

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.

The points are three:—

1. That God is a righteous God.
2. That this righteous and holy God hath given a rule of equity and justice to his creature.
3. That all the dispensations that proceed from him according to that rule are all exactly righteous.

First, That God is a righteous God.

Here I shall show—

1. What is the righteousness of God.
2. Prove that God is righteous.

First, What it is. Amongst men there is a general and a particular justice. The general justice is that whereby we carry ourselves conformable to the rule of religion, 1 Peter ii. 24, called there living unto righteousness; and the particular justice is that whereby we give every man his due: so it is taken, Titus ii. 12, ‘That we should live soberly, righteously, and godlily.’ Godliness is that grace which inclines us to give God his portion, and sobriety is that grace which helps us to govern ourselves, and righteousness that grace whereby we give our neighbour his due.

1. Justice is sometimes put for the whole rectitude and perfection of the divine nature; when God acts becoming such a pure, holy, and infinite being; and so God cannot do anything that is against the perfection of his nature; he cannot deny himself, 2 Tim. ii. 13. He will not give his glory to another, Isa. xlii. 8. He cannot be indifferent to good and evil; he will not damn and punish an innocent creature; there is a condescency in all his actions to the perfection of his nature.

2. There is a particular justice with respect to his dealings with the creature, especially man. And before I come to open that, I must tell you that God must be considered under a twofold relation—(1.) As absolute Lord; (2.) As governor and judge of the world.

[1.] As absolute Lord; and so his justice is nothing but the absolute and free motion of his own will concerning the estate of all creatures. In this respect God is wholly arbitrary, and hath no other rule but his own will; he doth not will things because they are just, but therefore they are just because God wills them. For—

(1.) He hath a right of making and framing anything as he willeth in any manner as it pleaseth him, as a potter hath power over his clay to form what vessel he pleaseth, either of honour or dishonour, Rom. ix. 21; and Jer. xviii. 6, ‘As the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.’ He hath not only might and power, but full right to dispose of the creature according to his own pleasure. As he sustaineth the person of a Lord, he doth what is agreeable to his free and sovereign will. As the good man of the house pleaded, Mat. xx. 15, ‘Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?’ so God as absolute lord and sovereign may do as he pleaseth. Nothing before it had a being had a right to dispose of itself. Neither did God make it what it was by the necessity of nature, nor by the command, counsel, or will of any superior, or the direction of any coadjutor; neither is there any to whom he should render an account of his work, but merely produceth things by the act of his

own will, as absolute and sovereign Lord of all his own actions: 'He works all things according to the counsel of his own will,' Eph. i. 11; and Rev. iv. 11, 'Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' As his wisdom saw fit, so he hath placed creatures in several ranks of being. The fish cannot complain that it was made without feet or hands, nor the ass that it was made for burden, that it is not fierce and mettlesome as the horse, which was made for battle. And we men, whatever was given us by creation, it was not a matter of right, but the mere effect of God's good-will and pleasure. He might have made us stocks and stones, and not living creatures; and among living creatures plants only, with the life of vegetation and growth. Or if he had given us a sensitive life, he might have placed us in the lowest rank; he might have made us toads and vipers, or horse and mule, without understanding, and not men. And among men, all the blessings and privileges to which we were born might have been withheld without any injustice.

(2.) He hath a right of using and disposing of them so made according to his own pleasure, to appoint them to be high or low, miserable and afflicted, or prosperous and happy, as it shall be for his glory: Rom. xi. 36, 'All things are of him, and from him, and to him, to whom be glory.' As God made the creatures for himself, so he governs them ultimately, terminatively for himself. There is no cause of murmuring and repining when he will use us as he pleaseth for his own glory, Isa. xlv. 9, 10. We cannot say, Why dost thou thus? It is enough to silence all tempests in our souls, God did it: Ps. xxxix. 9, 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.' Now this is true in the dispensations of grace as well as in the blessings of this life. To some God gives grace, to others not; some are elected to mercy, others left to perish in their own sins; one is taken, and another left, Mat. xxiv. 40, 41. There were two thieves upon the cross together with Christ; God saves the one, passes by the other. He may do with his own as he pleaseth. He being sovereign is obliged by no debt of law, or the command of any superior power; and therefore 'hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth,' Rom. ix. 18. Election is an act of sovereignty and dominion. God might have left all in misery, as he left the fallen angels; none of them that sinned are recovered out of their misery; and are we of a more noble consideration than the angels, than those spirits? One of them could have done God more service than many men could do; therefore, as he left all those angels in their sinful condition, so it is a mercy that, when he might have destroyed all mankind, he would save any. God could have given Judas a soft heart as well as Peter, but he does not. He will be master of his own gifts. Only this clears his justice: none are denied grace, but those that deserve it should be so; none by God are compelled to sin, none are punished without sin; but in all his gifts, and in what he doth as supreme Lord, his will is his reason.

[2.] God may be considered as governor and judge, and so he gave a law to the creatures; and his governing justice consists in giving all their due according to his law. This is to be distinguished from the former; for God, that is arbitrary in his gifts, is not arbitrary in his

judgments. Observe that he is arbitrary in his gifts ; he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, but in his judgments he proceedeth with men according to their works, according to a law or outward rule. Of this governing justice the scripture often speaks : Deut. xxxii. 4, 'He is a righteous God, and all his ways are judgment.' So Ps. vii. 9, 'He will judge the world in righteousness, and will minister judgment to the people.' Now this governing justice of God is twofold—either legislative or judicial.

(1.) God's legislative justice. This determines man's duty, and binds him to the performance thereof, and also decrees and sets down the rewards and punishments that shall be due upon man's obedience or disobedience. God made man rational, or a voluntary agent, capable of good and evil, with desires of the good and fears of the evil ; and therefore God, as universal king, that he might rule him according to his nature, hath made for him a law that revealeth good and evil, with promises to move him by desire and hope of the good, and with threatenings to drive him by a necessary fear of the evil. So Deut. xxx. 15, 'See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.' It is true of the law of Moses, and it is true of the gospel of Christ Jesus ; he deals with us this way (that I may not make a distinction between the law and the gospel). What is the law of the gospel ? Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Now this law is the rule of man's duty and God's dealings with all those that have received it.

(2.) There is his judicial justice, called also distributive ; and this is that whereby he renders unto men according to their works, whether they do good or evil, without any respect to persons : 1 Peter i. 17, 'Without respect of persons, he judgeth according to every man's work.' The persons that may be respected in judgment is some external thing, that hath no affinity with the cause in hand. Now when God comes to judge of the breach of his law, or the keeping of his law, he hath no respect of persons, high or low, rich or poor, professing or not professing Christianity ; he deals with them as they have walked according to his law. His judicial or distributive justice is declared at large by the apostle, Rom. ii. 5-9. There God's executing judgment according to his law is described, and you find it twofold—remunerative or vindictive.

(1st.) His remunerative or rewarding justice. It is just with God to reward our obedience, and to give men what his promise hath made due to them. It is true we cannot expect reward from God in strict righteousness, or by the exact laws of commutative justice and strict righteousness in this fallen estate, as if there were an inward condignity of our works to that which God gives. Oh no ! that is disclaimed by the saints : Ps. ciii. 3, 'Who forgiveth all thine iniquities ;' Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant ; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' From any exuberancy of merit we cannot expect a reward from God ; but we may and ought to encourage ourselves from his righteousness, even that it is not an unrighteous thing with God to give us heaven and happiness when we have served him faithfully, and patiently continued in well-doing. You know the

apostle distinguisheth that there is a reward according to debt, and a reward according to grace, Rom. iv. 4. Though it be righteous with God to give the reward, yet he gives it not out of debt, or for any con-dignity of worth ; but he gives it out of grace. And so all the comforts we have from obedience are said to come from the righteousness of God ; even the pardon of sin, which is one of the freest acts of God, and wherein he discovers most of his mercy : 1 John i. 9, ‘ He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.’ It is not, faithful and gracious, but just. And so for the eternal reward in 2 Thes. i. 6, 7, *δικαιον*, ‘ It is a just or righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you.’ Ay ! you think it is just with God to punish evil ; but is it a righteous thing that he should reward our obedience ? Read on : ‘ And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven,’ &c. God in righteousness is bound by his own promise to give this reward : Heb. vi. 10, ‘ God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love.’ How is God’s righteousness engaged ? Partly by Christ, Christ having given satisfaction equivalent to the offence and wrong to his majesty, and having interposed an everlasting merit, it is just with God to forgive the sin, as it is just for the creditor to forgive the debt when he hath received satisfaction from the surety. And it is just because God is bound by his own promise ; he hath promised a crown of life to them at the end of their trial, James i. 12 ; and it is part of his justice to make good his word ; by promise God hath made himself a debtor. So 2 Tim. iv. 8, ‘ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give me at that day.’ Bernard glosseth sweetly upon that place, *Paulus expectat coronam justitiae, justitiae Dei, non suae ; justum est ut reddat quod debet, debet autem quod pollicitus est*. It is just with God to pay what he oweth, and God oweth what he hath promised ; and so it is a crown of righteousness which God the righteous Judge will give us at that day. Once more, it is just with God not to forget your labour of love, because it agrees with his general justice, or the rectitude of his nature ; it falls in with his law. As God is a holy, perfect being, he cannot be indifferent to good and evil ; it concerns him to see, *ut bonis bene sit ; et malis, male* ; that it be well with them that do well, and ill with them that do ill. But how upon terms it should go well with them, that must be interpreted according to either covenant ; either according to the exactness of the law, and so no flesh can be justified in his sight, or according to the moderation of the gospel, where the soul sincerely frames itself to do the will of God : and it is not an unrighteous thing with God to give you according to your labour of love, and zeal for his glory.

(2dly.) There is his vindictive justice on all sinners. God punisheth none but sinners, and only for sin, and that ever according to the measure of the sin ; as it is more or less, so they have more or less punishment : Rom. ii. 9, ‘ Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.’ God will render vengeance to the Gentiles, that had the light of nature to teach them God, to show them the invisible things of his godhead and power ; but chiefly upon those that have been bred up in his ordi-

nances, and mostly upon them that have rejected the terms of grace offered them in the gospel; for so it is said, 2 Thes. i. 8, 'He will render vengeance upon all them that obey not the gospel;' and John iii. 18, 19, 'He that believeth not is condemned already.' The law is passed upon him; but 'this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.' Their sin is inexcusable that will not lay hold upon the offers of grace. They have no cause to murmur, or impute their damnation to God's secret purpose; in their own consciences they may read the justness of their condemnation. Well, then, this is God's justice; it is that property by which God acts agreeable to his nature as sovereign lord; and agreeable to his covenant as governor and judge of the world, either his covenant of works or grace.

Secondly, To prove that God is just. I shall prove it by four things:—

1. From the perfection of the divine nature. The perfection of the divine will is such that he necessarily loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity. As the perfection of God's understanding includes all intellectual virtues, so the perfection of his will all moral virtues. There can be no virtuous act of the will, either in men or angels, that doth not agree to God in a far more excellent manner and measure; and therefore if there be such a quality as justice and righteousness in angels and men, if holy angels and just men made perfect, certainly there is a just God. This rectitude in men and angels is accidental, and separable from their being. Angels may be angels, yet not just, as appears in the devils; but in God it is essential; as his essence is necessarily, so his integrity must needs be so. In short, God must be just and holy, because he necessarily loves himself, and hates everything that is contrary to himself: Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous God loveth righteousness, and his countenance beholdeth the upright.' If they be just, he loves their justice, because he loves himself; if unjust, he hates their injustice, because they are contrary to himself.

2. He could not else govern the world, or judge men according to their offences. Next his nature, God's office shows him just, that infers his justice as he is governor and judge of the world; so we shall see, Gen. xviii. 15, 'The judge of all the earth, shall not he do right?' It must needs be so that the judge of the earth will do right: Rom. v. 6, 'Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world?' It is impossible to imagine that he can be the supreme judge who is not just. Among men appeals are allowed, because men are fallible, and apt to pervert equity and judgment; and this is their relief that they can appeal higher. But now, Eccles. v. 8, 'If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice, marvel not at the matter; for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they.' God is the great arbiter of all affairs in the world, where all appeals rest, can go no higher than the will of God; therefore he must needs be just.

3. This was God's great end in giving Jesus Christ, that he might be known to be a just God; therefore he stood so punctually upon satisfaction, that the sinner must die or the surety. No surety so fit

to keep up the honour of his law and honour of his justice in the consciences of men as the Son of God, Rom. iii. 24–26. God had a mind to be gracious to the creature, but without any disparagement to his justice. Now how should this be? All the wise men in the world that had any sense of the nature and being of God busied themselves in this inquiry, How God could be merciful to the creature, and yet just; but all their devices were vain and frivolous, until God himself found out a ransom and remedy for us, as it is in Job xxxiii. 24. Here was the difficulty; God would preserve the notions which the creature had of his being and justice inviolable; he would be known as one that would stand to his law which he had made for the government of the world. Now, there was no way to keep up the credit of it but these two—strict execution or sufficient satisfaction. The execution would have destroyed all the inferior world, the reasonable creatures at least; and the love and wisdom and mercy of God would not permit that the world should be destroyed so soon as it was made, and man left remediless in everlasting misery. Well, then, strict execution would not do it; therefore satisfaction must be the remedy; and such satisfaction as might be sufficient to procure the ends of the law, to keep up the honour of God's justice in the consciences of men. Now this was done by Jesus Christ, whom God had set forth to declare his righteousness, that he might exercise his mercy without prejudice to his justice. If this ransom had not been found, we should either have slighted God, and not stood in awe of him, or else we had been for ever left under the curse, and under doubtfulness and scruple, wherewith we should have appeased him; but the Lord found out such a means to our hands, that he might declare he was a righteous God.

4. I prove it from the divine nature infused into us. As many as are made partakers of God's grace are more just than others, they hate sin and sinners; so we read, Eph. iv. 24, 'That the new man was created after God in righteousness and true holiness.' After God, that is, after the image and pattern of God. Now, if the new creature be made after such a pattern, then certainly God was righteous. We find by experience, the more god-like and virtuous any are the more just they are, more apt to give every one his due, to live without wrong to any, and the more their hearts are set against that which is base and unworthy. Therefore certainly God is righteous, for he hath put such a quality as the copy of his nature into the hearts of men.

Object. If God be so just, why then does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those that desire to be faithful with God so afflicted and calamitous? This is a wind that hath shaken the tallest cedars in Lebanon. The choicest saints of God have been exceedingly hurried and tossed to and fro in their thoughts by this objection against the righteousness of God: Jer. xii. 1, 'Righteous art thou, O Lord; yet let me plead with thee.' He holds fast this principle, but yet, Lord, saith he, I am not satisfied; 'Let me talk to thee of thy judgments,' that I may be better informed; 'why doth the way of the wicked prosper?' So David: Ps. lxxiii. 1, 'Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart;' but yet the wicked thrive and prosper, and there is no bands in their death. So Hab. i. 13, 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil,' &c. Lord, saith he, I

know thou art a holy God; but why can thy providence then look upon them in the world that deal treacherously and perversely? The clearest-sighted saints may be so bemisted many times that they are not able to reconcile God's dispensations with his nature and attributes, and so quarrel with and reproach and impeach his providence. Yea, the heathens, that knew little of sin and righteousness, were troubled at the afflictions of the good and the flourishing of the wicked, and questioned the being of a God upon this account; and therefore there are two heathens which have written two worthy treatises to vindicate the providence of God. Seneca hath written one treatise, *Cur male bonis, et bene malis*, to show why the good may be afflicted, though there be a God; and Plutarch hath written another treatise, *De sera numinis vindicta*, why the wicked may be spared, and suffered to flourish in the world, though there be a God to take notice of human affairs. These heathens had a sense of this difficulty, for it is an obvious objection.

I answer—In general God's dispensations are just, though we see not the reason of them. The saints hold their principle: Lord, I confess thou art righteous, Jer. xii. 1; Hab. i. 13. The justice of God must be acknowledged in all his dealings with us and others, though it appear not to our reason, which indeed cannot discern well; and therefore is unmeet to judge of such high matters as these are: Ps. xxxvi. 6, 'Thy righteousness is like the great mountains, thy judgments are a great deep.' The judgments of God are such a deep as we cannot easily fathom the bottom of; and therefore, though we do not see the justice of it, we must believe it, and prefer faith above sense. The Lord may deal otherwise in many things with us than we can express, and see the reason of his doing; and yet he is always just and holy in his proceedings, and it is the duty of his people to believe it: Ps. xlvii. 2, 'Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.' Augustine's words are a good comment upon that passage. The judgments of God, saith he, are sometimes secret, but always just, *sæpe occulta, nunquam injusta*. We know not what to make of it; clouds and darkness are round about it. Ay! but though they are unsearchable and secret, they are managed with great judgment and rectitude.

But more particularly to come to speak to the things mentioned in the objection. As to the flourishing of the wicked, four things to that:—

1. God's word doth sufficiently declare his displeasure against them, though his providence doth not. There is *sententia lata, sed dilata*: Eccles. viii. 11, 'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' Mark, there is a sentence pronounced against evil men, but the Lord doth not put the sentence in execution. The sentence is passed against them, both *sententia legis*, the sentence of the law; and so it is said he is condemned already, John iii. 18. Nay, there is *sententia judicis*, the sentence which the judge passeth upon a sinner; for he ratifieth the sentence of the law; what is bound upon earth is bound in heaven. Well, the warrant for execution is signed, yet the execution is suspended for just and wise reasons. Sin is not less

odious to God because wicked men do not presently feel the punishment of it. There are many righteous ends why execution should be delayed, partly with respect to the Mediator, into whose hands the government of the world is put: Exod. xxxiii. 2, 3, 'I will send an angel before thee; I will not go up with thee, lest I consume thee by the way,' compared with Exod. xxxiii. 20-23, 'Behold I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared: beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him. But if indeed thou obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and an adversary to thy adversaries; for my angel shall go before thee;' that was Christ, whom they tempted in the wilderness: 1 Cor. x. 9, 'Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted him, and were destroyed of serpents.' Partly that the elect might not be cut off in their unregenerate condition, that the wheat may not be plucked up with the tares, which they might be; if sentence should be speedily executed against every evil-doer, there would be no room left for conversion. Therefore God is not slack, as men count slackness; but only waits, that all those that belong to the purpose of his grace might come to repentance, 2 Peter iii. 9. He is long suffering to us-ward, to those that were such as the apostle was, that belonged to the purposes of God's grace. And it is delayed too, that his wrath may be glorified in the confusion of the reprobate: Rom. ix. 22, 'He endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction;' that he may show the glory of his power against them, they are hardened and strengthened in their wickedness by their prosperity. When all the favours of God have been abused, and the riches of his goodness set at naught, they have nothing to say for themselves. And sentence is delayed, that the little good they do in the world may not be hindered. God knows how to use all his creatures; even the wicked have a ministry and service under his providence. The Lord would not destroy their enemies all at once, lest the beasts of the field should increase upon them, Deut. vii. 22. They serve as a hedge of thorns to a garden of roses for his people. A dead rotten post may support a living tree. It may be God will bring some that belong to his grace out of their loins. Hierome saith, Many times an evil shrub may bear sweet fruit. And God hath righteous ends too, that his people may be humbled, and that their perverse humours may be broken; for so saith the Lord: Isa. x. 12, 'When the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria.' When he hath sufficiently humbled and purged his people, then he will do it. And whenever this temptation comes, when you see sentence delayed, go to the sanctuary, as David did: Ps. lxxiii. 17, 'Then you will understand their end.' There you will see sentence is not speedily executed, but it is surely executed. As a chimney long foul will be fired at length: Ps. lv. 19, 'Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God,' when they are high and prosperous; 'but God will hear and afflict them, even he that abideth of old;' he whose essence and providence hath been always the same, he will in due time execute his righteous

judgment; and the longer he stays, the more heavy; the longer he is about drawing of his bow, the deeper will his arrows pierce; they are but 'treasuring up wrath to themselves against the day of wrath,' Rom. ii. 5. As in Jehoiadah's chest, the longer it was ere it was opened, the more treasure there was in the chest; so they are treasuring up wrath, &c. The fire that hath been long kindling burns the more grievous at last.

2. There are other punishments besides outward afflictions. Invisible judgments are most fearful, blindness of mind, hardness of heart, terrors of conscience. *Tertullian ad Marg.—Cogitemus ipsum magis mundum carcerem esse, exisse eos de carcere, quam in carcerem introisse intelligemus. Majores tenebras habet mundus, que hominum corda cæcæcant: graviores catenas induit mundus, que animas hominum obstringunt*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. *Nihil infelicius felicitate peccantium*. No such misery as to be condemned to this kind of happiness, no blindness like a blind understanding, no chains like an obstinate will, no torments like terrors of conscience, under which a man lives for his further punishment, that he may be his own tormentor. Cain had rather die a thousand deaths than be let loose as a vagabond here upon earth, and be delivered over to the hell of his own conscience. Those that are under torments of conscience will call upon the mountains and rocks to cover them.

