that turn aside.' They know this will grieve the Spirit of God, that this will press him as a cart is pressed with sheaves; and shall God be pressed and burdened, and they not troubled? It cannot be. They that love the Lord will hate evil, Ps. xcvii. 10, both in themselves and others.

[4.] This disposition comes out of a sagacity of faith, and serious

foresight of the effects of sin. They know what sin will come to, and what is the danger of it; therefore, when they see sin increasing, 'Rivers of water run down their eyes.' Wicked men tremble only at the judgment of God, but good men tremble at his word; and therefore they mourn when others fall into danger of the threatening. When Ezra plucked his beard, and was in such a zealous indignation against the sins of the people, bewailing them before the Lord, Ezra ix. 4, 'Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel.' At fasts others are slight and obdurate; they look on threatening as a little mock thunder; they are not sensible of the danger. I may set forth this by that allusion, 2 Kings viii. 11, the prophet Elisha wept when he saw Hazael, that he looked wishly on his face till he blushed: 'The man of God wept, and Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil thou wilt do unto the children of Israel; their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child: and Hazael said, But what! is thy servant a dog?' &c. So when the children of God look upon sin, they know by the complexion of it what will be the dreadful effects. This will be bitterness in the issue, in time this will produce pestilences, famine, fire, sword, and all other mischiefs and judgments, and expressions of the angry indignation of the Lord. They foresee a storm when the clouds are but a-gathering, therefore they tremble when they see them. This is the sagacity of faith. Now carnal men, on the other side, look upon the threatenings of scripture but as words of course, used as in way of policy, that God only would awe and scare them, but doth not purpose to condemn them. But faith is sagacious. Look, as to the promises, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' So as to the threatenings, the same evidence of things not seen. The apostle doth not only instance when he had given the general description of the objects of hope for the recompense of reward, but he instances in the threatenings, 'Noah, being moved with fear, prepared an ark,' &c. They know, however men slight the word of God, one day it will be found true; and therefore, when they see men add sin to sin, they are troubled. The word is as sure as execution, and works upon them accordingly. They have all things in a near view; the nearer the objects of our faith are in our view, the more they stir up our affections. Dangers and death, when in hand and in present expectation, work far otherwise than they do when they are considered at a distance. So when the effects of sin are looked upon as near at hand, when faith makes them present, then they stir up these affections in the soul.

[5.] A fifth clause is from their public spirit and tender respect to the common good. When they wisely foresee approaching dangers, they are moved with the love and care of their country, and this melteth them. They know sin is of a destroying nature, that 'one sinner destroyeth much good,' Eccles. ix. 18. One sinner may do his country a great deal of mischief, an open bold-faced sinner—Achan troubled the whole camp, Josh. vii. 11, 12—much more when a multitude of sinners are increased; therefore they sigh and mourn. Godly men are

the truest friends to their native soil ; they are the chariots and horsemen of Israel. Those that plead with God stand in the gap, keep off judgments, and have the most public spirit ; therefore the least they can do is to sigh for it and to plead with wicked men ; as Tertullian, *Si non vis tibi parcere, parce Carthagini*—if thou wilt go on with thy soul-destroying course, and wilt not spare thyself, yet spare Carthage. This will be bitterness in the issue. The children of God are always of a public spirit. David fasted for his enemies, Ps. xxxv. Abraham prayed to God for Sodom, a neighbour country. The godly Israelites were good friends to Babylon in their captivity : Jer. xxix. 11, ‘ Seek the peace of the city, whither I have caused you to be carried captive, and pray unto the Lord for it ; for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace : ’ if nothing but their interest and share in the common rest and quietness. Passengers are concerned in the welfare of the vessel wherein they are embarked. Babylon fared the better for the Jews’ prayers. Now more especially are their hearts carried out with a respect to their native soil and dearest comforts ; therefore this melteth them to see the land defiled with sins and ready for judgments.

SERMON CLII.

Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.—
VER. 136.

USE 1. For reproof of two sorts of persons :—

1. Those that do not lay to heart their own sins. Usually men make their affections to prescribe to their judgment, and cavil at the fervorous exercises of religion, because unpleasant to flesh and blood ; to humble ourselves before the Lord with a pressing sorrow, seriously and indeed to rend our hearts and not our garments. In this wanton and delicate age, men are apt to think I speak of a theme obsolete and out of date, as calculated for former times, when men were more tender-hearted. If we could awaken some of the old godly professors out of their graves, as the prophet calleth up Rachel to weep in Ramah for her children, Jer. xxxi. 15, then we might hope to prevail. Alas ! to plead now for mourning over the sins of others, when men think it a crime to mourn for their own, this is like to be lost labour. Were this the humour only of ungodly wretches, it might be borne with silence and patience ; but those that would be taken for Christians of the highest form are altogether prejudiced against such doctrines as this. Men would be honeyed and oiled with grace, and distaste the wholesome discipline of repentance as too severe. They cry out, We are legal. How may the poor ministers of the gospel go to God, and say, as Moses did, Exod. vi. 12, ‘ The children of Israel have not hearkened unto me, how then shall Pharaoh hear me ? ’ The professors of religion will not brook such doctrine, and how shall we hope to prevail with the poor, blind, carnal world ? To scoff at doctrines of repentance and humiliation was once a badge of profaneness ; many now adopt it into their religion. But be not deceived ; the gospel doth not take

away the conscience of sin. It may take away the fear of hell and damnation upon right terms. The heart of flesh is a promise, and the spirit of grace is a promise, or mourning apart is a promise. You that say that justified persons must no more mourn for sin, you may as well say they shall no longer have a heart of flesh or a spirit of grace and supplications, that they shall no longer have a tender conscience. Be not deceived ; there must be some time to weep for your own sins, as Peter went out and wept bitterly. Sorrow must have its turn in the Christian life. I would press it upon you by this argument: You cannot be sorrowful for others' sins unless you be first sorrowful for your own sins. Grief must begin at home, there where you have the advantage of conscience and inward remorse. It is hypocrisy to pitch upon other men's sins and neglect your own ; as some will zealously declaim against public disorders, yet neglect their own hearts ; as the crafty lapwing will go up and down fluttering and crying to draw the fowler from her own nest. We have a nest of sin of our own, and we are loath it should be rifled and exposed to public view.

2. It reproveth them that in times of public defection never take care to mourn over God's dishonour. We complain and murmur under our judgments, but do not weep over our sins, every person and family apart. Whether it be out of negligence and carnal security, or out of distaste and displeasure against the conduct of present affairs, we seem to have lost our public affections, and can only wonder at the children of God in former times, since they were so broken and tender. To many that would now go for professors, this doctrine seemeth a riddle, a mere strain of wit and fancy, like a precept wire-drawn, or elevated beyond its pitch and tenor. But in the fear of God consider what hath been spoken. There are many abuses in our reflections upon the sins of others. Wicked men are quite otherwise disposed : they do not only do evil themselves, but take pleasure in those that do so, Rom. i. 32 ; would be glad that sin were more common, that it might be less odious, and then there would be none to put them to the blush : Prov. ii. 14, it is said ' they rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked.' So the prophet speaks of some corrupt men in the priesthood : ' They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity,' Hosea iv. 8. God had appointed those that served at the altar should live of the altar, have a proportion of those offerings ; now they flattered them in their sins, so they might have meat, and get a portion of the sacrifices. Many that would be accounted ministers care not for the sins of the people, but think the less serious men are in religion the better they can work them to their private advantages, and have more respect among them. Then there are some that scoff at the mourners in Zion ; they count it melancholy and mopishness to be so often and seriously humbling themselves before the Lord. The world deals perversely with the people of God ; they provoke their sorrow, and then upbraid them with it. You should bear them company, mourn with them, pine in consort with those doves of the valleys. Better be a mourner than a mocker and scoffer. Others there are that yet can make a shift to hold out some profession of religion, yet can delight in the company