3. The third consideration is this, providence must not be viewed by halves, but in its whole frame and connection. Do but wait a little, and you shall see God will show himself a righteous God. When we view the dealings of God by pieces, we are apt to break out into those complaints: Ps. lxxiii. 11, 12, 'Doth the Lord see? how doth God know? is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world, they increase in riches,' &c. Ay! but stay a while, and you will see, 'There is a God that judgeth in the earth,' Ps. lviii. 11. I remember the poet Claudian, who had a little tincture of Christianity, though a heathen, as appears by his words, when he saw drones and unworthy men greater than the worthy, and vex the pious, *latos diu florere nocentes vexarique pios, doubted num inesset rector*, &c., whether there were any governor of the world, any judge that took notice of things here below, *et incerto florent mortalia casu*, and thought all things were delivered over to blind chance; but, saith he at length, *abstulit hunc tandem Ruffini poena—absolvit Deos, tolluntur in altum, ut lapsu graviore ruant*. The gods were absolved, for they are lifted up on high, that their fall may be the greater. Men give another judgment of the work of God when it is brought to perfection than what they do when they see the beginning of it. Alas! at first, when we see the beginnings of God, we are apt to say, There is no profit to serve the Lord. Ay! but at length, Verily there is a reward for the righteous. And therefore let us not be rash and hasty, until God hath put his last hand to his work. They are impatient spectators that will not tarry till the last scene of the tragedy, till the Lord brings forth his last work. Our hastiness and impatience will betray us into many foul thoughts of God and his providence.

4. That the solemn triumph of God's justice will be at the last day.

If God should punish no sin here, no man would believe a God ; if he should punish all here, no man would be afraid of a future judgment. Now is the day of his patience, and all taste the effects of his common goodness : Acts xvii. 31, ‘ He hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world ;’ that is the great day of assizes for all the world, when the great judge shall appear in his royalty. Now God only keeps a petty sessions ; now and then he seizeth upon the hairy scalp of a sinner ; but the general assizes is then. In the day of trial it is not fit we should live by sense, but by faith ; but hereafter in the day of recompenses all shall be open and clear : Rom. ii. 5, ‘ Thou treasurest up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of Christ.’ There is a day that will reveal the justice and righteousness of God, a black day to the wicked it will be, and to God’s people a day of redemption. Now his justice is manifested on a few here, then on all. Now God’s children have their sentence of absolution from sin in private, *in foro conscientie*, their justification and assurance of eternal life ; and wicked men have their woful doom in the stings and horrors of their own conscience, they are self-condemned, Titus iii. 11 ; but then sentence will pass publicly. The equity of God’s dealings is not now so fully seen, but then the causes will be opened ; when the secrets of all hearts shall be manifested, then we shall see how justly God accepted one to salvation, and rejected another to damnation. God’s justice is seen by the present government of the world, but not so clearly. Here justice is mixed with mercy to the godly in their afflictions, and mercy is mixed with justice to the wicked in their temporal blessings ; but when the Lord shall stir up all his wrath, then we shall see clearly God is a just God, and will keep punctually to the law he hath made for the government of the world.

SERMON CLIV.

Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments.—VER. 137.

FOR the other part of the objection, that those which desire to be most faithful with God are calamitous and afflicted, as Lazarus lay in poverty and rags while the rich man surfeited in all manner of luxury, I answer—

1. God having an absolute right and dominion over us and our comforts, may give and take them away according to his own pleasure : Job i. 21, ‘ The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken ;’ *abstulit, sed et dedit* ; they are his own he gave at first. If he hath lent us anything for his service and our comfort, he may command it again when he pleaseth, and none can commence a suit against his providence. Whatever straits and poverty we are reduced to, we were poorer than ever we can be made by providence. We came into the world naked. If God should strip us of many comforts, we are not so poor as when we were born.

2. God having intended to bestow eternal blessings upon us, will take a liberty in disposing of outward things. Jesus Christ, when he

purchased comforts for us, did not purchase only or chiefly earthly comforts and blessings: Eph. i. 3, 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.' He did not purchase worldly blessings as our chief happiness. The world is a common inn for sons and bastards, where God will show his bounty to all his creatures; our inheritance is elsewhere, in heavenly places; for though all things come alike to all, we cannot murmur and say, God is unjust; nay, though a child of God should be in a worse condition than the wicked are. A child during his nonage is kept under more severe discipline than a slave, which doth more live at large. We distinguish between the care of a father and the indulgence of a mother. The father loves his child; ay! but he breeds him up in a strict way. But mothers are fondly indulgent, and would have them pampered and cockered; so evil habits increase upon them. We, that so quarrel for worldly things, would have God show the fondness and indulgence of a mother, and not the wisdom and care of a father.

3. It is fit, before we go to heaven, that we should be tried; therefore God will so manifest his love to us that there may be room to exercise faith and patience, Heb. vi. 12. Never any came to reap the comfort of God's promises but there was a time to exercise their faith with difficulties, and their patience with delays; and therefore God will try our sincerity when we have no visible encouragements. God would have us live by faith, and not by sense or present appearance only, 2 Cor. v. 8, to see if we can look above the clouds and mists of the lower world, and encourage ourselves, and grow bold upon the hopes and concerns of the world to come. Nature is parblind, but it is the property of faith to see afar off, 2 Peter i. 9. There is the excellency of faith, if we have but an eagle's eye to see afar off. If we had the fruition of the whole blessing, alas! there were no room for faith. And then for patience, we are not only to be conformed to God, but to Christ; not only to God in purity and holiness, but to Christ in patience and submission and self-denial. There are some of our duties which imply perfection, as justice, holiness, purity, and mercy; of these we have a pattern in God: and some of our duties imply subjection and obedience, and of these we have a pattern in Christ. Now all the heirs of promise God hath conformed to the image of his Son, Rom. viii. 29. If we must have all graces, then we must have those graces that are conversant about misery. We should be ignorant of one part of human affairs were it not for these suffering graces; therefore it is agreeable to God's justice that these suffering graces should have their exercise sometimes. Then the Lord will try our sincerity, whether we follow Christ for the loaves, John vi. 26, out of external encouragements, or out of affection for internal reasons, upon pure obedience. God's holiness consists in loving himself, but man's holiness consists in loving God; therefore his holiness need to be tried whether it be a sincere love to God: Ps. xlv. 17, 'All this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.' There is a trial of love! A man of strength seeks a fit adversary to deal withal. It is no trial to a man of strength and courage that he can bear down a child. If we would try our strength, fortitude, sincerity, and courage, we had need be exposed to

difficulty sometimes ; as the skill of a pilot is seen in a storm and tempest, and a valiant soldier's in a battle. *Verberat nos ? lacerat nos Jehovah ? patimur ; non est scvitiā, certamen est.*—Sen. Doth the Lord scourge us ? doth he break us, and tear us in all our concerns in pieces ? Bear it ; it is not cruelty, it is a trial. Religion must cost us something, else it is worth nothing. It will give you no comfort till it be tried, and therefore there is a necessity that we should be tried.

4. Afflictions have their profit and use, and conduce to our good, Heb. xii. 11. It yields grace and comfort to us ; it is the fruit of righteousness, and the peaceable fruit of righteousness ; that is, that righteousness which brings peace. Outward troubles occasion an increase of inward blessings. Outward things are but shadows of better. If God deny the shadow and give us the substance, have we cause to murmur ? If God do deny the picture, but give the thing itself, hath that man cause to complain ? If we have not abundance, yet if we grow rich in faith, rich in grace, James ii. 5, we have no cause to repine against God. Though we flow not in ease and plenty, yet if we have a full tide of spiritual consolation ; if we have no respect in the world, yet if we have the favour of God, we have no reason to complain. Levi had no portion among his brethren, but God was his portion. So it is here ; good men have comfort and support, at least in all their troubles ; they may be accounted miserable, but they are not so ; especially if we consider that a great part of their goodness lies in their mortification and contempt of the world. So that to a man that is as God would have him to be, that which is a misery to others is none to him, for his affections are weaned. Therefore, if we have an increase of grace and spiritual comfort, we have no reason to quarrel against God's providence.

5. Good men are but in part good, and it is fit their carnal part should be chastised, that while there are remainders of sin there should be some trouble, that God should burn and cut here that he might spare hereafter, that we should be judged of God, and not condemned with the world, 1 Cor. xi. 32. It is better that we should have our troubles than all our consolations here, and nothing but hell and misery in the world to come.

Use 1. Information. If God be righteous, then all that comes from him is righteous. His word and his works. *Modus operandi sequitur modum essendi.* 'Righteous art thou, O Lord ;' and then, 'Upright are thy judgments.' God acts according to his being. It is true a man may be just, and yet all that proceeds from him may not always be just. Why ? He is not essentially just ; but God being essentially just, all that he does or says is just also. A man's actions are one thing, and his rule another. A carpenter that hath a line without him, may sometimes chop beside his line ; but a man whose hand is his own line can never chop amiss. So a man's rule is without him ; his righteousness is one thing, his nature another ; he may swerve, and be just.¹ But God's act is his rule, his righteousness is himself ; therefore whatever he does is just and righteous. Men may be deceived, but God deceiveth none, and is deceived by none.

1. His word, and every part of his word, is just ; it is in all things right, commanding those things which natural justice exacteth, and forbidding those things which have a natural sinfulness and turpitude

in them. God is just, and all his judgments are just. The way he hath set down for the justifying of sinners and receiving them are just and righteous, Rom. iii. 26; and the way he hath set down for the sanctifying of men, to guide men in holiness, it is a just law: Rom. vii. 12, 'The commandment is holy, just, and good,' becoming such a pure nature to give, and having nothing of exorbitancy or irregularity.

2. The way God hath prescribed for saving such as follow this way of sanctification is just. The righteous judge will give a crown of righteousness in that day, 2 Tim. iv. 8. And the way for punishing such eternally as do despise eternal mercies is just: they have received a just recompense of reward, especially those that neglect so great salvation, Heb. ii. 3. God's law flows from his righteous nature, and it is a copy of his righteousness; therefore it becometh those that confess God to be righteous to acknowledge his laws such, and to live according to them.

3. His works. God hath his judgments for those that do not accept the way of righteousness prescribed by him: Ps. cxlv. 17, 'The Lord is just in all his ways, and holy in all his works.' We are too busy in interpreting wrongs to others, but when it lights upon us we do not acknowledge it: Neh. ix. 33, 'Thou art just in all that is brought upon us,' &c. Nay, if thy hand be never so smart upon us, Lord, thou art righteous in all. The only way to suppress murmuring and silence disputes, and rebuke the waves and winds of discontent that toss the soul to and fro, is to remember all God's ways are just and true. God taketh it ill when we question any of his works: 'Are not my ways equal? saith the Lord,' Ezek. xviii. 25. When we thus acknowledge the dispensations of God to ourselves, we may with profit observe them to others, that we may applaud his proceedings: Rev. xv. 3, 'Great and marvellous are thy works, just and true are thy ways, O king of saints.' So Rev. xix. 2, 'For true and righteous are his judgments, for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornications.' There is no hurt done, but they are confirmed in his promises, and the rule set down in the scripture, not afflicted but on just ground. It is good to observe this in all his dispensations.

Use 2. If God be a righteous God, and all his judgments right, this is terror to wicked men, that securely wallow in the pleasures of sin, without remorse and trouble. Go on in the way of your own hearts, give satisfaction to your senses, please your eye, withhold not your heart from any comfort you delight in; but remember, for all these things God will bring thee to judgment. As cold water stays the working of the boiling pot, so these sober thoughts of God's justice and judgment may abate the fervours of youthful lusts. When you are pampering the flesh, letting loose the reins to all wanton desires, Go on in them; there is a righteous God. Men harden themselves by two things—by God's patience for the present, and thoughts of his mercy for the future.

1. By God's patience for the present. When God doth not strike, but withholds his hand: Ps. l. 21, 22, 'These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.' Christians, patience and forbearance is not absolute

remission and forgiveness. God may give you a long day, and yet reckon with you at last : Rom. ix. 22, 'He endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.' Mark, there is suffering, long-suffering, and much long-suffering ; and yet vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. God suffered Cain to live as a man reprieved ; so you may be reprieved. He deals with ungodly men, as David with Joab and Shimei ; he would not acquit them, yet forbore them, and gave order to Solomon to put them to death ; your doom may yet be dreadful. Christians, bethink yourselves ; there is a sentence in force, and there is but a slender thread of a frail life between you and execution, but a step between you and death ; and will you add sin to sin, and heap up more wrath and condemnation to yourselves ? Alas ! you are but in the state of condemned malefactors, and will you roar and revel as some desperate wretches in the gaol between condemnation and execution ? There is but cold comfort in this, to be rescued and to be afterwards executed ; and therefore remember God may forbear those whom he will not pardon. Ay ! and his anger is most sharp after patience is abused, and most speedy when you begin to reckon the worst is over : Luke xii. 20, 'Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.'

2. Men please themselves that they shall do well enough because God is merciful ; and so they fancy a God all of honey and sweetness. God is just as well as merciful. Ay ! but his justice may be a friend. Can you claim that justice ? 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' When we with remorse and humble penitence go and confess them before the Lord, then justice is our friend. It is not your friend until you be in Christ : Rom. viii. 1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' Why, but am not I in Christ ? am not I baptized in his name ? Then I say again, there are none in Christ but those that come in in the new covenant way, for him hath God set forth through faith in his blood, Rom. iii. 2, 3. If we hope we believe in Christ ; if we do, then let me say one thing more : There are none come in the new covenant way that do allow themselves in any known sin ; and therefore the justice of God still remains upon you. I prove this latter thus : He that transgresses in one point is guilty of all ; therefore so speak and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty, James ii. 10-12. There are some that have judgment without mercy, and others that shall be judged by the law of liberty. He that allows himself to break with God in any one thing, shall not be judged by the law of liberty, but shall have judgment without mercy. Therefore take heed ; you will have double condemnation if you love darkness rather than light ; that is, if you allow yourselves in sinful courses, and turn your back upon the grace and mercy God offers in Christ.

3. Here is for the comfort of the godly ; God is just ; but to you also he will be merciful ; all his dispensations to you are justice and mercy mingled : Ps. cxvi. 5, 'Gracious is the Lord, and righteous ; yea, our God is merciful.' Not all mercy and no justice, nor all justice and no mercy ; but so just that we may not offend, so merciful that we may yet hope in him : Ps. xxv. 8, 'Good and upright is the Lord ; therefore will he teach sinners in the way.' He is good, therefore will

he direct you; he is righteous, therefore we must take his direction. Nay, justice and mercy are both for you. You must not apprehend as if mercy were for you and justice against you. No, no; the justice of God is made your friend; that attribute which is most terrible in God is the pawn and pledge of thy salvation.

The grand inquiry of all the great rabbis and sophists of all the world was this, How justice should be made a friend? It cannot be put out of our mind but that God is just and an avenger of the sinner; but he is faithful and just, 1 John i. 9; just in justifying those that believe in Christ. You have a double claim and holdfast on God; you may come to either court, before the throne of his grace and tribunal of his justice; for there Christ interposed, and satisfied the justice of God. Here the great scruple of nature is solved; that is, how the justice of God should be made our friend. Nay, when you are fainting and discouraged with the scorns and neglect of the world, Heb. vi. 10, the just God will reward 'your work and labour of love which ye have showed toward his name.' It may be vain in the world, but not vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 59. Therefore be cheerful in your service. Men are not paymasters, but God. It is a noble spirit to look for it hereafter, a base spirit to look after it here: 'They have their reward,' saith Christ.

And then against wrongs and injuries we meet with here, the just God, who, as he will do us no wrong himself, so he will not suffer others to do us wrong without punishing of them: Ps. ciii. 6, 'The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.' He pities the afflictions of them that suffer unjustly, and will execute judgment for them. Mark, first from his pity, then from his justice. From his pity: Judges x. 16, 'His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel;' and 2 Kings xiv. 26, 'And the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter, and he saved them.' But how much more will he pity those that are unjustly oppressed by men's hands! Acts vii. 33, 34, 'I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people, and I have heard their groaning;' and Isa. lxiii. 9, 'In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and pity he redeemed them.' Therefore, if we look upon the compassions and pities of God, this may comfort us in all wrongs and injuries. Then out of hatred to oppression: Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright.' So again, Ps. xciv. 15, 'Judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it.' Sometimes they are asunder. Earthly judges may refuse the justice of righteousness, a judge may suspend the act of his own judgment; but they shall not long be severed; God will bring forth his righteous judgment: Zech. viii. 17, 'These things I hate, saith the Lord.' And then in regard of his providence, God will not be unmindful of his promise: Ps. ix. 7-9, 'He hath prepared his throne for judgment, and he shall judge the world in righteousness; he shall minister judgment to his people in uprightness.' Courts of justice among men are not always open, they have term-time; but God is always ready to hear plaintiffs. They make complaints amongst men, and they are delayed so much and so long that they are discouraged. But we have a

friend that is always ready to hear: Ps. xlviii. 10, 'Thy right hand is full of righteousness;' for defending his people and punishing his enemies.

Use 3. To press us to acknowledge this justice of God, that he governeth all things righteously, especially when you are under his mighty hand. The Lord takes it ill when you question any of his providences: Ezek. xviii. 25, 'Are not my ways equal?' He will be clear when he judgeth, Ps. li. 4. God will be justified in all that he hath done or shall do for the punishment of sin; and therefore, when the hand of God is upon you, take heed you do not reproach God. When his hand is smart and heavy upon you, remember affliction opens the eyes of the worst men. Nebuchadnezzar, that knew no God but himself, no happiness but in pleasing his own humour, yet when he was whipped and scourged, hear him speak: Dan. iv. 37, 'Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the king of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.' Pharaoh: Exod. ii. 27, 'The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.' These acknowledgments and confessions come from wicked men, as water out of a still, forced by the fire. But if affliction opens the eyes of wicked men, surely when we are under God's afflicting hand we should give him the glory of his justice, and acknowledge that he is clear in all that he brings upon us. He takes it ill when we murmur and tax his judgment: Micah vii. 9, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me;' and Lam. i. 18, 'The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against his commandment.' And when we submissively stoop and accept of the punishment of our sin after he hath been provoked, then God will plead for us, Lev. xxvi. 41. When we stoop humbly under God's correcting hand, and bear it patiently, and say, God is just in all this, then it will succeed well. Observe the justice of God, especially his remarkable judgments upon others. The church is brought in acknowledging of it, Rev. xv. 3, 'Just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints;' and Rev. xix. 3, 'True and righteous are his judgments.' Not that we should sit crowners upon other men's souls, and judge their spiritual condition, and misinterpret providence: I look upon it as a great sin of a faction, and perverse humours. But clearly when men's sins are so great that the judgments of God have overtaken them, we ought to say, 'Just and true art thou, O Lord, and just in all thy judgments.'

I might show here is much to keep the children of God in awe; the Lord is a righteous God; though they have found mercy and taken sanctuary at his grace, the Lord is impartial in his justice. God, that did not spare the angels when they sinned, nor his Son when he was a sinner by imputation, will not spare you, though you are the dearly beloved of his soul, Prov. xi. 31. The sinful courses of God's children occasion bitterness enough; they never venture upon sin but with great loss. If Paul give way to a little pride, God will humble him. If any give way to sin, their pilgrimage will be made uncomfortable: God's hand may be smart and dismal. Eli for negligence and indulgence, there is the ark of God taken, his two sons slain in battle,

his daughter-in-law dies, he himself breaks his neck. Oh! the wonderful tragedies that sin works in the houses of the children of God. And David, when he intermeddled with forbidden fruit, was driven from his palace, his concubines defiled, his own son slain, a great many calamities did light upon him. Therefore the children of God have cause to fear, for the Lord is a just God, and they will find it so; here upon earth he hath reserved liberty to visit their iniquity with rods, and their transgression with scourges. I might press you to imitate God's righteousness: 1 John ii. 29, 'If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of God.' You have a righteous God, and here is the thing you should copy out.

SERMON CLV.

Thy testimonies, which thou hast commanded, are righteous and very faithful.—VER. 138.

IN the former verse the prophet had spoken of the righteousness of God; now God is essentially righteous, and therefore all that proceedeth from him is righteous. A carpenter, that hath a rule without him, and a line to measure his work by, may sometimes hit and sometimes miss; but if you could suppose a carpenter, the motion of whose hand were his rule, he could never chop amiss. So must we conceive of God; his act is his rule, holiness is his essence, not a superadded quality, his righteousness is himself; therefore from this righteous God there proceedeth nothing but righteousness, and from this faithful God nothing but faith. He discovereth his nature both in the acts of his providence and the institutions of his word. We cannot reason so concerning men, that because they are righteous nothing cometh from them but what is righteous; because righteousness is not their nature, but an adventitious quality: therefore good men may make ill laws, for though they be meant for good, they may be deceived; and sometimes wicked men may make good laws, to ingratiate themselves, and for the interest of their affairs; but God being essentially, necessarily good, holy, and righteous, his laws are also good, holy, and true: 'Thy testimonies, which thou hast commanded, are righteous and very faithful.'

In the words observe—

1. That there is a revelation of God's will in his word: *Thy testimonies.*

2. The authority wherewith his revelation is backed: *Which thou hast commanded.*

3. The intrinsic worth and excellency of these testimonies; it is double—they are (1.) *Righteous*; (2.) *Very faithful*.

In the Hebrew, righteousness and faithfulness; that is, very right, and very faithful; the one word is referred to the *agenda* in religion, the other to the *credenda*; they are worthy to be obeyed, worthy to be believed. The sum is, God hath his testimonies

extant, their authority is inviolable, and their justice and truth immutable.