of profane, carnal persons. Would a man willingly put himself upon occasions of grief? Are you like Lot, whose soul was vexed day by day? Do but consider how much your temper differs from theirs. David saith, Ps. cxix. 115, 'Depart from me, ye evil-doers.' Others there are that by censures and bitter invectives seek to make the sinner, rather than the sin, more odious. This is to exercise malice and pride, not Christian affection. We should not censure, but mourn. Tears flow from charity, censures from pride; and by this means you lose a duty for a sin, which is a sad exchange. Others again are apt to laugh at them, and to make sport with the sins of others, but do not mourn. This is a vile abuse, and yet we are many times guilty of it. Men laugh at drunkenness, and make the slips of others matter of boasting and vain talk. This should rather set our hearts a-bleeding and mourning. He were a monster, rather than a man, that could see a man take a fall, even to the breaking of his back or neck, and turn it into a jest; or a man wound himself, and he make a sport of it. And shall we be more kind to the bodies than to the souls of men? Oh! consider the danger of these practices. As much as in him lieth he hath put himself into hell, and wilt thou laugh at it?

Use 2. Trial. Are we so tenderly affected? I know every one is not of a like tender constitution, and cannot weep rivers of tears; but tell me—or rather, tell God—I cite thy conscience to make answer to God—when thou didst ever go aside into thy closet, or some secret place, to lay to heart the dishonour done to God, or the affronts put upon his grace? Do not tell me thou hast declaimed against the sin of the times, that thou hast not cried up a confederacy with them that cry up a confederacy against God. There may be somewhat of faction and interest and obstinacy in those things; but when hast thou mourned, and wept sore in secret places? Do not tell me that thou hast joined in public fasts: hasty and transient sighs do not wound the heart. Hast thou ever done it in secret? or hast thou often done it? It may be thou hast resented injuries, and spread them before God; and so there is a spirit of self-love and revenge that breathes into thy prayers. Men will be hot in their own cause; but what hast thou done in this duty? It is a plain question, and therefore I hope it will have the more force upon the conscience. True zeal for injuries done to God would ease itself by tears rather than anger. True penitents will not satisfy themselves only with public humiliation, to which law, custom, and example may draw them; but will make conscience of this duty in their families, yea, in secret, where no eye seeth them but God's; mourn apart, Zech. xii. 12–14, and bring home public provocations to their own doors, Jer. xi. 17.

Use 3. To exhort you to get this practice, and to get this disposition of the saints.

There is a great deal of need to practise it now, whether we look upon the sins or dangers of the nation; the sins, such horrid blasphemies and reproaches cast upon God's servants, his ways, truths, doctrines according to godliness. I think, in the wisest judgment that a man can make, never was there such a dangerous *κρίσις* and temper of any nation as of ours at this time. Never were sins boiled up to such a height and consistency as now, such snarling at reformation, that was hopefully begun. Now sin walketh in the streets with a

bold face, drunkenness, swearing, and profaneness seem to triumph; and with the more pretence, because the stricter sort have so much dishonoured God and religion. Church affairs are much out of order. And for our dangers, we hear again of wars and rumours of wars, and God knoweth what may be the issue and effect of them: Acts xiii. 41, 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man should tell you of it.' The danger of a nation doth not lie in outward probabilities so much as in the threatenings of the word. He alludeth to the horrible devastation of Judea by the Chaldeans, and applieth it to the despising of the gospel. Would any believe that the temple and city should be destroyed, and the people of God carried captive, that not one should remain? yet this came. In the time of Noah, when they abounded in all things, who would have thought of a flood? Many would say, as that nobleman, If the windows of heaven were opened, how could this be? Who would have believed the horrible dissolution by the Romans? or thirty years ago that which is now fallen out in Germany? Never think that our armies and forces are so strong as to withstand the threatenings of the gospel; for our horrible contempt, God may blow upon all these props in an instant. Therefore weep and mourn for the pride and rebellion of the daughter of your people. So for our private place. What sins are there among us! Some have withstood the ways of God; though they have had convictions, yet held out against them. Some are profane, many defects in all orders. Paul was mightily troubled because the church of Corinth was so much out of order; he bewailed it with many tears: 2 Cor. ii. 4, 'Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears.' So may I speak, and you think of these things: It is time to mourn. By way of motive, consider—

1. This is the best way to enter our protestation and dissent against the iniquity of the times. When we cannot help a thing, it is good to retract it, and commit it by tears to God; for then it shall not be laid to our charge. When the Corinthians mourned for incest committed among them, and sorrowed with a godly sorrow, 2 Cor. vii. 13, 'Ye are verily clear in this matter,' many of them did not only not approve, but abhor that foul act before; but they were not clear till they mourned, and purged the church from the imputation. So you are not clear till you have done this duty.