Some read, *præcepisti justitiam testimoniorum tuorum et fidem valde*—thou hast highly charged and earnestly commanded the righteousness and faithfulness of thy testimonies, as referring to our duty. But most translations agree with ours. Our duty indeed may be inferred; but I shall not make it the formal interpretation of the place. In the texture of the words in the Hebrew these attributes are given to the word itself.

Doct. They that would profit by the word or rule of faith and manners which God hath commanded them to observe, should look upon it as righteous and very faithful.

So did David here and elsewhere: Ps. xix. 9, 'The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.' I shall make good the point by these considerations:—

Prop. 1. That our faith and obedience must be well grounded, or else they will have no firmness and stability. The want of a foundation is the cause of many a ruinous building. Men carry on a fair and lofty structure of profession, but when the winds of boisterous temptations are let loose upon them, all is blown down, because they build upon the sand, and not upon the rock. They take up this profession without sound evidence and conviction in their consciences; and so they are not 'grounded or settled in the faith,' Col. i. 23; 'not rooted and grounded in love,' Eph. iii. 7. They take up religion slightly, not looking into the reasons of it, upon tradition or vulgar esteem, they are not undoubtedly persuaded that it is the very truth of God. The good seed withered that fell upon the stony ground, because there was no depth of earth, Mat. xiii. 5, no considerable strength of soil to feed faith.

Prop. 2. Faith and obedience cannot be well grounded but on such a doctrine as is true and righteous; for who can depend on that which is not true, or who can obey that which is not righteous? Truth is the only sure foundation for faith to build upon, and righteousness for practice. Faith considereth truth: Eph. i. 13, 'In whom ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' And that righteousness is that which bindeth to practice, we may gather from Ps. cxix. 128, 'Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way.' The word commandeth nothing but what is just and righteous.

Prop. 3. This true and righteous doctrine must be backed with a strong and powerful authority, not only recommended to us, but strictly and severely enjoined, for two reasons:—

1. Because otherwise it will not be observed and regarded, but be looked upon not as a binding law, but as an arbitrary direction. There is a difference between a law and a rule. A bare rule may only serve to inform our understandings, or to give direction; but a law is a binding rule, a rule with a strong obligation. The word of God is not his counsel and advice to us only, but his law; that men may examine and regard it with more care and diligence. God hath interposed his authority: Ps. cxix. 4, 'Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently;' and in the text, 'Thy testimonies,

which thou hast commanded.' God hath commanded us to believe all truths revealed, to obey all duties required; and if God commandeth, there is good reason why he should be obeyed.

2. Divine authority is one means to evidence the righteousness and truth of what is to be believed and obeyed. The righteousness; for if God, who is my superior, and hath a full right to govern me according to his own pleasure, doth command me anything, it is best that I should obey it without reply and contradiction; yea, though I see not the reason of it: Acts xvii. 28, 'For in him we live, and move, and have our being.' All creatures have their being not only from him, but in him; and therefore sometimes God giveth no other account of his law but this, 'I am the Lord.' Lev. xxii. 2, 3, 'Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they profane not my holy name in those things which they hallow unto me: I am the Lord. Say unto them, Whosoever he be of all your seed, among your generations, that goeth unto the holy things, which the children of Israel hallow unto the Lord, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from my presence: I am the Lord.' Therefore it gives rules of practice to be embraced with all the heart, as holy, just, and good. God's authority is founded upon the total dependence of all creatures upon him, and upon his infallible wisdom, truth, and goodness, by which he hath right to prescribe all points of faith to be believed and assented to, upon his own testimony, without contradiction: 1 John v. 9, 'If we receive the testimony of man, the testimony of God is greater.' A man that would not deceive us, we believe him upon his word, though he may be deceived himself; but God doth not deceive, nor can he be deceived: by the holy God nothing can be given but what is holy and good; and thereupon I am to receive it.

Prop. 4. This divine authority, truth, and righteousness, is only to be found in God's testimonies, which he hath commanded, or in God's word.

1. There is a godlike authority speaking there, and commanding that which it becometh none but God to command, who is the universal king and sovereign. For it speaketh to the whole world without respect of persons, to king and beggar, rich and poor, male and female, without reservation of honour or distinction of degrees. The word looketh on them as standing before God on the same level: Job xxxiv. 19, 'He accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regarded the rich more than the poor; for they all are the work of his hands.' And speaketh to them indifferently and equally: Exod. xx. 3, 'Thou shalt have no other gods but me.' Which is not the voice of any limited and bounded power, but of that which is supreme, transcendent, and absolute. And by these laws he bindeth the conscience and the immortal souls of men: Ps. xix. 7, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' Men may give laws to the words and actions, because they can take cognisance of them; but the word giveth laws to the thoughts: Isa. lv. 7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;' Mat. v. 28, 'Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' And the internal motions:

and affections of the heart, how we should love and fear, and joy and mourn: 1 Cor. vii. 30, 'They that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not.' Of these things God can only take notice; the power of man reacheth not to the mind and spirit; they would be ridiculous if they should take upon them to give laws to these. Philosophers might give directions about them, but potentates would not give laws, for it doth not besem them to interpose their authority in such cases, where it is impossible they shall know whether they are broke or kept. The scriptures upon their disobedience make men liable not only to temporal, but spiritual and eternal punishments; and accordingly are rewards proportioned in case of obedience. The magistrate's wrath lighteth on the body, but God's upon the soul. All that man can do concerns life, or limb, or liberty, or estate; the inward man is exempted from their power; but God threateneth hardness of heart: Exod. vii. 13, 'He hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them.' A reprobate sense: Rom. i. 28, 'And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient.' A trembling heart: Deut. xxviii. 65, 'The Lord shall give thee a trembling of heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.' On the contrary, obedience hath the promises of a soft heart, and peace that passeth all understanding: Phil. iv. 7, 'The peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus.' Of an increase of grace: Prov. iv. 18, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' God, that punisheth sin with sin, will reward grace with grace. So for eternal rewards, God threateneth, 'The worm that never dieth, and the fire that never shall be quenched,' Mark ix. 44. On the other side, he promiseth 'Rivers of pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore,' Ps. xvi. 11. He that will be believed and obeyed upon terms of salvation, is a God, one that hath power of the world to come. Thus hath God scattered the strictures of his majesty, and given real evidence of interposing his authority everywhere throughout the word. I shall only add, that the scriptures, as God's law, may be considered as the rule of man's duty, and God's judgment. In respect of the commands, they bind man to duty, and are the rule of it. In respect of the sanction, that is, promises and threatenings, they are the rule of God's judgment. In the one God sheweth his righteousness, in the other, his truth; in the precepts, righteousness; in the promises and threatenings, truth.

2. All that God hath required of us is very righteous and just, becoming God to give, and man to receive. There is a condescency in these precepts both to God's nature and to ours. They are the copy of God's holiness, and so a fit means to bring us not only into a subjection to him, which is just, he being our creator, but into a conformity to him, which is our happiness. To prove the righteousness which is in God's laws, I shall produce several arguments.

[1.] Surely there is a distinction between good and evil, and all acts are not in their own nature indifferent; that was a monstrous conceit of Carpenter and others, contrary to the common sense of men. If

this were true, the chasteness of Lucretia should not be more to be prized than the lightness of Lais, nor the virtue of Cato than the dissoluteness of Sardanapalus; and it would be as indifferent for a man to kill his father as his neighbour's dog, to rob in the woods as to hunt a deer or hare, to lie with his father's wife as to contract honest matrimony, to forswear and lie as to be sincere in all our words and proceedings. Now whose heart doth not rise within them at such an apprehension? If this be thought to be only custom and received opinion that begets this abhorrence, I would ask, Whence cometh it that we all desire to be, if not really, yet seemingly honest? The most wicked are offended when they are taken for such as they are; and endeavour, as much as they can, to clothe their actions with the appearance of probity and uprightness. If men were not sensible that vice were blameworthy and virtue commendable, why should such a desire so universally possess the heart of man, were there not a natural sense of good and evil, and an essential difference between the one and the other, which we are sensible of, nature itself valuing and esteeming the one, and blasting the other with severe marks of her improbation and hatred? And I do with the more confidence urge this argument, because there is difficulty in the exercise of virtue, because of the conflict of the sensual appetite; and on the other side, many delights and pleasures accompanying vice, by which it gets an easy entrance into our souls, and dominion over our desires. Why should a thing so much against the bent and hair be accounted worthy of praise, and the contrary, which hath such a compliance with our natural desires, be accounted worthy of blame? And were there only custom and tradition for it, would men so universally conspire to decree honours for that which is contrary to their corrupt nature, and to disapprove what is suitable to it? It cannot be. Would they desire the reputation of virtue, when their desires choose vice, and impel them to it, and hold them under it, if they were not sensible that the one hath a comeliness, and the other a turpitude in it? Thus hypocrites do clearly attest the excellency of uprightness and honesty. Well, then, the testimonies which God hath commanded are very righteous, for they forbid those things which have a natural turpitude and indispensable sinfulness in them; and command those things which are plainly and evidently lovely and praiseworthy: Phil. iv. 8, 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'

[2.] It is such a rule and direction as men would choose if they were at their own liberty, provided they were wise, and not brutified by their inordinate passions, evil customs, and discomposure of soul; for all such are incompetent judges. For there is nothing preserveth the rectitude of human nature, and maketh men to live as men, according to the dictates of reason, as the serious observance of this law. Break it a little, and so far a man turneth beast: so that it was well said of one, A saint or a brute. For the law is so written upon man's heart, and so connatural to his reason, that you must extinguish the nature

of man before you can raze out all the sentiments of this law: Rom. ii. 14, 15, 'For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another.' As long as we have these hearts that we have, we cannot wholly except against the justice and equity of these laws and rules of commerce between God and his creatures. It is true, all truths are not alike evident, but they that seriously mind the one will be led on to the other, at least will find none contrary to such conclusions, as may be drawn from principles naturally known, and will be encouraged to go on till God reveal more to them. This is so evident, that the wiser any among the heathen are, the nearer they come to this rule, and have framed something like it for the regulation of men, though with great mixtures of their own folly. The perfect discovery of man's duty God reserved to himself and his own writings, elsewhere there is but *ficta rectitudo* and *picta justitia*, poor counterfeits in the laws of civil nations and institutions of philosophy; *sapientia eorum abscondit vitia, non abscondit*; there was only a little hiding and disguising of sin that it might not appear too odious. In short, the less knowledge any nation or society of men have of this law, the more brutish and barbarous they have been, and so accounted to be by all that have known what civility and human converse mean; and on the contrary, the more polite and civil, the nearer they come to it. Whom would you judge to be more civil, the Romans or the Scythians? the wise and good man, or the sot and fool? Even among us, the more punctually any keepeth to this law, the more he differeth from others, as much as an angel from a man, or a man from a beast: 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' Prov. xii. 26. It is clear as the sun; whether men will or nill, they must acknowledge it, and do when they are serious; for they approve them while they hate them, wish their latter end like theirs, intrust them more than others, presume more from them than others. Out of all I conclude, that the very frame and constitution of the reasonable and immortal soul and body of man doth dictate the equity and justice of this law, and it doth result from the image of God, wherein man was created.

[3.] That law is just and righteous, the violation of which men judge to be justly punished. I use this argument because under punishment men are serious, for it rubbeth up and reviveth the sense of a divine power. Now, for the violation of this law God hath judged persons, families, nations, and kingdoms, and conscience is sensible of the justice of God's judgments exercised upon them. God is clear when he judgeth, Ps. li. 4; his eminent judgments carry light and conviction with them; and wherefore have his judgments been executed? Rom. i. 18, 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;' Heb. ii. 2, 'Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.' There is a fear after some notorious breach, even in those that are not acquainted with God, a shyness of his presence, ever since Adam run to the bushes; so it is.

All which doth seal the righteousness and truth of this law, and how justly God may reckon with us about it.

[4.] There is an intrinsical righteousness in all the duties commanded in God's law. Besides the will of the lawgiver, there is a justice in the things themselves. By what measure will we take justice? We usually understand it to be to give every one his due. So doth the law, it commandeth us to give God his due and man his due. Love is *πλήρωμα νόμου*, the fulfilling of the law. The law is comprised in one word, 'love;' to love God, himself, and his neighbour. Is there not justice in all this? The natural relation we have to God calleth for love to him; for he made us, and is the strength of our lives, and the length of our days: Deut. xxx. 20, 'That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave to him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days.' Self-love and self-preservation, if that be not a natural principle, nothing is. Our neighbours we are bound to love, because of consanguinity; they are our own flesh and blood, and God hath bidden us do to them as we would to ourselves: Mat. vii. 12, 'Therefore all things, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.' There is a universal consanguinity between all mankind, which hath its root in the communion of one and the same nature, and in the dependence and derivation from one common stock. The eminence of the divine nature is the foundation of the honour which we tender to it; and the equality of our nature is the foundation of the justice which we use to one another. So that here are natural, immutable obligations and grounds of right. Go to particulars: How equal is it that we should acknowledge but one God! They are drunk that see double, strangely depraved that see more. That we should not worship him before an idol, which is very apt to taint our minds with a gross opinion of God, as if he were some limited, finite being. It is a great lessening of reverence to see what we worship. Not to take God's name in vain by a false oath, that breedeth atheism and contempt. That there should be a day to remember the creator of all things; everyday's work is no day's work; but there must be a limited time. For reverence to parents, all nations call for it. For murder, adultery, stealing, false accusations, man's interest will teach him the necessity of those laws that forbid these things. Contentation is a guard to all the rest, it is fit the God of the spirits of all flesh should give a law to the spirit: 'Thou shalt not covet.' Yet this is the law of God, to which scripture is subservient; and all the admonitions, reproofs, exhortations, dehortations, examples, directions, histories of the obedience and virtue of some, with their rewards; of the disobedience, apostasy, rebellion of others, with their punishments; all is to enforce this law. The doctrine of Christ, and redemption and reconciliation by him, I bring not under this first head, because that is a favour and privilege; and the justice and equity of gospel precepts will soon appear, when once we have consented to the law that it is good. But of that in the next head.

3. For the truth and faithfulness of God's testimonies. This may

be considered either in revealing or performing, making or making good his promises.

[1.] For truth and faithfulness in making such offers and promises of pardon and eternal life in case of obedience, and threatening a curse and everlasting punishment in case of disobedience. Surely there is no doubt in all this, because they are revealed by God, who is the supreme and original truth, and who neither is nor can be deceived; for God's understanding is the rule and measure of all other truths: nothing is true but what is constant to his knowledge. And he cannot deceive us; that will not agree with the goodness of his nature and love to mankind; therefore he is called 'God that cannot lie,' Titus i. 2.

[2.] In making good. God hath given us the most solemn assurance: Heb. vi. 17, 18, 'God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation.' He hath demitted himself to the terms of a covenant, given us a seal: Rom. iv. 11, 'And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith.' Pledge: 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of his Spirit in our hearts.' He hath stood upon his truth above all things: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, 'I will worship towards thy holy temple, and praise thy name, for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth; for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' One part of the word verifieth another; in one part you have the promise, in another the accomplishment, the great promise of sending Christ: Heb. x. 5-7, 'Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.' He would not go back, being willing to keep the promise afoot. It was on our part a handwriting against us, in testification of our guilt and need of expiation; but on God's part an obligation of debt to pay our ransom. Still he accomplisheth promises in the return of prayers; and though the great payment be in the other world, yet here God remembereth us still, accomplishing the intervening promises, and giving proof of his truth. So that they that are acquainted with his name will never distrust him: Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.' They that have known his way, and the course of his dealings, will have a confidence in him.

Prop. 5. They that would receive the word as the word of God, must be soundly convinced of, and seriously consider, this righteousness and faithfulness in the testimonies, which he hath commanded; for till then the word worketh not on them: 1 Thes. ii. 13, 'For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.' And till then they are but customary Christians, and can never rightly believe nor obey: John iv. 42, 'Now we believe: not because of thy saying, for we have heard him our-

selves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.' First their faith depends on the common tradition, or the testimony of the church; afterwards on the sure ground of the word itself, in which they find such clearness and efficacy, that they cannot but yield to God. The authority of man is nothing to it, when our faith is bottomed on a surer ground, the authority of God speaking in his word.

1. There must be sound conviction, or belief of this. This is called, 'The acknowledgment of the truth,' Titus i. 1, *ἐπίγνωσις τῆς ἀληθείας*; and Col. ii. 2, 'The riches of the assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.' An assurance that God will keep touch with me, that he will not delude me in the terms propounded in the gospel. This full persuasion of the truth of God's testimonies we must all aim at, and seek after. The assurance of my interest and my salvation is another thing, and yet that I am not to neglect, but with this I am to begin.

2. There must be serious consideration; for that improveth all truths, and maketh them active and effectual. God's complaint of his people is that they will not consider: Isa. i. 3, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.' They do not lay truths in the view of conscience. Food without mastication and chewing nourisheth not. A thing not considered doth profit as little as if not believed, as a forgetting God is a kind of denying of him. Seriously then debate it with yourselves. You must consider the authority of God. Authority is that right which a superior hath to prescribe to such as are under him. Doth God usurp upon you when he giveth you a law? or hath he left you in the dark, that you do not know whether this be his law, yea or no? Are there no strictures of his majesty in the very economy and frame of it? Can any but a God speak at such a rate? And for his justice, hath he commanded anything to your hurt? No, it is all for thy good: Deut. vi. 24, 'And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always.' And for his truth, men may deceive and be deceived, and though they often speak truth, they do not always so; but God seeth by his own light, not by discourse, but vision. Truth is his nature, from which he can no more swerve than from himself; and what need he court a worm, and flatter us? Thus should we urge our hearts.

Use 1. Let us own and improve the word, as a righteous and faithful word, which God hath commanded for our good.

1. Own the authority of it. It is not an arbitrary thing; the truths revealed imply a command to believe them, the duties required imply a command to obey them: Mat. xvii. 5, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.' God hath commanded us to hear Christ, to believe in his name, to love one another: 1 John iii. 23, 'And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.' As we value his word, and would one day see his face with comfort, we should bind his precepts upon our hearts. Say to thy soul, As thou wilt answer it to God another day, take care of this.

2. Own and improve the righteousness of his testimonies. Man having a total and absolute dependence upon God, God might govern us in what manner it pleased him; for it is just 'that one may do with his own what he will,' Mat. xx. 15. But what hath the Lord required of thee, but to love him and serve him? Not to pluck the stars from the sky, or to guide the chariot of the sun, not such sublimity of knowledge and learning, nor such a quantity and proportion of alms, nor to lance thyself, or offer thy first-born, nor rivers of oil, nor thousands of rams, for a burnt-offering: Micah vi. 8, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' The Lord's commands are not rigid and severe and unreasonable, but sweet and desirable, that we should do wrong to none, do good to all, and maintain communion with him; and is this burthensome? Go try the drunkard's life and the adulterer's life; you will see the temperate, the chaste, have much the sweeter life of it. Therefore let there not be one disallowing thought of what God hath required. Could we bring you to esteem the word, other things would come on more easily.

3. Own it and improve it as a faithful word, building upon the promises, fearing the threats thereof. The word will not deceive them that are ruled by it. Consider your condition, and what will be the event of things. There is a curiosity in men to know their own destiny. We may easily know what shall become of us by the word of God; and if men were not more curious to know their end than careful to amend their lives, they need not seek any other oracle: Rom. viii. 13, 'For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' So for the end of any action; if the word of God say it will be bitter in the latter end, though it bring profit and pleasure for a while, believe it against all the wicked men in the world, and say, I do more believe this one text and place of scripture than all that men can do and say. Mind the great duties of the gospel, and venture your souls in Christ's hands upon these terms: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' I have nothing but God's word, yet I will venture my salvation, my all, upon it, upon his bare word. Comfort yourselves in the midst of difficulties with the truth of God's word, when all sense and outward seeming is contrary to the promise. Before a promise be accomplished there will be unlikelihoods. I will instance in Paul's prediction: Acts xxvii. 24-26, 'Lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island,' &c. Yet how many difficulties came to pass! First, no isle appeareth; they are tossed in the Adriatic sea for fourteen days together; they knew not where they were, nor whither they did go. Thus doth God delay the accomplishment of the promise; they know not how nor which way it shall be made good. Another difficulty was, that, meeting with some isle, it fell out in the night-time; they deemed they drew near to some country, but yet feared they should be split upon the rocks, ver. 30; the

shipmen were ready to flee out of the ship, leave Paul and his fellows in danger, upon pretence of casting out anchors out of the fore-stern, and so they were ready to miscarry in the haven. When this difficulty was over, and it was day, they were not able to row to land, because of their long fasting, having eaten little or nothing for fourteen days. Another difficulty was, when they would have thrust the ship ashore it was broken all in pieces, what with high banks and two seas meeting. Another difficulty was, when they were to swim to land, they think of killing the prisoners, and the captain, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and so they escaped all to land. Therefore do not distrust the word; but especially bear up with the hope of eternal life, though remote and in another world, which we never saw: Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them;' Rom. ii. 7, 'To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for life, and glory, and immortality, eternal life.' You will meet with bitter conflicts, heavy troubles, sad desertions; yet remember God's word is a faithful word, and let this cheer and revive you.

Use 2. Express these virtues of the word. We must be righteous and true if the word of God be so, for the impression must answer the seal and stamp: Rom. vi. 17, 'But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you;' 2 Cor. iii. 3, 'Ye are declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart;' Phil. ii. 16, 'Holding fast the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.' A Christian is the Bible exemplified; such a conformity there must be there to the law of God; the same light that shineth forth in scripture should shine forth in the lives of the godly; so it was in Hezekiah: Isa. xxxviii. 3, 'Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.' And of David it is said, 1 Kings iii. 6, 'Thy servant David walked before thee in truth, and righteousness, and uprightness of heart.'

1. For righteousness. A Christian's business is to give to every man his due, to do what he is bound to do to God and man; Mat. xxii. 21, to 'render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.' Whether by the law of nature: 1 Tim. v. 8, 'If any provide not for his own, and especially for them of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' Or by relation, as Boaz did the part of a kinsman to Ruth: Ruth iii. 13, 'Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the Lord liveth.' Or by place or station: Neh. vi. 11, 'And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.' Or by paction or agreement: Col. iv. 1, 'Masters, give to your servants that which is just and equal.' Or according to

rules of prudence, equity, charity : Phil. iv. 5, 'Let your moderation,' τὸ ἐπιεικὲς, 'be known unto all men ;' whether it be fear or honour that be due : Rom. xiii. 7, 'Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.' Or good-will : ver. 8, 'Owe no man anything, but to love one another.'

2. For truth. You are to adhere to the truth, 'not to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive ; but, speaking the truth in love, ye may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ,' Eph. iv. 14, 15. 'To speak nothing but truth in your ordinary communication : Eph. iv. 25, 'Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.' To perform what you promise, though to your loss : Ps. xv. 4, 'He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.' Thus should the whole course of our lives express the properties of the word.

Use 3. To show the reason why men are so backward in obedience, so prone to what is evil, so uncomfortable in trouble. We do not believe that the testimony of God is righteous and true, very true, every tittle of it ; but we are slow of heart to believe ; therefore is the faithfulness and truth of the word inculcated. Christ saith, 'Believest thou this ?' John xi. 25. Could we believe the word more, what advantage should we have in the spiritual life ! what fear of God ! what joy of faith ! what readiness of obedience ! But we cannot depend upon God's word, and therefore are easily shaken in mind. Our hearts are like a sea, one wave riseth up after another. We must be fed with sense, and God must do all immediately, or else we are apt to sink under our discouragements.

SERMON CLVI.

My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.—VER. 139.

IN these words you may observe—(1.) Two different persons ; (2.) A different carriage mentioned.

1. Two different persons are spoken of, David and his enemies. By enemies is not to be understood those only that were troublesome to himself, but those who were an opposite party to God, who opposed themselves against God and godliness ; these without any breach of the law of love may be counted enemies : Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22, 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee ? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee ? I hate them with a perfect hatred ; I count them mine enemies.' It is a comfort and satisfaction to the godly to have no enemies to themselves but such as are enemies to God also, such as rise up against God.

2. There is a different carriage mentioned, and ascribed to these two parties ; on the one side, oblivion and forgetfulness of God's law ; on the other side, zeal.

[1.] On the enemies' part, oblivion and forgetfulness of God's word. The word of God is not effectual usually, but where it is hid in recent memory. They 'have forgotten thy word;' a proper phrase to set forth them in the bosom of the visible church who do not wholly deny and reject the word and rule of scripture, but yet live as though they had forgotten it; they do not observe it, as if God had never spoken any such thing, or given them any such rule. They that reject and condemn such things as thy word enforceth, surely do not remember to do them.

[2.] On David's part here is mentioned zeal, or a flagrant affection, which is set forth—(1.) By the vehemency of it; (2.) By the cause of it.

(1.) By the vehemency of it, 'My zeal hath consumed me.' It was no small zeal that David had, but a consuming zeal. Vehement affections exhaust and consume the vital spirits, and waste the body. The like expression is used, Ps. lxxviii. 9, 'The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.' Strength of holy affection works many times upon the body as well as the soul, especially zeal, which is a high degree of love, and vents itself by a mixture of grief and anger. What a man loves, he would have it respected, and is grieved when it is dishonoured and under disrepute. Both have an influence upon this consuming, this wasting of the spirits that is spoken of in the text, because they had lessened and obscured the glory of God, and violated his law; and there was in him a holy care, ardour, and earnest endeavour to rectify this abuse, and awaken them out of their security, and reduce them to their duty.

(2.) Here was the cause of it. Why was David so much wasted, pined, consumed, and troubled? Because they 'have forgotten thy word;' the contempt of God, and the offence of God sat nearest his heart; as if he had said, I should more patiently bear the injury done to myself, but I cannot be coldly affected where thy glory, O Lord, is concerned; since I have had a taste of thy grace, and felt the benefit of thy word, I cannot endure it should be contemned, and it much moves me to see creatures so mad upon their own destruction, and to make so light of thy salvation. Thus was David consumed, not at the sight of his own, but at other men's sins; and not at others in general, but them, his enemies, that they should make void the law of God. Such was his love to the word, that he could not endure the contempt and violation of it; and such was his compassion to the souls of men, that it grieved him exceedingly to see any of the workmanship of God to perish, to be captivated to the world, to be made factors for the devil, and fuel for hell-fire, and to be so violent for their own destruction.

Doct. That great and pure zeal becomes those that have any affection for the word and for the ways of God.

Here is a great zeal; for David saith, 'My zeal hath consumed me;' it preyed upon his spirit. And here is a pure zeal, for he mentions not personal injuries, but disrespect to God's word. When the same men are our enemies and God's enemies, we should be more zealous for God's cause than our own. Now both the greatness and purity of his zeal did arise from his love to the word, as appears from the precedent and subsequent verses. In the precedent verses he had told

them, 'Just and upright are thy testimonies, and very faithful,' therefore 'my zeal hath consumed me,' because this word should be slighted and contemned. And it appears also from the following verse, 'Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.' He was troubled to see such a holy and pure word to be trampled under foot, and especially that those seem to disown it (he doth not say they deny it) who had generally professed to live under this rule; that they made light and disregarded the precepts, in which I found so much comfort and delight.

In the prosecution of this point I shall—

1. Show what is true zeal.

2. Why all that love the word should have this great and pure zeal.

First, What is true zeal? There is a carnal zeal and there is a spiritual zeal.

1. The carnal zeal (to begin with that) is threefold:—

[1.] That which comes from an ill cause, and produceth ill effects. An ill cause, as hatred of men's persons, or envy at their gifts and excellences, or their success and happiness in the world: James iii. 14, 'If ye have bitter envying in your hearts.' It is *πικρὸν ζῆλον*, if you have bitter zeal in your hearts. There is a kind of bitter zeal, and malignity at their excellency, whether gifts, graces, rank, dignity in the world. And in ver. 16 he tells us this bitter zeal produceth confusion and every evil work. To be consumed and eaten out with envy is little commendable. This is not the zeal of the text. With this zeal were the chief priests filled when they saw that the gospel came into some reputation, and that the people, do what they could, did haunt and frequent it. We read, Acts v. 17, *ἐπλήσθησαν ζήλου*. We render it, They were filled with indignation; it is in the Greek and in the margin, They were filled with zeal; with this bitter zeal, malignity, envy, indignation, they would bestir themselves to suppress the growing gospel by all the means that possibly they could.

[2.] There is another sort of carnal zeal which hath an ill object, though it may be a good cause from whence it proceeds, such as an ignorant zeal, which proceeds from some love to that which men call religion, but falsely; and so the apostle saith, Rom. x. 2, 'I bear them witness that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge;' and such a zeal had Paul when he was a pharisee. He gives an account of it, Gal. i. 12–14, 'How that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.' Paul was a man that never acted against his conscience, no, not when he was a pharisee; he still acted according to his light; but when he was blinded by pharisaical prejudices, he wasted the church of God, and was exceedingly zealous for a false religion. Thus is such a zeal as possibly might have a tolerable cause, but it had a bad object, a zeal about the dictates of a deluded conscience, and this zeal, *perniciosior est, quo flagrantior*, is the more pernicious the more earnest it is. It hath often raised confusions in the church, when men are led with a blind zeal they think for God; if they be under, then they make divisions; if they get a-top, then they are persecuting and oppressing. This is the zeal of a deluded conscience. In short, zeal must have a right object, otherwise it may be great, but cannot be good, pure, and holy.

[3.] Another false zeal is when it hath no ill object, but it exceeds in the measure and degree, and is far beyond the weight of the thing that it is laid out upon. This is a superstitious, a trifling zeal, which runs out to externals, and is altogether employed about lesser things of religion, as the pharisees, Mat. xxiii. 23, that made a great business about a small matter, tithing mint, and anise, and cummin, but neglected weighty duties, faith, judgment, righteousness, and the great things of the kingdom of God. The apostle tells us, Rom. xiv. 17, 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink,' in being of this party and that; many all their care and strength of their souls runs out in matters of less importance, keeping up a party and faction in religion; we should first make conscience of principal matters. Superstitious scrupulosity is always damageful, like those that come into a shop to buy a pennyworth of a commodity, and steal a pound's worth. Oh! they have a great zeal for lesser things when it runs out mightily about outward things, either for that or against that; and in the meantime they cherish the world, pride, envy, carnal evil affections, that are destructive to and the bane of godliness.

2. There is a spiritual holy zeal which we may describe—(1.) By its cause; (2.) by its object; (3.) by its effects; (4.) by its use as to public reformation; (5.) as to its use as to Christians' private exercises, to carry on the spiritual life with fervour, warmth, and vigour.

[1.] I am to speak of the cause of it. The true cause of holy zeal is love to God and what belongs to God. Zeal is *ferrentis amoris gradus*, a higher degree of love; it is the fervour of divine charity. We should mark still what spirit inflames the zeal that we have. Every man is eaten up with one kind of zeal or another. The zeal of the world eats up many, Ps. cxxvii. 2. They bereave their souls of good, and all for a little pelf; they work in the fires, they load themselves with thick clay. The zeal of the flesh inflames many; they are mad upon carnal delights, can let go all considerations so as they may fulfil their lusts; they are consumed with these kind of zeals. Another spirit should be working in us, a zeal for God; and that comes from an entire love to God. When the soul doth heartily and earnestly love God above all, then there is a strong desire of promoting God's glory and interest; there should be that spirit which breathes in our zeal, and with this zeal should we be eaten up and spent. Now they that love God will love all them which belong to God. Friends have all things common, so it is between us and God; the injuries done to him will be as grievous to us as if they were done to ourselves: Ps. lxi. 9, 'For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me;' and the glory that comes to them is as acceptable as if some great benefit had come to us: Acts xv. 3, 'Declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.' Oh! this is great joy to a gracious soul when God's interest thrives in the world. Oh! this is that they would willingly hear spoken of; their hearts are upon it, when God's interest stands or falls, such an earnest desire of the glory of God, which is the highest degree and measure of love to God.

[2.] Let us speak of the object of zeal. In three things God's interest lies in the world, viz., his truth, his worship, and his servants. Now it is not enough to have zeal that we do not oppose any of these, but they must be tenderly regarded and looked after, and we must be affected with these things as we would with our own concerns. When wrongs are offered to any of these, either to God's truth, his worship, or his servants, they must go more nearly to our hearts than any personal injuries done to ourselves. What we cannot remedy we must mourn for. All these three concur in Elijah's speech: 1 Kings xix. 10, 'I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts;' there is his zeal. Why? 'For the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant;' there is his truth perverted: 'they have thrown down thy altars;' there is his worship overturned: 'they have slain thy prophets with the sword;' there his servants are wronged. So that zeal mainly is concerned when God suffers loss in any of these things. If his truth be perverted, his worship overturned, his servants be despitefully used, vexed, and grieved, then zeal presently shows itself in opposing these things, or in grieving for them.

(1.) Zeal seeks to preserve the truth of God inviolable. Truth is a precious *depositum*, trust, and charge which God hath committed to the keeping of his people; and without zeal to defend and propagate and maintain it, though with the greatest hazard, it will never be kept, and you will never be faithful to God. We are a kind of feoffees for the present age, and trustees for the future; and the charge of God's truth is put into our hands, and we must see it be transmitted to the world pure and undefiled. Therefore, Jude 3, ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι, 'We must contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.' When others would violate the truth we must contend with them: Jer. ix. 3, 'They are not valiant for the truth.' A Christian needs not only the labour of an ox, that he may be diligent, but the valour of a lion, that he may appear for God in defence of his truth when it is invaded and encroached upon. And especially doth this concern the officers of the church; this zeal they should have for the word: Titus i. 9, ἀντρεχόμενον, 'Holding fast the faithful word.' The word signifies to be good at holding and drawing; that is, when others would wrest it out of our hands, we should hold it fast; as a staff that another would take out of our hands, we hold it faster and wrestle with him. So should we wrestle, contend, and hold fast the truth, when others would draw it from us. And Phil. i. 27, 'Striving together for the faith of the gospel.' Oh! we should not let one dust of truth perish. This is to be zealous for the truth, standing to, and striving for the defence thereof, in our way and place. If God had not raised up zealous instruments in every age to plead for his truth, what a sad case would the church have been in? Truth would have been buried under a great heap of prejudices, and Christ's kingdom have been crushed in the very egg, and religion strangled in the cradle. But there is a cloud of witnesses gone before us. In every age God sets up some of all sexes, ages, conditions, that have owned his despised and oppugned truths, and have not counted their lives dear, so as they might give their testimony to the truth of God, Rev. xii. 11, and have more greedily embraced martyrdom than others

honours and dignities in the church ; as Sulpicius Severus observes, they have with greater desire affected the glory of martyrdom and suffering for the truth, that they might be faithful to God and the souls of men in future ages, and to preserve God's truth inviolate ; they have greedily sought this honour to suffer for God. And Ignatius, he could say, Come, saith he, I desire the beasts that are prepared should be let loose for me ; it is better to die for Christ than to command the ends of the earth. And Basil, when the Arian emperor threatened those that did oppose his religion should die the death. The wild beasts, let them be let out ; would to God it were so, that I had the honour to die for the truth of Christ ! This was notably for the increase of Christ's kingdom, and thus the Lord hath inspired his people with a holy love and zeal.

(2.) For his worship, that that may not be corrupted, but his institutions kept pure. Zeal is conversant about that too : Exod. xx. 5, 'Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them ; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.' In the first commandment, God forbids a false god ; in the second, he forbids the false means of worship, as before the false object. Now, because the means of worship are apt to be perverted, the Lord shows how jealous he was for his worship : 'I am a jealous God ;' if the institutions of God be perverted, then 'I will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.' The children are considered in that commandment, because usually the interest of families is our great snare, when an idol is set up, or a false means of worship. The chiefest false worship is an idol ; and the greatest sin is put for all the rest, before an idol, the imagination or invention of men, when that is set up. The Lord speaks of the interest of families, because men are apt to think they shall undo them and their families if they contend in this matter. Now, be you zealous of my worship, for I will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. That the interest of families might not abate our zeal, the Lord takes the family into the curse for the violation, and likewise into the blessing for zeal for his institutions. And so Christ saith, John ii. 17, 'The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.' We should be zealous for God's worship. Ministers should preach zealously, and magistrates govern zealously to purge God's house, and Christians pray zealously ; every one of us, as far as the bounds of our calling will permit, should be zealous for God's worship. *Quis comeditur zelo Domus Dei ?* saith Austin—who is he that is eaten out with the zeal of God's house ? He that desires that no human invention may be blended and mixed with God's worship, and would fain amend what is amiss. This zeal is the only right and acceptable principle of reformation, our great indignation against all false worship whatever. I remember the story of Valentinian, who was afterwards emperor, when according to the duty of his place, being captain of the guard to Julian the apostate and emperor, he was engaged to attend him into the heathen temple of fortune, and the priests were to sprinkle the lustrating and holy water—for that ceremony was common to the heathens with the papists—and a drop of it lighted upon Valentinian, he struck the priest that did it, and said, Thou hast defiled me, thou hast not purged me (he thought

his garments to be contaminated, and not his body sanctified), and he tore off his belt, renounced his honour, rather than he would do anything that should be contrary to his religion; and for this Julian sent him into banishment, and within a year and a few months, the story tells us, that he received the reward of his holy confession and owning of Christ, the Roman empire. For the soldiers, being weary of this pagan emperor, as soon as he died chose Jovinianus (that had been banished, and a fellow sufferer with him), who recalled him and other Christians from their exile, and after having reigned not full eight months, he died, and Valentinian was chosen emperor in his stead.

(3.) The third thing we should be zealous for is God's servants; when they are oppressed we should own and cherish them, as good Obadiah did the prophets, who 'hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water,' 1 Kings xviii. 4; and Jonathan owned David though his father was greatly displeased with him, and flung a javelin at him, 1 Sam. xx. 32; and Esther pleads for the Jews when they were doomed to destruction, Esther vii. 3; and Nicodemus pleads for Christ that he might not be condemned unheard: John vii. 50, 51, 'When the council was ready to condemn him, Nicodemus saith to them (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them), Doth our law judge any man before it hear him? And then they went their way.' That stopped the persecution for that time. Certainly they have little zeal for God, that can see good men perish before their eyes, and have not a word to speak for them. This Nicodemus, that was before infirm and weak, that sneaked unto Christ, that came to him by night, gets courage in the time of need to speak for Christ.

[3.] What are the acts of zeal with respect to these objects?

(1.) It quickens us to our duty, and makes us publicly active for God: Gal. iv. 18, 'It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.' Oh! how remiss and sluggish would we be otherwise in matters of God's kingdom and glory, if we had not a strong degree of love to stir us up to appear for God, in the worst times, and in the way and places that is proper for us! Paul when he saw the whole city given to idolatry, it is said, his 'spirit was stirred in him,' Acts xvii. 16; he could not contain; and again, Acts xviii. 5, Paul 'was pressed in spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.' That heroic act of Phinehas when he saw the laws of God broken, and nobody ready to vindicate the honour of God; he took a javelin in his hand and thrust the offenders through, Num. xxv. 7; and the Lord saith afterwards, ver. 11, 'Phineas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.' He had an extraordinary call to do that; he was high priest, but he went then upon *jus zenorum*.¹ So Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 40, 'He took the prophets of Baal and brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.' There was an extraordinary call; but we are all to be active in spreading and defending the truth, and promoting the purity of God's worship, and welfare of his people, as far as our calling and places permit.

(2.) It maketh us spare no cost, yea, it judgeth that best done for God which costs us most, as David would not serve God with that

¹ So in the original edition.—En.

which cost nothing, 2 Sam. xxiv. 25. That is worth nothing that cost nothing in religion. Jezebel she was zealous for Baal, and maintained four hundred of his priests at her table. In the primitive times they sold all things that they had, and had all things common: and the Israelites they offered so plentifully to the tabernacle, that Moses was fain to forbid them, to put a stop, because there was enough given for the advancement of God's worship, Exod. xxxviii. 8. And therefore certainly they are cold, and have little zeal for God, that love as the Corinthians did, *ἀδάπανον εὐαγγέλιον*, a gospel without charges, would be at no cost for Christ. This was Paul's case; there the poor saints of Macedonia which had but from hand to mouth, they ministered to him, and maintained him when he was at Corinth, a rich and opulent town. Paul would depart from his right rather than prejudice the gospel. Therefore they that will be at no cost for Christ, maintaining his truth, upholding his worship, relieving his people, have no zeal.

(3.) It vents itself by holy grief and anger when any of these are violated. (1.) With holy grief. We should be touched, and that to the quick, with other men's sins, when they neglect their duty, pervert all that is right and honest, and seem not to be concerned with the glory of God, 1 Peter ii. 7, 8. It is said of Lot, 'his righteous soul was vexed' at the wickedness of the Sodomites; and 'he vexed himself,' not with Sodom's injuries, but with Sodom's impurities; he could not redress the evils, but he mourns for them. So the prophet Jeremiah for the stubbornness of the people: Jer. xiii. 17, 'But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore,' &c. Though they would not hearken, amend, nor any way regard these things, yet it grieved him exceedingly. So you shall see the like of Ezra, chap. x. 6, 'He mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.' The transgression of God's people was very grievous to him. Thus we read of Eli, 1 Sam. iv. 13, 'Eli sat by the wayside watching; for his heart trembled for the ark of God.' The glory of God was dear to him; and when religion is in danger, God dishonoured, it leaves a mighty impression upon the hearts of those that have a zeal and strong love to God. (2.) It vents itself by indignation and holy anger; as Christ whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and showed his divine power therein, John ii. 15. And 'remember them, O God, that defile the priesthood,' Neh. xiii. 29; and Exod. xxxii. 19. Meek Moses, yet his anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hand; and Ezra ix. 3, 'When I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head, and of my beard, and sat down astonished.' Thus deeply are God's children affected with God's public dishonour, though not occasioned by themselves, but occasioned by others, and this is to have a zeal for God.