2. God may take occasion to punish you from their sins. We are all fuel fit for the burning. God's dispensation is not unrighteous as to you, but that may be the occasion: Zech. x. 3, 'My anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats.' So Prov. xxviii. 2, 'For the transgression of a people; many are the rulers thereof.' The people's sins may make great changes and alterations of government.

3. You are one body with them. Nations are one political body, churches one political body. In God's plea about Sodom with Abraham, ten righteous persons have an influence to save or ruin it. The sins of one generation may be the cause of another. It is said God turned not from the fierceness of his anger that was kindled against

Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. Manasseh was dead thirty or forty years before. Manasseh had repented, and Josiah was a great reformer, none like him. You see God may punish their sins many years after; nay, in the process of vengeance the whole lump is involved, as being one body. So all Israel were troubled for one Achan. Do not tax God's dispensation of severity and rigour, for it is the condescension and art of divine mercy by this means to prevent public ruin; and you are involved in their portion, that every man in his place may study the prevention of sin and ruin. So churches are one lesser body; one root of bitterness defileth many, Heb. xii. 15; not only by the contagion of the sin, but also by imputation of guilt. So at Corinth: 1 Cor. v. 6, 'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.' So also in households and families, which are one lesser body.

4. Many of their sins may be thine. It is a good prayer, though it be a harsh expression, to desire God to be delivered from other men's sins: *Ab alieno libera me Domine*. They have sinned the more because thou hast been wanting as a magistrate, as a minister, as a neighbour, a fellow-member, as a private Christian. As a magistrate: a negligent prince all the sin is put upon him. Eli was a high priest, and was a judge in that case; and therefore, though he were innocent, God saith he would cut off his house for the iniquity of his sons: 1 Sam. iii. 17, 'Because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.' When magistrates suffer all things to run at random in religion, instead of God's ministers, they prove the devil's agents; though they be holy for their persons, yet there is a great guilt lieth upon them. So for ministers: we are to watch as those that must give an account, Heb. xiii. 17; 'I will require him at thy hands,' &c. He may be a good man, yet not a good minister, when he is not so diligent in inspection, so faithful to his trust, as he should be; so frequent in exhortation, prayer, mourning, care of the flock: much hurt cometh by our connivance. So for private Christians, they are bound to watch over one another. It may be you do not look after them, Heb. iii. 13. You suffer hardness to grow upon them, and would not warn them. Ye are witnesses from God to the people of Israel. You may be guilty of much evil example, and unwary carriage: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness that is by faith;' and Ezek. xvi. 51, 52, 'Thou hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done. Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame, for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.' You either justify or condemn the world. So that in effect they may be your sins: you are sensual, vain. We easily catch a disease from one another, but do not get health. Nature is more susceptible of evil than of grace.

5. By seeing of their sins conscience may awaken, and thou mayest remember thy own; as Pharaoh's butler said, 'I remember my faults this day.' Their lives are but a glass of the deformity of our natures.

There are many Judases, many Cains in thy nature. I was in times past as bad as any, as bold with sin, and as notorious a sinner. Every sin therefore should be a fresh bleeding wound in our own souls. They are but the picture of thy natural face: Titus iii. 3, 'We in times past were foolish, disobedient, deceiving, and being deceived.' Thou seest them given up to vain pleasure; remember how it was with thee before conversion, and let this humble thee.

6. If all this do not work, consider the holy angels, that are no way interested, but as it conduceth to God's glory; that do not communicate with us in nature and blood, how they rejoice at the welfare of man. As when the world was made: Job xxxviii. 7, 'When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' So when Christ came, and assumed human nature at his birth: Luke ii. 14, 'Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.' And when the creature repenteth: Luke xv. 7, 'I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.' So should we mourn over them to God, who are our flesh, our neighbours, united in the bonds of duty and neighbourhood, it may be church relation.