[4.] The qualifications and concomitants of this holy zeal. I will name three:—

(1.) It must be accompanied with knowledge and discretion; that is to say, there must be a distinct knowledge of the cause that we take up, else we may be factors for the devil's kingdom when we think we are acting for God, and be persecuting the saints when we think we are destroying his enemies. It must be out of the knowledge of the

cause of the evil to be renounced and the good to be established. There is a blind zeal: John xvi. 2, 'Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.' The pseudo-Christians, the literal Christians, have a blind zeal against the serious Christians, and if they can excommunicate them and throw them out of the church and kill them, they think this is acceptable service to God. All this is blind zeal. In Rom. x. 2, the apostle saith, 'They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge;' therefore there must be light as well as heat in this fire, else it is not the fire of the altar, but of a common hearth; nay, we must not only know the truth, but also the worth of the cause. The truth of the cause, that must be guided still by wisdom, and we must observe all the seasonable circumstances in discovering ourselves for God, else it will produce strange, evil, and malignant effects, which tend much to the dishonour of God, and prejudice of the gospel. Look, as a blind horse that is full of mettle, but is always stumbling, so they never act commendably and seasonably. The church of God hath had bitter experience in all ages of the sad effects of misguided zeal; when it hath not been seasoned with knowledge and discretion to time things, it hath tended much to the hindrance of Christ's kingdom, and the promotion of Satan's interest in the world. Christ in one place bids us to 'be wise as serpents,' Mat. x. 16; and in another place, not to give that which is holy to dogs, 'nor cast pearls before swine,' Mat. vii. 6; otherwise we unprofitably sacrifice ourselves, and hinder the good which we would promote. It was a grievous thing to Paul, and pressed upon his spirit, to see all Ephesus given to idolatry, and mightily affected with Diana's worship; yet we read, Acts xix. 10, he was two years at Ephesus before he spake against Diana; he observed his season before he took the liberty and thought himself bound to speak against that false worship. The historian tells us of Andes, a Persian bishop, that was under Varrans, that, having an unguided zeal, got some Christians together to destroy the temple of fire, which the Persians worshipped. Saith Theodoret, Not as he ought to do; and what is the issue? Varrans the emperor, that was formerly favourable to the Christians, when he saw they affected power, and would destroy the worship of the country, what then? He was filled with cruel persecution, he skinned the backs of some of the Christians, and the faces of others, drew splinters through their flesh, used horrible torments, which the historian takes notice of, and it conduced to the total suppression of the Christian religion. Therefore this wildfire when it runs abroad without discretion, and not being seasoned with prudence, it doth a world of harm to the church of God. We must observe the time, circumstances, and when it is most behoveful for the glory of God, the good of the church, and cause we would promote. See Videlius, lib i. cap. 1.

(2.) This zeal also must be mingled with compassion, that as we mind the glory of God, so we may pity deluded souls. When we are zealous against the sin we must have commiseration of the sinner, as knowing the weaknesses and prejudices of education that are incident to human nature. This is, to be sure, most agreeable to Christ's pattern. He wept over Jerusalem that stood in a state of enmity to him, Luke xix. 41; and when he was angry with the unbelief

of his countrymen, at the same time he was grieved at the hardness of their hearts, Mark iii. 5. In Christ's anger there was more of compassion than of passion. And Samuel he mourned for Saul when he saw him no more, 1 Sam. xv. 35; and the apostle, when he had zealously declaimed against the false teachers, he falls a-weeping, Phil. iii. 18. When we show love to God there should not be a hatred and ill-will to the persons of men, but we should bewail their obstinacy and blindness. Those that are all for destruction, and ready to call fire from heaven, they know not what spirit they are of; they have a fiery zealous spirit, but that which doth not become the temper of the gospel.

(3.) Zeal must be constant, Gal. iv. 18; the fire on the altar must never go out; we cannot be without it for a moment. There are some that have zeal for a fit, but soon grow weary of it; they are zealous in prosperity, then they are forward and active for God; but when it comes to trouble, they give up all to oppositions. On the contrary, others in their affliction and low estate, they have a warm sense of religion, but when they are all well at ease, they are lost in the delights of the flesh, and drowned in the cares of the world, and their zeal for God is checked. And we see that some in their youth have a good savour and towardliness, and seem to have a very tender conscience, but after their first heats are spent they are very careless, and grow inordinate, and all their zeal for God is gone: Gal. v. 7, 'Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?' David was as zealous when the crown was upon his head as when God humbled him and kept him low. Many think zeal a cumber as they increase in worldly wisdom, and so cast it off. Nay, in gross hypocrites you shall find this, they will be zealous in good company, and as vain and loose in bad. Let any grave servant of God be there, they seem to kindle a great fire, but as soon as they are gone, they put it out again. Ay! but true zeal should always continue and be of a lasting and of an increasing flame.

[5.] To speak of the private and personal use of zeal, what need we have to keep up a warm frame of heart towards God and heavenly things (hitherto we have considered it as it respects God's public interest); it is also of private use both in resisting of sin, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

(1.) In resisting of sin. A man never doth anything to purpose in purging out sin until he hath a zeal for God: Rev. iii. 19, 'Be zealous therefore, and repent.' Repentance is set on and quickened by zeal. Doth zeal, think you, serve only to rectify the disorders of other men, and not our own? No, certainly; we should begin at home; we should take care that God be exalted in our own hearts, as well as his interest be not infringed in the world. First our Saviour adviseth us to pluck out the beam out of our own eyes, Mat. vii. 5. Unless we be blameless ourselves we can have no confidence or hope to do much good to others. The first stone should be cast at ourselves; we should repent of our own sin, our own lusts, the plague of our own heart; if anything we are apt to allow that is contrary to God, this should be a great grief to us. Unless we cleanse our own unclean sinks at home, how can we hope for reformation abroad? Men cry out against public vices, as the lapwing will croak abroad to draw off the person from her own nest;

it is all but the deceit of the heart ; and usually we find it to be so in the world. Most men are better acquainted with other men's duties than their own ; with the magistrate's duties more than their own, and so other men's sins more than their own. But it is not so where zeal is unfeigned ; there it begins at home ; they will allow nothing in their own hearts that may be contrary to God's interest and to the sovereignty of his Spirit.

(2.) Also in perfecting holiness. The whole business of the spiritual life must be carried on in warmth and vigour : Rom. xii. 11, 'Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' It is ζέοντες πνεύματι, seething hot in spirit. Nothing done for God should be done negligently, but affectionately. To be lukewarm and key-cold, that makes no work in religion ; but when a man hath a great zeal for God, oh ! then he profits and gets ground, then sin decays, grace is strengthened, love is more rooted in his heart every day, and he doth more for God. Paul profited in the Jewish religion, Gal. i. 14. Why ? Because he was 'more zealous than others.' This is the man that will be the honour of God's ordinances, that man that will show forth the virtue and power of religion, when his heart grows warm for God and zealous for God.

Secondly, Why we ought to look after a great and pure zeal, if we have any love to God and the law of God and his ways.

1. Why a great zeal ?

[1.] Because it is not zeal else, if it be not in some good degree ; for zeal is a great fire and a vehement flame ; not only love, but vehement love ; it must needs be great : Cant. viii. 6, 7, 'For love is as strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave.' Zeal is cruel as the grave ; read it so : 'Many waters cannot quench love,' &c. Mark, our love to the ways of God should be of such a nature, such a warm and zealous working of heart towards God, that many floods cannot quench it, that nothing can bribe it. Surely the best things deserve the best affections ; therefore whatever we do in religion and for God, we should do it with all our might, Eccles. ix. 10.

[2.] Otherwise it will not do the work. Such as increaseth with opposition ; as fire, when you put on more fuel, it grows more vehement ; so unless it be a zeal that grows earnest with discouragement, alas ! it will soon be quenched. We shall meet with many discouragements from within and without ; but when we can resolve with David, the more they scoffed and opposed him, he would 'be yet more vile,' 2 Sam. vi. 22. So the more trouble they meet with in the ways of God, the more they will cleave to him, and will please God though with the displeasure of men. True zeal is inflamed with difficulties. As lime, the more water they pour on, the more it burns ; as Nehemiah's courage it sparkled the more the more it was opposed : 'Should such a man as I flee ?' Should I betray the cause of God ? This is the true zeal, when it sparkles by opposition. As Paul, the more they persuaded him, the more he seemed to be bound in spirit to go to Jerusalem, Acts xxi. 13 ; though they did even break his heart, they could not break his purpose. Such a zeal as is quenched with every drop of water, and goes out with every flout and scorn, will never do it ; therefore we had need have a great zeal, that we may harden ourselves against all oppositions we meet with in the way.

2. It needs to be pure, too ; such a fervent affection had need be right, for since it makes men so active and resolute, certainly it should go upon clear grounds. I showed before nothing hath done more mischief in the world than wild zeal ; it is like fire out of its place, that sets all the house in a flame ; it doth not comfort and refresh those that have it, but it destroys and consumes all. But why must we have pure zeal ?

[1.] Because there is a false zeal, and a self-seeking zeal, which men have while they pretend much love to God and good of souls, but are really hunting after their own interest : Gal. iv. 17, ‘ They zealously affect you, but not well ; yea, they would exclude you that ye might affect them ; ’ that is, they sought to rend their affections from Paul, and from their faithful pastors, that they might affect them ; so he tells us, Phil. i. 15, ‘ Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife.’ There may be a zeal that comes merely out of envy and strife ; Jehu could say, ‘ Come, see my zeal for the Lord,’ 2 Kings x. 16.

[2.] This false zeal doth a great deal of mischief. It is a dishonour to God to pretend to him, and to put the varnish of our cause upon God. God himself is involved in the deceit, Jer. iv. 10. It is a strange expression to be used to God, ‘ Ah ! Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people.’ The false prophets did it in his name. And it divides the church as well as dishonours God : Gal. iv. 17, ‘ They would exclude you, that ye might affect them.’ The meaning is, they would rend you from the body of the Christian church, and alienate the minds of God’s people, so as to devote them to a faction : Phil. i. 16, ‘ They preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds.’ And it hardens the persons themselves, as Jehu boasted of his zeal, and it was only self-seeking, and the Lord counts it murder, Hosea i. 4.

Use. Have we this pure zeal, such a zeal as David speaks of ? There are many notes by which it may be discerned ; as—

1. When injuries done to God or religion affect us more than injuries done personally to ourselves ; when we carry ourselves in an indifferency in our own cause, but not in God’s. Compare Num. xii. 13, with Exod. xxxii. 19. Moses could with a meek spirit bear all the injuries done to himself, but could not contain himself when he saw injury done to God, but breaks the tables.

2. When the same enemies are God’s enemies and ours. David was sensible not of the inhumanity of his enemies, but that which most troubled him was because they were God’s enemies and forsook his words. David was not so much troubled at Absalom’s rebellion, as dying in his sins.

3. When there is a compassion mingled with our zeal. Fleshly anger is all for destruction ; holy anger is for conversion, when they grieve, and seek to redress the matter.

4. True zeal is universal ; it is most against their own sins, and the sins of those that are nearest, and runs out upon weighty things. But those that tithe mint and cummin, and neglect weighty things, they have not true zeal. There are many instances of this false disproportionate zeal of a conscience, taken up for a turn. When there is a partial conscience—in some things men are mighty scrupulous, and strain at a gnat and swallow a camel—it discovers the hypocrisy that

lights upon the professors of religion, full of heinous outcries upon small things, yet dashing upon things that are against the fundamentals of the covenant.

SERMON CLVII.

Thy word is very pure : therefore thy servant loveth it.—VER. 140.

THERE are three things in this verse :—

1. The excellency of the word, *thy word is very pure.*

2. David's respect to it, *thy servant loveth it.*

3. The connection between both, in the illative particle, *therefore.*

1. The excellency of the word, 'Thy word is very pure.' That which we render 'very pure,' signifieth tried in the fire and refined; the Septuagint reads it, *πεπυρωμένον λόγιόν σου σφόδρα*, thy word is set on fire; and so you may see it explained, Ps. xii. 6, 'The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times.' The expression may import two things—(1.) The infallible certainty of the word; (2.) The exact purity.

[1.] The infallible certainty of the word, as gold endureth in the fire when the dross is consumed. Vain conceits comfort us not in a time of trouble, but the word of God, the more it is tried, the more you will find the excellency of it. The promise is tried, as well as we are tried, in deep afflictions; but when it is so, it will be found to be most sure. In the old translation it is, Thy word is proved most pure: Ps. xviii. 30, 'The word of the Lord is tried; he is a buckler to all them that trust in him.' So Prov. xxx. 5, 'The word of the Lord is pure; he is a shield to all that trust in him.' As pure gold suffers no loss by the fire, so the promises suffer no loss when they are tried, but stand to us in our greatest troubles.

[2.] It notes the exact perfection of the word. There is no dross in silver and gold that hath been often refined, so there is no defect in the word of God.

2. Here is David's respect to the word; speaking of himself in the third person, he saith, 'Thy servant loveth it.' The children of God love the word, and the duty and obedience it prescribeth, so as effectually to follow it; that is love, and none but that.

3. Here is his reason for it, 'Therefore I love it,' because it is pure. Wicked men hate it and slight it for this reason: the word of God is so pure that it ransacks their consciences, and therefore they cannot endure it: 'The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be,' Rom. viii. 7. But the saints do the rather embrace it: wicked men could wish it were less strict, that it might be calculated to their turns; but the children of God love it for this reason.

Doct. That God's children see such purity in his word that therefore they value it and love it exceedingly.

The point will be made good by four considerations :—

1. That the word of God is pure.

2. That this pure word must be loved and esteemed by us.

3. That we must not only love God's word, but see why we love it.

4. Among all the grounds and reasons of our love to the word of God, this is the most noble and excellent, to love it for its purity.

For the first of these, that the word of God is pure, yea, as it is superlatively expressed in the text, it is very pure, that will appear in two respects—it is pure in itself, and it maketh us pure.

1. It is pure in itself, because it is a holy rule, fit for God to give and us to receive, exactly comprising the whole duty of man. We need not seek elsewhere for direction in order to true happiness: Ps. xix. 8, 'The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;' as metal refined from all dross, so here is not the least mixture of error, folly, or falsehood, not the least corruption or flaw to be found in it, as in all other books of human composure. All other writings come as short of the scripture as a coal doth of the sun. The whole art and design of this holy book is to advance the spiritual and heavenly life, and not to fashion our outward carriage a little for converse with men, but to bring us into fellowship and communion with God, and to direct us to do all things from holy principles, in a holy manner, to holy ends. There is no dead fly in this box of ointment, no blemish of weakness and imperfection; it hath the manifest impress of the author left upon it, and is the copy of that exact holiness which is in God himself.

2. The word is very pure, as it maketh us pure if we diligently attend unto it: Ps. cxix. 9, 'By what means may a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereunto according to thy word.' It is not said, By what means may a young man guide his way; as if he were yet to choose, or were as white paper, indifferent to any impression. But by what means shall a young man cleanse his way? Man's heart naturally is a sink of sin, and he delighteth to wallow in this puddle, as swine do in the mire; he hath gotten a tang and smatch of the old Adam. Now, is there no way to make his heart and his way clean? Yes, if he will take God's counsel, and direct his life according to the word. A young man that is in the heat and strength of his lusts, he may be cured and cleansed. Christ prayeth, John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.' The work is God's, but he doth it by the truth or his will revealed in the word. He hath reserved the power of his Spirit for this dispensation and way of institution of mankind. A moral lecture may make a man change his life, but it is the word of God that changeth his heart: his Spirit goeth along with his word. So John xv. 3, 'Now you are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you.' The word is the instrument of purifying sinners, and to get rid of their sins. But how doth the word make us pure? As it is an appointed instrument of the Spirit, and as it is an accommodate instrument to such an end and purpose.

[1.] It is an appointed instrument by which the Spirit will work: 1 Peter i. 22, 'Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit.' It is the Spirit of Christ that powerfully worketh it, but yet in and by the truth: he worketh by his own means, he will not join his assistance with other things. The sum of what I would say is this, it was meet that God should give a rule to his creatures,

or else how should they know his will? and then it was meet he should honour his rule by owning it above all other doctrines, by the concomitant operation of his Spirit, that this might be a constant authentic proof of its divine authority. The efficacy of the word is a pledge of the truth of it.

[2.] It is a commodious instrument for this end and purpose, for there is a wisdom in all God's institutions. He that looketh upon an axe will say, This is an instrument made to cut; so he that looketh upon the scriptures must needs say, This is a means to purify. The word is more morally accommodated to work upon the heart of man than any other instrument, means, or doctrine in the world. Now the word doth so commodiously serve for this purpose because there are—(1.) Such pure precepts; (2.) Such pure examples; (3.) Such great helps to purity; (4.) Great encouragements to purity; (5.) Such great terrors to dissuade men from sin.

(1.) There are pure precepts, setting forth the nature of that purity that is pleasing to God; and so, on the one hand, they serve to humble us for our natural filthiness; for *verum est index sui et obliqui*—truth showeth itself, and discovereth error also, James i. 34. It is such a pure doctrine that it showeth a man his natural face, and discovers soul-spots. And, on the other side, by these precepts and doctrines we are urged and enjoined to seek after true purity and holiness of the right constitution: 1 Tim. i. 5, 'The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.' The word telleth us God will be served, and that he will be served with a pure heart. The right end and scope of the whole law, as it is a gospel rule, is love to God and man, flowing from a sincere and renewed heart, and a good conscience rightly informed of God's will, and faith unfeigned, apprehending the grace of God towards us in Christ our Redeemer. So that you see there is required of us not only good actions, but good principles and ends.

The apostle telleth us *ἔργον νόμου*, the work of the law, was written upon man's heart, Rom. ii. 14. Natural conscience will take notice of some gross acts, urge to some external conformity and show of duty; but the word of God taketh notice not only of acts, but the frame of the heart; not only of sins, but also of lusts. If ever there were an instrument fitted to do a thing, the word is fitted to make men pure and holy. Briefly, then, the word requireth purity of heart and life. That we should be pure in heart: Mat. v. 8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;' and pure in life: 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way,' Ps. cxix. 1. You have both in one place: James iv. 8, 'Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded;' both must be cleansed, both heart and hands. But we must first begin with the heart. The heart is that polluted fountain from whence floweth all the pollution of life: Mat. xv. 19, 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, blasphemies,' &c. It is in vain to cleanse the outside, unless the heart be cleansed; and therefore the scripture presseth us to wash our hearts from wickedness, Jer. iv. 14. There is the difficulty. It is more easy to heal an outward wound than to stanch an inward bleeding; and the cause is within. The purity of the outside is loathsome to God unless the

heart be cleansed ; it is more easy to prevent disorders in our conversations than to cleanse our hearts ; and therefore the scripture mainly calleth upon you to purge sin out of the heart, Mat. xxiii. 26, 27. Therefore the great design of the word of God, with which it travaileth, is to get the heart clean ; as Elisha when he would cure the brackishness of the waters, cast salt into the fountain, so doth the word of God seek to cleanse the hearts of men, and all its wooings and pleadings and entreaties tend to this.

(2.) There are pure examples and patterns. We miscarry by low examples, and grow loose and careless seeing others to be so ; therefore the word is still to keep us humble under our defects, unsatisfied with our present measure, always contending, and striving towards the mark : it propoundeth all manner of examples to us. It propoundeth the example of God : 1 Peter i. 15, ‘ Be ye holy, as he that hath called you is holy, in all manner of conversation.’ God is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works ; and so should we be. And the scripture presseth us to be holy as Christ is holy : 1 John iii. 3, ‘ He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, as Christ is pure.’ It is impossible there should be an exact equality, yet some answerable conformity there should be. God is essentially, immutably, infinitely holy : he loveth himself so much as he can be loved. His essence and his being is the same with his holiness. Our holiness is a super-added quality. God’s holiness is like a vessel of pure gold, where the substance is the same with the lustre ; but our holiness is like a vessel of earth gilded with gold ; the substance is one thing, the varnish another. But yet this God and Christ must ever be before our eyes ; we must be holy as he is holy ; we must always be increasing in holiness. We must come into an abiding state of holiness. There must be some kind of conformity between God and us, and Christ and us ; and head and members must be all of a piece. He will shoot farther that aimeth at a star, than he that aimeth at a shrub ; so he will be more holy that doth as God doth, than he that doth as sinful creatures do, like himself. Nay, the scripture propoundeth the example of the saints, Heb. vi. 12. We need all kinds of examples. As we need high and glorious examples, that we may not rest in any low degrees and beginnings of purity, so lower examples, that we may not be discouraged, and think it impossible. And therefore the saints of God are propounded to us, men and women of like affections with us, the same natural interests, and we the same grace with them ; the way to heaven is a trodden path all along ; you may see the footsteps of the saints before you.

(3.) The scripture offereth great helps to purity. Christ died to purchase it for us : Eph. v. 27, ‘ He gave himself for us, that he might sanctify and cleanse us by the washing of water through the word.’ And God hath promised to give this clean heart to them that seek after it, and undertaketh to give what he requireth : Ezek. xxxvi. 25–27, ‘ I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean ; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you : a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh : and I will put my spirit within you, and cause

you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' God hath promised this to somebody, and why not to you? You are as fair for this promise as any; and if God hath not excluded you, why will you shut yourselves out from the grace offered?

(4.) There are in the scripture excellent encouragements and motives from the reward promised to the pure. Lactantius saith of the heathen, *Virtutis vim non sentiunt quia ejus premium ignorant*—that they were ignorant of the force of virtue, because they were not acquainted with the reward of it. There is a great force in scripture arguments in this kind. See how the scripture speaks of these promises; they are so great, so pure, and so expressly binding in their condition and qualification annexed. They are so great, 2 Cor. vii. 1, that 'having such great and precious promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.' And then so pure: 1 John iii. 3, 'He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as Christ is pure.' It is not barely said, He hath hope in him, but, He that hath this hope. It is not a Turkish paradise, but a sinless estate; not an estate wherein we shall be engulfed in all sensualities, but satisfied with the vision of God, and made like him. Heaven is not only to be looked upon as a place of happiness, but a state of likeness to God. Once more, so many and so expressly binding to purity, in their condition and qualification annexed. See what the word of God speaks to purity, if we would enjoy the favour of God, and have him good to us: Ps. lxxiii. 1, 'Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.' Who are they that God will be good to? To Israel. All are not Israel that are of Israel; but those whose consciences are cleansed by the blood of Christ, and study to be clean and holy in heart and life, those are God's Israel. However things fall out here, how blustering and boisterous soever the times are, yet God will be good to them that are his Israel. If we would have his favour actually exhibited, if we would have God to shine upon us, we must look after purity: Ps. xviii. 26, 'With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.' God will be to man as man is to God. No degree of purity shall go unrewarded; the holy use of the creatures is their privilege: Titus i. 15, 'To the pure all things are pure.' To the wicked all things are defiled, and they have a curse with their blessings; but to the pure these blessings are lawfully enjoyed, and are sanctified to them, and they receive every temporal mercy as a blessing of the covenant. Would we be accepted in our service? Prov. xv. 26, 'The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, but the words of the pure are pleasant words.' The thoughts and words of wicked men are an abomination to the Lord, but the thoughts and words of the saints are his delight. God hath respect to the person and then to his services; so that we must be pure in heart if we would have our services accepted of the Lord. Once more, the pure are those that shall be employed with honour for God: 2 Tim. ii. 21, 'If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel of honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.' Again, the purified and cleansed are meet to receive and retain the word: 1 Tim. iii. 9, 'Hold fast the mysteries of faith in a pure conscience.' None

receive the word with such profit, and retain it with such warmth, as the pure in heart. Precious liquor is not put into musty, filthy vessels; if it be, it is corrupted and spoiled presently. Let a man be addicted to any worldly lust, and he will soon lose all the sense of good he hath received. Once more, none pray aright but the pure: Zeph. iii. 9, 'For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord;' and 1 Tim. ii. 8, 'Lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;' and Heb. x. 22, 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.' Then we draw near to God with comfort, being sure of audience. Once more, if we would be happy for ever more, who are they that shall see God? Mat. v. 8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' You shall see the question propounded in Ps. xxiv. 3, 4, 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? who shall stand in his holy place?' And the question is answered in the third verse, 'He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.' It standeth upon us to examine how it is with us, since all the visible church are not saved; the pure and holy are they that shall see and enjoy God. Filthy dogs and impure and unclean swine are not suffered to enter into the new Jerusalem.

(5.) Here are terrible threatenings; the word is impatient of being denied; it would have holiness and purity upon any terms; there is something propounded to our fear as well as to our hope. Sometimes the word of God threatens with the loss of happiness: Heb. xii. 14, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' If there were no more but this, this were enough to terrify us (to be shut out from the presence of the Lord!) if it were rightly considered. But oh! how miserable will the poor creature be that the word threatens with the loss of the vision of God, supposing the soul subsists! This is enough to overwhelm us, that we shall never enter into the place where God is: Rev. xxi. 17, 'There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth or worketh abomination.' But we hear of a worm that shall never die, a pit without a bottom, a fire that shall never be quenched, and torments that are without end and without ease. God shall say, I would have purged you, but you would not be purged. Whose heart doth not tremble at the mention of these things? Oh! then you see the word is very pure.

The second consideration, that this pure word must be valued and esteemed and loved by us. Here I shall show you what it is to love the word, and then why.

1. What it is to love the word.

[1.] Negatively.

(1.) It is not an outward receiving, or a loose owning of the scripture as the word of God. Many carnal men may so receive it, or rather not contradict it: they receive the word of God, not upon any divine testimony and evidence of the Spirit of God, but upon the authority and credit of men, the practice and profession of the nation where they live, and the injunctions of the civil state, or the tradition of the church. This is the just account of most men's faith and love to the word, and therefore they never feel the power of it. It cometh with power when it is the evidence of the Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 4; human credulity breedeth no true love to the word of God.

(2.) This love is not a bare approbation of purity and holiness ; many approve that which they never choose and follow. None in the face of the church can be such a wretch as not to think that it is a good thing to be holy, that strictness is commendable. Mark vi. 26, Herod revered John. There is an excellency in holiness, and it winneth esteem, even there where it is not embraced. Purity is a stricture of God's majesty, and so it is feared. Where it is not loved, it breedeth an awful respect in wicked men. Natural conscience so far doth homage to the image of God, and doth incline men to think well of holiness, and to show some respect to it.

(3.) It is not a pang or passionate delight ; as some, when the word falls upon them, they may be stirred a little ; it is not a love that is controllable, or easily overcome by other loves : John v. 45, 'How can ye believe, that seek honour one of another?' As Herod rejoiced in John's light for a season, and, Mark vi. 20, he loved John's preaching, but he loved his Herodias better ; and therefore off goes John's head. The love that he had, it was controllable by a higher love. Unless we be so addicted to the word that it prevaieth over all contrary inclinations, we do not love the word. Whether it be sensuality, or pride, or covetousness, it will be casting off the dominion of the word : John viii. 37, 'My word hath no place in you ;' it doth not sink down into their hearts that it may bring forth fruit in their lives.

[2.] Positively, what is it then ?

(1.) It is such a love as causeth us to wait at wisdom's gates, to consult with the word upon all occasions, to read it, hear it, meditate on it as the great instrument of sanctification. You will take it for your counsel, Ps. cxix. 4. That we love we will be thinking on often, and exercising our minds in it : Ps. i. 2, 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' Oh, how few love the word thus ! Few read and delight in the scriptures because of the purity and holiness that is in them. They read them for dispute's sake, or to know the mystery, or to be able to hold up an argument ; but as they serve to make us pure and heavenly, who loves them so ? as they forewarn us of sin, and quicken to grace and love to God ? Ps. xix. 10, 11, 'Thy word is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb,' because by 'them thy servant is forewarned.' Then we love the word when we love it for this reason.

(2.) We love the word when we are chary of transgressing it, or doing anything contrary to the tenor of it. We are bidden to keep the commandment as the apple of the eye, Prov. vii. 2. The eye is a tender thing, offended with the least dust. Oh, take heed of offending the word of God ! Fear of offending is a sure note and effect of love. So he that loves God, he fears the commandment : Prov. xiii. 13, 'Whoso despiseth the word, shall be destroyed ; but whoso feareth the commandment, shall be rewarded.' A wicked man maketh no bones of a commandment, regardeth not what the word saith, but doth according to the bent of his own will. Those that will turn their back upon a commandment for the least temptation, they have no true love to the word of God. But now a godly man is one that feareth a commandment ; he is afraid to do anything against the express will of God. If a commandment stands in his way, it is as much as if an angel with

a drawn sword stood in his way, as the angel stood with a drawn sword in Balaam's way: they had rather have all the world against them, than the word against them, Isa. lxvi. 25. This awful regard of the word of God it is a good evidence of our love to it.

(3.) Then we are said to love the word when we cheerfully and readily delight to do what it requireth in order to the glory of God and our own salvation: that is love; for true love is not only notional, but practical: 1 John ii. 4, 'He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' Our love to God is known by our obedience to him; so our love to the word is known by our obedience to it. And therefore we love the word in good earnest when we observe it readily and diligently, whatever it costs us: Rom. vi. 17, 'Ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine that was delivered to you.' Look, as there is a cold love to a man's brother, when we say, Be clothed, be warmed; so there is a pretended love to the word that endeth in talk, and not in action; which is as if a man should hope to pay his debts by the noise of money, and instead of opening his purse to shut it; as ridiculous it is to think to put off our duty with good words.

(4.) It is a rooted affection. A carnal man may have his affections moved, and be a little stirred with this pure doctrine, but he is soon put out of humour; he is not changed by it, he hath not a constant affection to God and holy things: Gal. iv. 18, 'It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing;' to hold out to the end, and still to keep up a warm respect to the word of God. This is to love it, to have the word ingrafted into the stock of corrupt nature, James i. 21. It is not something tied on, but ingrafted into the soul; it hath place in the heart.

2. Let me show you why.

[1.] The necessity of this love to the word appears because without this love we cannot be accepted of God; unwilling and constrained service is of little acceptance with him: 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3, 'If I should give my goods to the poor, and my body to be burnt, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' If a man hath never so many excellencies, if he spend his goods and life and all for God, without this sincere love to God and his ways, all is nothing. God doth not value men by the pomp of their services, but by the affection of their hearts in them; he needeth not the service, and he seeth the heart. A man is pleased so his work be done willingly or unwillingly, for he needeth the labour of the slave; but he seeth not into his heart; but God hath no need of us, and he seeth whether we give him the heart or no. So that if we have not charity, all that we do is nothing.

[2.] Without this love your work will be very difficult, grievous, and irksome to you. It is love maketh all things pleasant and easy, and to go on roundly: 1 John v. 3, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.' A love to the commands of God will make us do them with cheerfulness. When a man loves God, it will be no grievous thing to serve him. It is said, Neh. iv. 6, 'That the building went on because the people had a mind to the work.' The building of the temple was a difficult task, to remove the rubbish, and carry on such a vast piece

of work; but they had a mind to the work, and then it went on. Love to anything makes it go on sweetly and cheerfully, as we use to say; so in God's service, if we love the work, we cannot count it difficult.

[3.] You will never be constant with God without this love. An unwilling servant is ever running from his work, and he that hath not a heart fixed and set will find discouragement enough in heaven's way. They fell off that received not the truth in the love of it, 2 Thes. ii. 10. Fear hath compulsion in it, but it will not hold when the fear is worn off; but love is a lasting affection, when your hearts love holiness, and you love the work for the work's sake.

Third consideration. It is not enough to love the word, but we must look after the grounds and reasons of this love.

1. Because a true love to the word is not blind, but rational, and may be justified: Mat. xi. 19, 'Wisdom is justified of her children.' All that love God and his truth are able to plead for it. If you are not able to show your grounds and reasons for your love to the word, your love is but customary: Phil. i. 9, 'I pray that your love may abound in all knowledge and judgment.' Such a love and zeal is commendable as hath a proportionable measure of knowledge going along with it. When the spouse had spoken so much of her beloved, the question is propounded, Cant. v. 9, 'What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost thus charge us?' Christians should be able to say what is their Christ, and what is the religion they do profess; that there is more in their religion than in all religions in the world.

2. Because many love it upon wrong reasons. There may be a natural and carnal love to spiritual things. Look, as a religious man in outward things rejoiceth spiritually, so a carnal man in spiritual things rejoiceth carnally. So Herod rejoiced in John's preaching with a human passion, Mark vi. 20, as he was a plausible preacher, and a rare and pregnant interpreter of the law. This was but a carnal affection; that is, thus: They may be pleased with notions, and elevated strains of wisdom. I remember a moralist gives this similitude: A gallant going into a garden prizeth flowers altogether for the beauty of them; but a physician he looks after their use and virtue in medicine, but they both go to look after flowers. So a godly man delights in the word of God; it is that he may be brought under the power of it, and made more holy and heavenly-minded; but others go to hear an argument rationally traversed, or to hear cadences of speech and pleasant language. It is not enough to take a liking to things, but we must know why. Nay, let me tell you that mere foreign and external reasons may sway us to delight in the word; when religion is in request, and groweth in fashion, and becometh matter of reputation, it is no great matter to be an honourer and admirer of it. Simon Magus will be a disciple and turn Christian too, when the whole city of Samaria listened to the apostles, and embraced their doctrine, Acts viii.; when there was so great an outward affluence.

3. The more we view the grounds and reasons, the more our love is increased. It is clear the will and affections are moved by the understanding, and that ignorance is the cause of the contempt of the Lord's grace: 'If thou knewest the gift,' John iv. 10. We love, and

fear, and hate, and joy, according to the apprehensions that we have of things; and therefore the more knowledge we have, the more love: Phil. i. 9, 'I pray that your love may abound in all knowledge.' If thou dost not increase in knowledge, thou wilt never increase in affection: 2 Peter i. 2, 'Grace and peace be multiplied unto you by the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ our Lord.' Now, the more these grounds and reasons are drawn forth in the view of conscience, the more our love is stirred; as the more we beat the steel upon the flint, the more the sparks fly out.

Fourth consideration. Of all the grounds and reasons of our love to the word of God, the most noble and excellent is to love the word for its purity.

1. Because, this sheweth indeed that we are made 'partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter i. 4. For I pray you mark, when we hate evil as evil, and love good as good, we have the same love and hatred that God hath. It sheweth that the soul is changed into the likeness of God when we love a thing for its purity. God hath no interest to be advanced by the creature; he loves them more or less as they are nearer or further off from his glorious being. When once we come to love things because they are pure, it is a sign that we have the same love that God hath.

2. This argueth a suitableness of heart to what God requireth, for things affect us as they suit with us: 'They that are after the flesh savour the things of the flesh,' Rom. viii. 5. The pure will only delight in pure things, but swine delight in puddles; they that have the spirit of the world, they must have worldly pleasure and honour, but the pure will delight in the word of God: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of God,' and because they are not suitable to him. First we love things as suitable to our necessity, and then we love them upon interest, and afterwards as suitable to our disposition. Now it argueth a good frame of heart, and a deep sense of God's interest, when we love the word because it is so pure. A man first loves the word customarily, because he is born there where that religion is in fashion; and then when he beginneth to have a conscience, he loveth it for pardon and peace, as it offers a Saviour: his own happiness, self-love, puts him upon seeking after God; then afterwards his heart is suited to God's will, and there is something of kin in his heart to the will of God revealed without, and he loveth it for its suitableness of nature unto the will of God.

3. To be sure this love is no way questionable, but is an undoubted evidence of right and sound love to the word of God. Many pretend to have a high estimation and respect to the doctrine of God when they cannot digest the directions of it, because it is contrary to their desires and carnal affections; they reserve something in their hearts that makes their love questionable. They that have not a real love to the word of God are but lightly tinctured with religion, not deeply dyed. The stony ground received the word with joy. Men may have strong affections and strange stirrings in their souls, and yet not be right with God. But here is an undoubted evidence, to love the word for its purity. A man's love may be questionable, because he may love the word upon foreign motives, either because of novelty, or fineness of

expression, or public countenance and credit, or external advantage, John vi. 26. *Vix diligitur Jesus propter Jesum.* Or they may love it for internal reasons, as it is a good word, as they that tasted of the power of the world to come; they may look upon it for pleasure and profit, but not as good and holy. Many look upon the gospel as good and profitable, as offering peace, and pardon, and comfort, and eternal life. Nature, that hath naturally a sense of religion, hath also a hunger after immortality and blessedness; and therefore the promises of the gospel may be greedily caught after, as offering everlasting life and blessedness. But now a love to that which is pure and holy leaveth a more durable impression upon the soul. And further, many have a liking to the purity of the word, and a general approbation of it, as it is a fit rule for creatures to live by; yet unless there be a strong prevailing affection, all comes to nothing; and therefore nothing but this love to the word because of its purity is unquestionable.

4. Unless we love the word as pure, we shall fail in many other parts of religion; we shall not love God as we ought, for God is lovely, not only as the fountain of blessedness, but as he is the most pure and perfect being. He was *diligibilis nature* before any emanation of goodness passed from him. We are to love him in desertions, when we feel no good from him, and he seemeth to write bitter things against us, Isa. xxvi. 8. So that we cannot discharge this duty to love God as he is a pure and perfect being if we do not love the word because it is pure. And we shall not love the saints as we ought without this, Ps. xvi. 3. We are to love them for the image of God in them. 'If you love them that love you, what thanks have you?' Mat. v. 46. We are to love the saints as saints, and for that reason. Once more, we are to hate sin, as filthy, as it is a gross absurdity, and deordination of the human nature: Ps. xcvi. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.' Now, till we have this frame of heart, to love the law as it is pure, we can do none of these things; for there is the same reason for the one as for the other; and therefore it is not a nicety, but a necessary frame of heart.

Use 1. To inform us that they can never love God and his ways that hate purity, till their hearts be changed. There are a sort of men in the world whose hearts rise against purity; for if they see any make conscience of sin, they brand them with the name of Puritans; so those that seek to keep themselves from sin, and the more holy they are, they are an eyesore to them. Now, can they say, I love thy law because it is pure, and cannot endure to see it copied out in others? Oh, what a vile disposition is this in you, to be despisers of that which is good! 2 Tim. iii. 3. None live up to the purity of their profession but you scorn them; and let me tell you, you scorn that which is most glorious in God himself. Would a father take it well that a slave should mock his child because it is like him? So will God take it well that you should scorn those that are good, because they are like their heavenly Father? These are of the seed of the serpent, who are full of enmity; they have the old antipathy, Gen. iii. 15; Prov. xxix. 27. It is a vile scorn of the God of heaven to hate a man for his holiness. And they can never love the law, whatever they pretend, that do not love the law for its purity. A carnal dis-

tempered appetite hath no taste for the word of God, as it is a direction to holiness, 2 Cor. ii. 14.

Use 2. To inform us in what rank to place principles. There are several sorts of principles; there are some that are false and rotten, and some more tolerable, and some good and sound, and some rare and excellent.

1. There are some false and rotten principles, as carnal example and custom. Men will do as they have done, or as others do; they will own the religion that their fathers have done, be it what it will. By the same reason you may serve Mahomet as well as Christ. A man that standeth upon the vantage-ground is not taller than another; such are of no better constitution than the Turks, only they stand upon the vantage-ground. Another rotten principle is vainglory, to be seen of men, Mat. vi.; they pray and give alms to be seen of men. 'Come see my zeal for the Lord of hosts,' saith Jehu. Vainglory many times filleth the sails, and carries us on in the service of God. So secular and worldly interests and ends; as the Pharisees made long prayers that they might devour widows' houses, Mat. xxiii.; that is, they made long prayers and show of devotion, to be trusted with the management of widows' estates, to make a prey of them. All that I shall say to this principle is this, that it is better for the world that men would serve God anyhow, that Christ should be served out of vainglory, than not served at all; as the apostle saith some preach Christ out of envy, and others out of good-will, but I am glad so Christ be preached, Phil. i. 18; though they themselves be rotten-hearted hypocrites, yet the world fares the better for it.

2. There are some more tolerable principles, the hope of temporal mercies. When we come and pray, and do not seek the favour of God, but seek temporal mercies: Hosea vii. 14, 'They howled upon their beds for corn and wine.' Or the fear of temporal judgments, Isa. lviii. 5; Jer. ii. 16; when all that they do is to remove some temporal judgment: 'In their afflictions they will seek me right early.' And I think I may add one thing more here, the fear of eternal death, when it is alone (otherwise it is a grace); they shall be damned else; and so it is a sleepy sop to appease an accusing conscience, and so it is but a sin-offering. Though it requireth some faith to fear what is to come, yet fear of punishment alone sheweth you are slaves, and only love yourselves: the devils fear and tremble, but do not love. You may fear a thing though you hate it. So far as the heart is affected with the fear of hell, it is good.

3. There are very good and sound principles, yet do not always argue grace, as when duties are done out of the urgings of an enlightened conscience; this may be without the bent of a renewed heart, but yet the principle is sound; for the first thing that influenceth a man is to consider himself a creature, and so to look upon himself as bound to obey his creator. I shall illustrate it by the apostle's words in another case: I must preach the gospel, and 'woe unto me if I preach not the gospel,' 1 Cor. ix. 16, 17, 'Whether I do it willingly or unwillingly, yet a dispensation is committed to me.' So saith the soul, Whether I be fitted to do God service or no, God must be obeyed. But because God's precept is invested with a sanction of

threatenings and rewards, here comes in the fear of hell and the hope of heaven. The Lord hath commanded me to fly from hell; this is a good principle: so the hope of heaven, Heb. xi. 26; it is a sound principle: a man may be gracious, or he may not. Many have a liking to heaven and eternal life, as it is a state of happiness, not of likeness to God. Where it is not alone, it is a very sound principle, but as it is, it may sometimes be the sign of a renewed man, and sometimes not.

4. There are rare and excellent principles, when we act out of thankfulness to God, when we consider the Lord's goodness, that might have required duty out of mere sovereignty; he hath laid the foundation of it in the blood of his own Son, 1 John iv. 29; when we love him out of the sense of his love to us in Christ, and when the grace of God that hath appeared teacheth us to deny ungodliness, Titus ii. 11; when the mercies of God melt us, Rom. xii. 1; when there are no entreaties so powerful as that of love. Again, another principle that is rare and excellent is when the glory of God doth season us in our whole course, that it may be to the praise of his glorious grace, 1 Cor. x. 31. Another is complacency in the work for the work's sake, when we love the law because it is pure, when I see it will ennoble me and make me like God, when I love God and his ways, when nothing but so noble employment doth engage me to his service; and service to God is the sweetest life in the world.

SERMON CLVIII.

I am small and despised; yet do I not forget thy precepts.—VER. 141.

HERE David proveth the truth of his former assertion, that seeing the word of God was so pure, he loved it for its own sake, and that he did not court religion for the portion that he should have with it, but for itself. Some are mere mercenaries; no longer than they are bribed by some worldly profit, have they any respect for God and his ways. The man of God was of another temper. If God would bestow anything on him, well; if not, he would love his word still; yea, when it brought him apparent loss, meanness, and contempt, yet this could not make any divorce between his heart and the word: 'I am small and despised,' &c.