7. I might tell of the fruits of mourning. The greater party of mourners, the more hope of preservation. We have complained of drought, we have dry bottles: judgments are kept off as long as there is a sighing party; you are preserved, Ezek. ix. 4, as Lot out of Sodom. But if the righteous God see not this fit, and a godly man may be swept away, as two dry sticks burn a green one, yet you shall laugh when others mourn. In heaven there will be joy enough; this is the valley of tears. Wicked men, though now they are dry wood, yet they are fit fuel for hell. Consider of these things. It is a difficult work to soften the heart, and you have need of all the help that may be.

[1.] Consider the compassion of Christ to thee. If he had not mourned and sighed in the garden, and sweat drops of blood, where had thy soul been? Thou wert in thy blood when free grace went a-sighing after thee in the ministry of the word: Ezek. xvi. 6, 'I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.' These are intending considerations: 1 Tim. i. 13, 'Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy,' *ἡλεῖσθην*. If I had not been all to¹ be-bowelled, and all to¹ be-mercied, I had been a brand fit for the burning.

[2.] Take heed of sensuality: Hosea iv. 12, 'My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them; for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a-whoring from under their God.' It taketh away the heart, the tenderness and softness; no one thing doth more brawn the spirit. To be given to uncleanness, past feeling: Eph. iv. 18, 'Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.'

[3.] Beg the assistance of God's Spirit; he can smite the rock and make waters gush out. That thou mayest not be discouraged, look upon precedents in scripture, the tender hearts of God's people there.

¹ Here *all to* signifies *altogether*, as in Judges ix. 53.—Ed.

The Spirit of God wrought them to this frame : ‘Cry, O arm of the Lord ; put on strength as in the ancient days.’ God hath promised it : Zech. xii. 10, ‘I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications ; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son,’ &c.; and then it follows, ‘And the land shall mourn, every family apart,’ &c.

SERMON CLIII.

Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments.—

VER. 137.

THIS psalm is spent in commendation of the word of God. The man of God sometimes commends it for its efficacy, sometimes for its sureness and certainty, and at other times for its sweetness. In this octonary or portion, the word of God is commended for its righteousness. David was sore troubled for the wickedness of his enemies, yea, tempted greatly to impatience and distrust, by looking upon their prosperous estate ; for if you consult with the context, you shall find this was spoken in a time of defection, when rivers of tears ran down his eyes because men kept not the law of God. When carnal men pass their time in joy and the godly in tears, it is good then to meditate of God’s righteousness. So does David. When they were making void God’s law, he was in deep sorrow and tears. It is good so to do, that we may humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and compose our soul to patience and a quiet submission, and with hope to wait upon God in the midst of wrongs and injuries. Simo Caltu telleth us that the emperor Mauritius used these words when he saw all his children slain before his face, and himself ready to be slain after them by Phocas. The historian tells us, ἐπὶ πάντων ἐπεκαλείτο, δίκαιος εἶ κύριε καὶ εὐθείς αἱ κρίσεις σου—that he did in the presence of all meekly submit to this great and heavy calamity, crying out, ‘Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments.’

In the words the man of God reasons *ab efficiente ad effectum, a legislatore ad leges*—from the property of God to the laws that he hath given us. God being essentially righteous and perfectly righteous, yea, righteousness itself, nothing contrary to justice can proceed from him ; no iniquity from equity itself, nor injustice from justice itself. God’s law, all his dispensations that proceed from him, are as himself is. Therefore in the text you have two things :—

1. What God is : *Thou art righteous, O Lord.*
2. What his word and works are : *Upright are thy judgments.*

The word *misphatim*, judgments, implies both—both the rule and his providential dispensations according to that rule. In God’s word there is a judicial sentence concerning our thoughts, words, and works ; therefore his law is called judgments. It is the judgment of the great God concerning the actions of men, and then the effect thereof when his sentence takes place.