In the words we have—(1.) David's condition; (2.) David's carriage under that condition. His condition might have been a snare to him, yet still he keepeth up his affection.

1. His condition is set forth by two notions, the one of which implieth the other. God's providence, 'I am small.' God had reduced him to straits. The other, man's treatment of him, 'and despised.' The one sheweth what he was really in himself, the other what he was in the opinion of others: mean in himself, and contemptible in the eye of others. The Septuagint has, νεώτερος ἐγὼ εἰμι καὶ ἐξουδενωμένος—I am the younger, and set at nought; therefore the Greek interpreters suppose it relateth to the story where God bids Samuel to anoint one

of the sons of Jesse to be king, and the elder children were brought forth, who were taller, and more likely too; and they said of them, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him; and when Samuel inquired for another, they told him, 1 Sam. xvi. 7, 'That there remaineth the youngest, and he keepeth sheep;' then, when he was but a youth, and a despised stripling, his heart was with God, and God favoured him. Or else they refer it to the time when Eliab his eldest brother despised him, 1 Sam. xvii. 28. Others think this was verified when the elders of Israel forsook him, and clave to Absalom. Rather I think it general to any afflicted condition, when he was little in estate and reputation, rather than in years; elsewhere so is this word 'small' taken: Amos vii. 2-5, 'Jacob is small; by whom shall he arise?' when his condition was helpless and hopeless, and interest inconsiderable in the world. So here: 'I am small and despised;' I am looked upon as a man of no value and interest.

2. David's carriage under this condition, 'Yet do I not forget thy precepts.' First, here is a *μείωσις*; less is said, more is intended: I do earnestly remember them. Again, a man may be said to remember or forget two ways—notionally or affectively. Notionally, a man forgets when the notions of things formerly known are quite vanished out of his mind; affectively, when, though he retaineth the notions, yet he is not answerably affected, he doth not act suitably. So it is taken here, and implieth as much as I am steadfast in the profession of this truth: as they say in a like case, Ps. xlv. 17, 'We have not forgotten thee, nor dealt falsely in thy covenant;' not parted with any point of truth, or neglected and dispensed with any part of duty. 'Precepts' is put for the whole word of God: 'I do not forget thy word,' the comforts and duties of it. None do so far forget God and his precepts as those that make defection from him. The sum of all is, My mean and despicable condition doth not make a breach upon my constancy, but still I keep the credit of being a faithful servant to thee. His temptation was double. His faithfulness had made him small (God seemeth to forget us in our low estate, yet we should not forget him), and had made him despised. Though we lose esteem with men by sticking to the word of God, yet the word of God should lose no esteem with us.

Doct. They that love God may be reduced to a mean, low, and afflicted condition. 'I am small,' saith David. The Lord seeth it meet for divers reasons.

1. That they may know their happiness is not in this world, and so the more long for heaven and delight in heavenly things: Ps. xvii. 14, 15, 'From men of the world, which have their portion in this life: as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.' Christ gave his Spirit to the rest of the disciples, and the purse to Judas; he had the keeping of the bag, that was the worst. God's dearest children usually have the least in this world, that they may look higher; as Levi had no portion among his brethren, because God would be his portion. Others have more plentiful accommodations for back and belly; they are better clad, their tables more plentifully furnished and supplied, larger portions for their children. They that look to save anything or get anything

by religion but the saving of their souls are foully mistaken; if we have more than others, religion calleth for more disbursements. Charity and liberal distributions exposeth to troubles; religion moderateth our desires, and forbids all unjust ways of acquiring wealth, calleth upon us to forsake all for a good conscience. Therefore they that follow Christ out of a design to be rich in this world, lose their aim. Not but that hypocrites sometimes make a market of religion, but then God is angry, and they, and the church too, pay for it at last: not but that religion bringeth in temporal supplies: Mat. vi. 33, 'First seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,' *ταῦτα πάντα προστεθήσεται*; food and raiment it bringeth in. God may give some a more plentiful allowance; especially if they be faithful stewards, then they are intrusted with more; but generally they are mean and small, or if they have more of this world's goods, they have their afflictions in other kinds.

2. It is necessary to cut off the provisions of the flesh and the fuel of their lusts. A rank soil breedeth weeds, and when we sail with a full stream we are apt to be carried away with it. We either glut ourselves with the pleasures of the flesh, or grow proud, and hanker and linger after the pomp and vanities of the world, and neglect God. And therefore God is fain to diet us, and to keep us bare and low; as he is said to cut Israel short, 2 Kings x. 32, when he straitened their coasts and borders. So for our cure we need not only internal grace to abate the lust, but external providence to catch away the prey and bait by which it is fed. The wise man saith not only, Give me grace, but 'Give me neither poverty nor riches,' Prov. xxx. 8, 9; and Gal. vi. 14, 'By whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.' Both parts are necessary. Riches are a great temptation; we would root here, and grow sensual, worldly, and proud, if God did not snatch our comforts from us, when we are apt to surfeit of them. A plentiful portion of temporal things is spiritually dangerous.

3. That they may be more sensible of his displeasure against their sins and scandalous carriage, by which they have dishonoured him and provoked the pure eyes of his glory. Never have scandals fallen out but some great woe followed: Mat. xviii. 7, 'Woe to the world, because of offences.' Therefore God hath brought his people low that he may vindicate his name, which through their means is blasphemed, Rom. ii. 24, and make his people sensible of their sin. The world shall know that he doth allow sin no more in them than in others; and therefore, though they were as the signet upon his finger, he will pluck them off, and make them feel the smart of their wanderings: Amos iii. 2, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.' They that have been so near and dear to him, the world might think he did approve their sins if he did not manifest his displeasure at them. Usually their sins go nearest his heart, and meet with the sorest vengeance: Deut. xxxii. 19, 'When the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provokings of his sons and of his daughters.' Their relation to God, their privileges, and the consequences of their actions, aggravate their sins; and therefore God is most quick and severe in punishing

their sins. We complain we were brought low, but were not our provocations first very high? The most religious cannot wipe their mouths, and excuse themselves as faultless. Oh! what a sad part hath been lately acted upon the public stage! What a trade have many driven for themselves under a mask of religion! What breaches in the body of Christ, uncharitable divisions, making a profession of the name of Christ for carnal ends!

4. That we may learn to live upon the promises, and learn to exercise suffering graces; especially dependence upon God, who can support us without a temporal visible interest. Compare Rev. xii. 11, 'And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives to the death;' Rev. xiii. 7, 'And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations.' You shall see how the enemies overcome, and the saints overcome; the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The beast raiseth the world against the saints, and prevaileth over their bodies; he overcomes them by spoiling them of liberty, lives, and temporal estate; but they overcome by adhering to truth, and resisting his temptations and their own corruptions even in the lowest estate by suffering. So for other graces,—patience, meekness, self-denial, spiritual comforts. As the stars in their order fought against Sisera, so all graces are exercised in their turn: Rev. xiii. 10, 'Here is the faith and patience of the saints;' that is, a time to act these graces. A full third of the scriptures would be lost which containeth comfort for afflicted ones, if God did not exercise them with temporal afflictions.

5. That God may convince the enemies that there is a people that do sincerely serve him, and not for carnal selfish ends, Job i. The carnal world suspects private, selfish, worldly aims and designs in all that we do, and attributes all our duties to interest; being themselves led by interest, they cannot think others are led by conscience. Men are apt to suspect and malign what they will not imitate. There is sometimes too much advantage given; many are mercenaries, only esteem the ways of God when beneficial to them: John vi. 26, 'Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.' Therefore it is needful to heighten the price of religion when it is too cheap a thing to be a Christian. This God doth by bringing his people low, that the world may see some will cleave to him in all conditions; not only when his ways are befriended, but when frowned upon. God will glorify himself and his truth by their constancy.

6. That his glory may be more seen in their deliverance; and therefore before God doth appear for his children, he bringeth them very low. Thus Paul, 2 Cor. i. 9, 'We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raised the dead;' and Ps. cxxxvi. 23, 'He remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever.' His mercy and power is the more glorious in our rescue.

All that I shall say by way of use on this point is this—

1. That when we are a small people, and persons of no interest, we

have a liberty to use it to God; you may make use of your weak and low condition as an argument of pity. So doth the prophet Amos, 'Jacob is small;' so doth David here and elsewhere: Ps. cix. 22, 'But I am poor and needy; deliver me for thy name's sake;' and Ps. lxxix. 29, 'But I am poor and sorrowful; let thy salvation, O God, set me on high.' It is some ease to acquaint a friend with our griefs that can only pity us, much more when we have liberty to go to God, who can and will help us, and will allow us to complain to him, though not of him.

2. When God's ends are accomplished there is hope: Isa. x. 12, 'When the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion;' when he hath chastised his people, and brought them to his purpose, then he will reckon with his enemies; when heaven is minded more, and earth less. We naturally mind earthly things, and please ourselves with the dreaming of a happy estate in the world; the appetite of temporal dominion, and wealth, and honour, and peace is natural to us, and very hardly subdued; and therefore we would fain flourish here, and do not comfort ourselves in our crosses with the meditation of the glory of the world to come, but are always feeding ourselves with desires and hopes of earthly happiness, and of turning the tide and current of affairs, that things may again smile upon us; and when frustrated and disappointed of this hope, our soul fainteth. Your worldly happiness will be a snare to you while you are thus affected, Mat. vi. 33. Prepare for heaven, and God will give you so much happiness by the way as will be needful and fit for you. Again, when we are mortified, and the cross hath purged out sin, Isa. xxvii. 9, the cross hath done its work. So when we are humble: Lev. xxvi. 41, 'If then their uncircumcised hearts be humble, and they accept of the punishment of their iniquity.' To be meek in spirit and to trust in the Lord is a forerunner of mercy: Zeph. iii. 12, 'I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.' When you bring honour to God by your sufferings: James i. 4, 'But let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.' When it is most for God's glory to do it: Deut. xxxii. 36, 'For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.'

Doct. God's people, when they are brought low, are usually a very despised people, the most despised people under heaven.

Here I shall show—

1. That this is the usual lot of an afflicted people.
2. But especially of the people of God.
3. The trial is very grievous to them.

1. An afflicted people are usually a despised people: Ps. cxliii. 4, 'Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.' They that are proud, and have all things flow in upon them according to their own will, condemn and slight others, and take no notice of their burdens, unless it be to increase them; they pour vinegar on the wound. The heathens had a reverence for places stricken with thunder, because the hand of God had touched them; but here it is not so: Job xii. 5, 'He that is

ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thoughts of him that is at ease.' While we are burning lamps, shining in riches and greatness, we shall have enough to look after us ; but a poor, broken, dying lamp, a snuff, that is ready to go out, everybody holdeth their nose at it. Whilst the enemies are honourable, great, tumble in wealth and the excess of carnal delights, they despise those that are mean and low, and fallen under God's hand.

2. The people of God, much more common sufferers, may meet with some pity in their calamity, but the godly are subject to reproaches and mockings in their troubles ; and this many times proveth the heaviest part of the cross, and maketh it most grievous to be borne. It is so partly because they are fallen from their great hopes, carried on in a way of religion. Where is their God, their fasting, prayer ? As if all were now delusions and fantastical impressions. And partly because the presence of God is sensibly gone from them. The presence of God among his people maketh them wise, courageous, prosperous. How should one chase a hundred, and a hundred put a thousand to flight ? But when God leaveth them, they grow despicable and ridiculous above all others : Hosea xiv. 1, 'Return to the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.' 'All that honoured her shall despise her, because her nakedness is seen,' Lam. i. 8. A dispirited, judgment-blasted people shall be contemned. And partly because the cause for which they suffer may be strangely disguised and ill-represented to the world. Satan was first a liar and then a murderer, John viii. 44. Elijah was thought the troubler of Israel. They may not only persecute, but say all manner of evil against us falsely for Christ's sake, Mat. xi. 19. Christ is called a glutton, a wine-bibber ; and Stephen a blasphemer. And partly by Satan's instigation ; by this means he maketh the despisers increase their sin and hasten their judgment, and so he dissuades and discourages many weak Christians from owning the despised ways of Christ ; yea, it taketh off much of the cheerfulness and courage of the strong in the profession of godliness.

3. It is very grievous. Contempt maketh our other trials more sharp. Every man thinketh himself worthy of some respect, and would be somebody in the world, and therefore, when we are laid aside as if dead and useless, the temptation is the greater. Saul could better bear death than contempt : 1 Sam. xxxi. 4, 'Draw thy sword and thrust me through, lest the uncircumcised come and abuse me.' Zedekiah was afraid of mocking : Jer. xxxviii. 19, 'Lest they deliver me into the hands of the Chaldeans, and they mock me.' But not only as we are men is it grievous to us, but also as Christians ; because this contempt reflecteth upon our hopes and the worship of God ; it hindereth our service : while we were esteemed we did more good, and had greater advantages. It may revive the sense of guilt. God saith, 1 Sam. ii. 30, 'Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.' We have made God's name to be reproached, and religion to be lightly esteemed ; we may own the justice of God in all this.

Use. Oh ! then, let us be fore-armed against this temptation, that when we lose esteem with wicked men, because we will not comply with their lusts, we may bear it patiently. Surely we stand too

much upon honour and respect, and have too tender a sense and feeling of contempt, when it discourageth us in the ways of God. A Christian should seek the honour that cometh from God only, and be content with his approbation. I know it is a blessing to have respect with men; it is said of our Lord Christ that he grew in favour with God and with men, Luke ii. 52; the same also is spoken of Samuel: 1 Sam. ii. 26, 'And the child grew, and was in favour with God and with men.' It is a blessing where it may be had without any violation of duty. When God blameth us not, and men have no just complaint against us, our care must be to provide things honest in the sight of God and men, Rom. xii. 17; to take away all cause of offence both from Jew and Gentile, and from the church of God, 1 Cor. x. 32. But if men will not be pleased but with the offence of God, we should count it a privilege to be worthy of the world's hatred. *Gratias ago Deo meo, quod dignus sum, quem mundus oderit*, saith Hierome; be not discouraged if they slight you that slight God and Christ and their own salvation. Our self-love is too great when so tender to suffer a little disgrace and contempt for Christ, who hath suffered so many and and so great indignities for us. Therefore, though we be small and despised, let our affection be as great to the word as ever; say, 2 Sam. vi. 22, 'I will yet be more vile than this, and base in mine own sight.' Alas! many cannot bear contempt, *coguntur esse mali ne viles habentur*, as Salviaan complains in his days. As we should not forsake the despised ways of God, so not be dejected and troubled at it; better we be despised than God dishonoured; therefore let us purchase the glory of God with our disgrace. To animate you—

1. Consider it is the usual lot and portion of God's children. When God meaneth thoroughly to humble his children, he suffereth them to be odious in the eyes of the people where they live; we need so sharp a means to do us good, therefore the church complaineth of contempt: Lam. iii. 45, 'Thou hast made us as the off-scouring and refuse in the midst of the people.' You will say this was a sinning nation. Nay, the apostle saith the same thing of himself and other apostles: 1 Cor. iv. 13, 'We are made the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things;' cast out, as the sweeping of the city. Yea, Christ himself complaineth, Ps. xxii. 6, 'I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people;' as if he were but as a worm to be trod upon in respect of the world. Thou canst not be more despised than Christ was. So Isa. liii. 3, 'He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; we hid our faces as it were from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not.' Well, if this be a common lot and portion of God's people, it is more usual to persecute with contempt than with violence; men are kept off by the restraint of laws.

2. Shall we not suffer a little for Christ who suffered so much for us? He hath endured greater reproaches for our sakes; and what are we to him? If he endured shame, was made a curse for us, what a softness and tenderness have we for our interests! Mat. x. 24, 'The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord,' &c.

3. We must be dead to esteem, credit, and reputation, as well as other things, or else we are incapable of the kingdom of heaven: John

v. 44, 'How can ye believe, that seek honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh of God only?' John xii. 41, 42, 'These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.' It is not enough to deny brutish pleasures, to escape sordid covetousness, but all prizing of our own credit, content to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all, or else there is some affection not yet subdued to Christ's interest; any interest of ours that cometh into competition with Christ must be denied.

4. This is the true fortitude. We all affect to be counted men of spirit and courage; there is not a greater evidence of it than when we can endure contempt for Christ. Military valour depends upon bodily spirits; it is a more brutish thing. Peter, that ventured upon a band of men, was overcome by the weak blast of a damsel's question. He that can in a generous contempt count man's day nothing: 1 Cor. iv. 3, 'But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment,' &c.

5. The more despised in the world for righteousness' sake, the more honourable with God. If they could hinder your esteem with him it were something, 2 Cor. x. 18. He is approved whom the Lord commendeth. They will ever be of great account in heaven that have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb, and kept themselves unspotted from the world, and are clothed with the sun and have the moon under their feet, Rev. xii. 1. The true and afflicted despised church is in the eyes of God fair as the sun, pure as the moon, Cant. vi. 10. You are an elect seed, a royal priesthood, 1 Peter ii. 9.

6. If we cannot endure a little disgrace for God, what shall we do when called to resist unto blood? Jer. xii. 5, 'If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, how canst thou contend with horses?' *Scommata nostra ferre non potes*, &c.

7. God hath his times of bringing you into request again: Ps. xxxvii. 6, 'He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day;' Zeph. iii. 19, 'Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee, and will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out, and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.' All God's children were despised in their time, and yet afterwards were honoured. There is a resurrection of names as well as persons. Abraham gave Isaac his son to God in sacrifice, and received him again; so we receive our names from reproach and contempt. He that draweth light out of darkness is able to revive our credit and esteem; if not in this world, yet in the world to come we shall be glorious, though our condition be never so contemptible here; our reward is not in this life. When he dies, the beggar is carried into Abraham's bosom. Would you be in the condition of Dives or Lazarus? to wallow in ease and plenty, and go to hell, and be cast out with the devil and damned spirits? or to be poor and despised here, to be carried by angels into the presence of God hereafter? So at the day of judgment: Mat. x. 32, 'Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father in heaven;' we shall be publicly owned.

8. Great contempt shall be poured upon those that now contemn you. When Hanun offered injury to David's servants, he took severe revenge of it. God will require an account of all the wrongs and affronts that are put upon his servants. The wicked shall be made the scorn of good men and angels: Ps. lii. 6, 7, 'The righteous also shall see and fear, and laugh at him. Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness; but I am like a green olive-tree,' &c.

Doct. That though our condition be small and despicable, yet we should be still faithful in our respects to God and his word.

1. The temptation will not excuse us. *Esse bonum facile est, ubi quod vclat esse remotum est.* Our trial is expressly mentioned in the promise, as necessary for our crowning: James i. 12, 'When he is tried;' when the temptation is over, the trial is past. It is no praise for a woman to be chaste that hath no suitors. Adam was tempted by Eve, and Eve by Satan, yet both bore their burden. *Si taceret Deus et loqueretur Satan,* &c. Why should we hearken to Satan's suggestions rather than God's admonitions?

2. God observeth what we do in our trouble: Ps. xlv. 20, 21, 'If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god, shall not God search out this, for he knoweth the secrets of our hearts?' If we slacken our service to God, or fall off to any degree of apostasy, the judge of hearts knoweth all; God knoweth whether we have or would deprave and corrupt doctrine, worship, or ordinances, or whether we will faithfully adhere to him, to his word, and worship, and ordinances, whatever it cost us.

3. God and his law are the same, and therefore though our condition be altered, our affections should not. If we love the word of God upon intrinsic reasons, there is the same reason we should adhere to it with love still, as to embrace it out of love: ver. 142, 'Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.' Among men, that may be just to-day which is not so to-morrow, because they and their laws alter; but God's law is the eternal rule of righteousness, that never alters.

4. In our poor and despicable condition, we see more cause to love the word than we did before; because we experiment supports and comforts which we have thereby: Rom. v. 3, 'Knowing that tribulation worketh patience,' &c.; 2 Cor. i. 5, 'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.' God hath special consolations for his afflicted and despised people; and makes their consolation by Christ to run parallel and to keep pace with their sufferings for Christ.

Use 1. Carry your duty still in remembrance. The first step of defection is to forget what God hath commanded. There is an oblivion, and a darkness for the present on the mind, so that a man knoweth not what he knoweth, as Hagar saw not the well that was before her, till God opened her eyes. Therefore revive the grounds of your adherence, if you would constantly adhere to God. The temptation cometh afresh upon you every day, with all the enticing blandishments; so should the reasons of your duty. It helath our

perseverance to consider how strong and cogent they are, and what wrong we should do to God and religion to consent. At first a man beholds temptations with horror; but being familiarised, our thoughts are more reconciled to them; therefore recollect yourselves, and remember the reasons you first had to put you upon your duty; and if you duly consider them, they will be strong and cogent to repel the temptation, that would take you off from it.

Use 2. It sheweth who are lovers of the word and who not. On the one hand, some love the precepts of God when they are in honour and esteem, have many to join with them, and they see peace and plenty follow the profession of it; but rather than they will endure trouble and contempt, forsake it. The Samaritans would be Jews when the Jews were favoured; but in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, when the Jews were in trouble, they would be called Sidonians, οὐκέθ' ὠμολόγουν τὸν ἐν Ταρίζιν ναὸν τοῦ μεγίστου θεοῦ, dedicating their temple not to Jehovah but Jupiter (Josephus). These never received the love of the truth. On the other side, when a man loveth it alike in all times and in all conditions, when rich, when poor, in liberty and in bonds, when the ways of God are countenanced or when despised, it is all one to him; they love it not for outward respects, but internal reasons.

THE END OF VOL. VIII.

SEVERAL SERMONS UPON THE CXIX. PSALM.

SERMON CLIX.

Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.—VER. 142.

IN this verse the word of God is set forth by a double notion, of righteousness and law; accordingly two things are predicated of it: as it is righteousness, it is said to be an everlasting righteousness; and as it is law, it is said to be the truth. Both imply our duty: as there are truths in the word, it is man's duty to believe them; as there are commands, it is man's duty to obey them. I shall treat first of the notions, secondly of the predications.

First, The notions; and there the word is first called righteousness. 'Thy righteousness.' God's righteousness is sometimes put for the righteousness which is in God himself; as ver. 137, 'Righteous art thou, O Lord;' Ps. cxlv. 17, 'The Lord is righteous in all his ways.' And sometimes for the righteousness which he requireth of us; as James i. 20, 'The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;' that is, the righteousness which God requireth of us; and here in the text. Once more, that righteousness which God requireth of us in his word is sometimes taken, in a limited sense, for the duties of the second table, and so usually when it is coupled with holiness, Luke i. 75; Eph. iv. 24, 'The new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness.' Holiness giveth God his due, and righteousness giveth man his due. Sometimes it is taken in a more general sense, as to imply the whole duty and perfection of man; thus righteousness when it is put alone.

In this general sense I take it here, and observe this point—

1. The word of God is righteousness. This is one of the notions by which it is expressed in this psalm; so it is called in the text.

The reasons.

[1.] Because it is the copy of that righteousness which is in God. God's natural perfections are represented in the creatures, his majesty and omnipresence in the sun, but his moral perfections in the word.

The heavens declare his excellent majesty and glory, but his law, his purity, righteousness, and holiness—Ps. xix., the sun and the law are compared together,—as the creatures in their kind set forth God, so doth the word in its kind. Well may it be called righteousness, because it is the fairest draught and representation of God in his moral perfections, the chief of which are called righteousness and holiness. The knowledge we get by the creatures tendeth to exalt God; the knowledge we get by the law to humble and abase man, because of our impurity: and therefore the prophet, when he saw God, cried out, Isa. vi. 3, ‘Woe is me! I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips;’ and David, when he contemplated the holiness of the law, cried out presently, Ps. xix. 12, ‘Lord, cleanse me from my secret sins.’

[2.] It is the rule and pattern of all righteousness and justice in man; for our righteousness is a conformity to God’s law. Indeed, habitual righteousness is a conformity to God’s nature; actual righteousness, to his law. His Spirit reneweth our nature according to the image of God, and telleth us what is pleasing to God: Isa. li. 7, ‘Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law.’ They that have the law of God in their hearts do only know righteousness, that is, know what belongs to it; the new nature is tried, and all our ways tried by it.

[3.] It is the great instrument to promote righteousness. It maketh the man that doth observe it just and righteous before God. There is a twofold righteousness before God—the righteousness of justification and the righteousness of sanctification. The righteousness of justification, that is the great truth revealed in the scriptures. Nature saw nothing of that; the heathen saw something of a breach, that there was need of appeasing God, but nothing of a righteousness before God: that secret was hid from the wise men of the world, and reserved for the scriptures; and therefore the apostle saith, Rom. iii. 21, 22, ‘But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all that believe.’ The law and the prophets set forth this mystery to teach men, that we are to be justified before God by faith in Christ. Nature could convince us of guilt, but not of a righteousness.

2. For the way of sanctification, or how a man that is justified should approve himself to God and men. The scripture crieth up another righteousness, that becometh justified persons; that is, the way to be righteous is to do righteousness: 1 John iii. 7, ‘Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness is righteous.’ So it is said of Zacharias and Elizabeth, Luke i. 6, that ‘they were righteous before God, and walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.’ So Deut. vi. 25, ‘And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments, before the Lord our God, as he commanded us.’ This wisdom we learn from the word, where nothing but righteousness is recommended; for it cometh from the righteous God, who is essentially good and holy, and cannot be contrary to himself in commanding unjust things: and therefore his commandments are in all points right. There is no way right to prove principles but by arguing *ab absurdis*, and so prove

the goodness of them. What a miserable case would the world be in if there were not such a law and rule ! a place of villanies and wickedness. And therefore here is righteousness, and all righteousness ; we need not seek further for direction. Sure God can tell what will best please him, and our sense and experience inform us what things are good and honest in the sight of men.

Use. Let us live as becometh them that have such a righteous rule : ‘ Wisdom is justified of her children,’ Mat. xi. 19. Let us bear witness by our faith, profession, and godly life to the doctrine of God. This is to glorify the word, Acts xiii. 40, when we express the excellencies of it in our practice ; do not only approve it in our judgments, and commend it with our mouths, but express it in our lives. Practice glorifieth more than verbal praise. Let us show that the word is righteousness, that is to say, the copy of God’s righteousness, by being the rule and instrument of ours. Let us look after the righteousness of justification. We can never be truly righteous, unless we lay the foundation of the spiritual life in faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance from dead works, that maketh way for the spirit and power of godliness ; for Christ is made of God to us righteousness before he is made sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30. There is no acceptance with God without it : Rom. v. 19, ‘ By the obedience of one, many were made righteous.’ Thereby our persons are accepted. In ourselves there is none righteous, no not one ; and it is dangerous to look after any other righteousness while this is neglected : Rom. x. 3, ‘ Being ignorant of God’s righteousness, they went about to establish their own righteousness,’ &c. Again, let me press you to look after the righteousness of sanctification, to see that we be renewed by the Spirit, and entered into a holy course ; and not only so, but we go on still in righteousness : Rev. xxii. 11, ‘ He that is righteous, let him be righteous still.’ We are renewed but in part : Prov. xv. 9, ‘ The Lord loveth him that followeth after righteousness ;’ that maketh it his business to grow more righteous every day, and increase the acts, to perfect the habit ; this earnest endeavour must never be left off.

Secondly, Now I come from the notion to the predication. This righteousness, it is an everlasting righteousness : it is so in two respects—in the constitution among men, and in the effects of it.

1. In the constitution of it. The covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant ; so it is called Heb. xiii. 20 ; and the gospel is called the ‘ everlasting gospel,’ Rev. xiv. 6 ; and ‘ I will make an everlasting covenant with you,’ Isa. lv. 3. The privileges of this covenant are eternal. Christ ‘ hath obtained an eternal redemption for us,’ Heb. ix. 12 ; Dan. ix. 24. There is an unchangeable righteousness which Christ hath established in the church ; he is the Lord our righteousness. His righteousness is still the same, and the plot was first laid in his everlasting decrees. The terms of life and salvation held forth in the new covenant are to continue for ever, no change to be expected. From the beginning of the world to the end thereof, the covenant of grace cannot cease ; the obligation still continueth ; men are for ever bound to love God and their neighbour. There shall no time come when the law of loving God and our neighbour shall be reversed and out of date. The covenant is essentially the same, under all the diver-

sity of administrations. And as the privileges, so the duties are of an eternal obligation. Among men, τὰ δίκαια κινούμενα, that is just at one time that is not just at another. Lawgivers cannot always live to see their laws executed, and men cannot foresee all occasions and inconveniences, and therefore often repeal their laws. But God is wise; he hath made an unchangeable law, and he forbiddeth things intrinsically evil, and commandeth things intrinsically good.

2. As to the effects of it, in case of obedience or disobedience. (1.) In case of disobedience, eternal wrath lighteth on them that reject this covenant, that walk contrary to it, they shall be eternally miserable: 2 Thes. i. 9, 'Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.' Not a temporal but an everlasting destruction; and Mark ix. 44, 'The worm shall never die, and the fire shall never be quenched.' An eternity of torments, because they despised everlasting mercy, and rejected the authority of an everlasting God. Having offended an infinite God, their punishment abideth on them for ever. If they will stand out their day, it is fit their recovery should be hopeless. (2.) The benefits are eternal in case of obedience. There is everlasting grace, everlasting comfort, and everlasting life: 1 John ii. 17, 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the word of God abideth for ever.' The Spirit is given as a comforter that shall abide for ever, John xiv. 16; and 2 Thes. ii. 16, 'God who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.' And it is fit it should be so, because it is built upon God's unchangeable love, and Christ's eternal merit and intercession. God's love is an everlasting love, Jer. xxxi. 3. The efficacy of Christ's merit never ceaseth, Heb. xiii. 8. His continual intercession ever lasteth, Heb. vii. 25, and Rom. viii. 39, 'Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ.' He liveth for ever, by which we continue for ever in the favour of God, and the covenant standeth firm between him and us; the fountain of comfort is never dried up.

Use 1. To inform us of the difference between the laws of God and the laws of men. There are many differences, some of which I shall touch by and by; this expression offereth two—it is righteousness, and everlasting righteousness.

1. It is righteousness. Men have and do often decree wickedness by a law, not only in the first table, where man is most blind, but also in the second; not only in their barbarous worship, their sacrificing of men, but also in their human constitutions. The Lacedemonians held it lawful to steal, if he were not taken ἐπ' αὐτῷ φέρειν, in the very act. In Cyprus they held it lawful for their virgins, if they were poor, to prostitute themselves to get a dowry or portion. By the law of the twelve tables a man might kill his wife if she smelt of wine or counterfeited his keys. And among the Romans, if a slave had killed his master, all his fellow-slaves were put to death with him, though never so innocent. By the same laws, a father might thrice sell his child; they might tear their debtors in pieces if they were not solvent. Thus blind were men in their own concerns and what made for human commerce; much more in the way of pleasing God and the interest of the world to come. Bless God for this righteous law. Again—

2. It is everlasting righteousness; not only righteous at the first giving out, but righteous in all ages and times; and should we slight this rule that will hold for ever? In the world, new lords new laws; men vary and change their designs and purposes; privileges granted to-day may be repealed to-morrow, but this word will hold true for ever; our justification by Christ is irrevocable, that part of righteousness is everlasting. Be sure you are justified now, upon terms of the gospel, and you shall be justified for ever; your forgiveness is an everlasting forgiveness, and your peace is an everlasting peace: Jer. xxxiii. 34, 'I will remember your sins no more.' So the other righteousness of sanctification, it is for ever. Approve yourselves to God now, and you will approve yourselves at the day of judgment.

Use 2. Exhortation.

1. Let this take us off from seeking things that have no continuance in them. The everlastingness of the word is opposed often to the transitory vanities of the world: 1 Peter i. 23-24, 'All flesh is grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass: the grass withereth, and the flower falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.' Why should we hunt after that glory that soon fadeth? So 1 John ii. 17, 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' All these things change, and move up and down by divers circumrotations; we sit fast and loose in the world, but in the covenant of grace all is sure.

2. Let us choose this word to live by, that we may be partakers of that everlasting good which cometh by it. Oh, let us regard it! Eternity is concerned in it. If the righteousness of God be everlasting, let us begin betimes to get interested in it, and persevere in it to the end. Let us begin betimes, for we have but a few days to live here in the world, and so either to express our thankfulness or lay a foundation for our eternal hopes; therefore let us set about the work the sooner. And let us persevere; our care to keep this law must be perpetual, not like temporaries. Many will carry themselves well and godly for a while, but afterwards fall off; this doth not become an everlasting law; there is the same goodness in God's law that there was at first.

3. Let us comfort ourselves with the everlastingness of the privileges offered to us in God's word. The redeemed of the Lord should have an everlasting joy: Isa. xxxv. 10, 'And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.' Let other things end and change as they will, our right by the new covenant changeth not. Sometimes we are in request in the world, and sometimes in disgrace; but God's love is everlasting and sure. We are not in with him to-day and out to-morrow; he hath dealt with us upon sure and unchangeable terms; nay, when you die, you may comfort yourselves in this, Ps. ciii. 17, 'The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him, and his righteousness upon children's children.' Yea, not only in the changes of your outward condition is here an everlasting spring of comfort, but also in the ups and downs of your spiritual condition, and the clouds which now and then darken your comfort and hope in God. In a time of desertion we seem to be dead and cast off; yet remember God loves to be bound for ever: 2 Sam. xxiii. 5,

‘Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made an everlasting covenant.’ Though we are not so punctual, exact, and faithful, but are subject to many errors and failings, yet God will mind his eternal covenant: Ps. lxxxix. 33-34, ‘Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I 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.’ Death doth not dissolve it, nor desertions break it off.

Now for the second notion by which the word of God is expressed, ‘thy law,’ from whence observe—

Doct. That the word of God hath the nature and force of a law.

It is often so called in scripture; not only the decalogue, which is the abridgment of all moral duties, but the whole scripture is God’s law: Isa. li. 4, ‘A law shall proceed from me;’ and Ps. i. 2, ‘His delight is in the law of God;’ and the gospel is called ‘the law of faith,’ Rom. iii. 28. Here I shall show you how necessary it was that God should give man a law, both as we are considered apart, and with respect to community; and then show that the word hath the force of a law.

1. Consider man apart. Surely the reasonable creature, as it is a creature, hath a superior to whose providence and ordering it is subject. So all the creatures have a law, by which the bounds of their motion are fixed and limited: Ps. clxviii. 6, ‘He hath established them for ever and ever; he hath made a decree which shall not pass;’ Prov. viii. 29, ‘He gave the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment.’ The sun, moon, and stars are under a law; all the creatures are balanced in a due proportion, and guided and fixed in their tract and course by an unerring hand, which is a kind of law to them. As a creature, man is subject to the direction of God’s providence, as other creatures are; but as a reasonable creature, he is capable of moral government; for so he hath a choice of his own, a power of refusing evil and choosing good. Other creatures are ruled by a rod of iron, necessitated to what they do by an act of God’s power and sovereignty; but man, being a voluntary agent, is governed by laws which may direct and oblige him to good, and warn and drive him from evil. This law was at first written upon man’s nature, and that was sufficient while he stood in his integrity to guide him and enable him to serve and please God in all things propounded to him. The law written on the heart of man was his rule and principle. But that being obliterated by the fall, it was needful that God should give a new law, to guide man to his own blessedness, and to keep him from erring. The internal principle of righteousness being lost, the laws of men could not be sufficient, for they have another end, which is the good of human society. They aim not at such a supernatural end as the enjoyment of God; their laws reach no further than the ordering of men’s outward conversations, and meddle not with the inward workings and motions of the heart, of which they can take no cognisance. These may be inordinate, do a great deal of mischief; therefore, as the wise God directed men to give laws to order men’s actions, so he would himself give laws to order the heart, which man cannot reach. Lay all these together, and there is a necessity that God should give a law to man.

2. But much more if you consider man in his community, as he is a part of that spiritual community called a church. All societies of men from the beginning of the world have found the establishing of laws the only means to preserve themselves from ruin. There is no other way against confusion; and would God leave that society which is of his own institution, that of which he is the head, and in which his honour is concerned, without a law? Dent. xxxii. 9, 'The Lord's portion is his people,' which was set apart to serve him, and to be to him for a name and a praise. Surely a people that have God so near them, and are in special relation to him, have their laws by which they may be governed and preserved as to their eternal good, unless we should say God took less care for his own people than for others. This necessity is the greater because this society is spiritual; though made up of visible men, yet combined for spiritual ends, commerce and communion with God, and that mostly in their spirits, which maketh this society the hardest to be governed, and this, the most scattered and dispersed of all societies throughout all parts of the earth, should therefore be knit together with the strongest bonds. Surely then there needeth a common law, whereby they may be united in their conjunction with Christ, the head, and one another, that it may not be broken in pieces; and this to be given by God, that he may preserve his own authority and interest among them.

This law is the scripture, those sacred digests in which God hath discovered not only his wisdom and justice, but his will and imperial power, what he will have us do. The one sheweth the equity, the other the necessity of our obedience; surely this is his law or none. The church to whom the law was given, God hath constituted the keeper of its own records; never acknowledge another; nor can any other make any tolerable pretence.

Now, having brought the matter home, I shall show you wherein it hath the nature and force of a law, as we commonly take the word; and here I shall—

1. Show you wherein it agrees.

2. Wherein it differs from the ordinary laws of men.

1. Wherein it agreeth.

[1.] A law is an act of power and sovereignty by which a superior declareth his will to those that are subject to him. There are two branches of the supreme power—legislation and jurisdiction; giving the law, and governing according to the law so given. And so God's power over the reasonable creature is seen in legislation, and in the administration of his providence there is his jurisdiction. In the scripture he hath given the law, and he will take an account of the observance of it; in part here, at the petty sessions; hereafter, more fully and clearly at the day of general judgment. But for the present, here is God's power seen over the creature in appointing him such a law. God hath the greatest right and authority to command: Isa. xxxiii. 22, 'The Lord is our judge and our lawgiver.'

[2.] That there is not only direction given to us, but an obligation laid upon us. There is this difference between a law and a rule—a bare rule is for information, a law for obligation. So herein the word of God agrees with a law; it is not only the result of God's wisdom,

but the effect of his legislative will. He would not only help and instruct the creature in his duty, but oblige him by his authority. *Decretum necessitatem facit, exhortatio liberam voluntatem excitat*, saith the canonist. Exhortation and advice properly serveth to quicken one that is free, but a decree and a law imposeth a force, a necessity upon him. So Hierome, lib. ii. *contra Jovin—Ubi consilium datur operantis arbitrium est, ubi præceptum necessitas servitutis*. A counsel and a precept differ; a precept respects subjects, a counsel, friends. The scriptures are not only God's counsel, but his precept. There is a coactive power in his laws. God hath not left the creature at liberty to comply with his directions if he please, but hath left a strict charge upon him.

[3.] Every law hath a sanction, otherwise it were but an arbitrary direction; the authority might be contemned unless it hath a sanction, that is, confirmed by rewards and punishments; so hath God given his law under the highest penalties: Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;' Gal. vi. 8, 'If ye sow to the flesh, of the flesh ye shall reap corruption;' Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.' God telleth them what will come of it, and commandeth them to abstain as they will answer to God at their utmost peril. The obligation of a law, first, inferreth a fault, that is, contempt of authority; so doth God's, as it is his law, and so it will infer a fault in us to break it; and as we reject his counsel, it inferreth punishment, and the greater punishment the more we know of God's law: Rom. ii. 9, 'Tribulation, wrath, and anguish upon every soul that doeth evil, upon the Jew first, and also upon the Gentile.' Why the Jew first? They knew God's mind more clearly.

[4.] A sanction supposeth a judge, who will take an account whether his law be broken or kept, otherwise all the promises and threatenings were in vain. The law, that is the rule of our obedience, is the rule of his process; so the word of God hath this in common with other laws; therefore God hath appointed a judge and a judgment-day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath appointed; and 2 Thes. i. 8, 'He will come in flaming fire, to render vengeance on all them that know not God, and obey not the gospel.' According to the law they have been under, Gentiles, Christians, they must all appear before the Lord, to give an account how they have observed God's law. Now in patience he beareth with men, yet sometimes interposeth by particular judgments, but then they shall receive their final doom.

2. Let us see whercin they differ from ordinary laws among men.

[1.] Man in his laws doth not debate matters with his subjects, but barely enjoineth and interposeth authority; but God condescendeth to the infirmities of man, and cometh down from the throne of his sovereignty, and reasoneth with and persuadeth and prayeth men that they will not forsake their own mercies, but yield obedience to his laws, which he convinceth them are for their good: Isa. xli. 8, 'Remember this, show yourselves men; bring it to mind again, ye transgressors;' Isa. i. 18, 'Let us reason together, saith the Lord.' God is pleased to stoop to sorry creatures, to argue with them, and make them judges in their own cause: Micah vi. 2, 3, he will plead with Israel, 'O my

people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? 'Testify against we.' He will plead with Israel about the equity of his laws, whether they are not for their good. It is a lessening of authority for princes to court their subjects—they command them; but God will beseech and expostulate and argue with his people; 2 Cor. v. 20, he draws with the cords of a man, sweetly alluring their hearts to him.

[2.] The laws of God bind the conscience and the immortal souls of men; the laws of men only bind the behaviour of the outward man. they cannot order the heart. God takes notice of a wanton glance, of an unclean thought, a carnal motion, Mat. v. 28. Men's words and actions are liable to the laws of men; they cannot know the thoughts; but the law of God falls upon the counsels of the heart: Rom. vii. 14, 'For I know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal;' Heb. iv. 12, 'It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.'

[3.] The law of God immutably and indispensably bindeth all men without distinction; no man beggeth exemption here because of their condition; there is no immunity and freedom from God's law. Men may grant immunity from their laws: 1 Sam. xvii. 25, 'He will make his father's house free in Israel.' Men's laws are compared to spiders' webs; the lesser flies are entangled, great ones break through. God doth not exempt any creature from duty to him, but speaketh impartially to all.

[4.] Men's laws do more propend to punishment than they do to reward. For robbers and manslayers death is appointed, but the innocent subject hath only this reward, that he doth his duty, and escapeth these punishments. In very few cases doth the law promise rewards; the inflicting of punishments is its proper work, because its use is to restrain evil; but God's law propoundeth punishments equal to the rewards; eternal life on the one hand, as well as eternal death on the other: Dent. xxx. 15, 'See I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil;' because the use of God's law is to guide men to their happiness. This should be much observed; it is *legis candor*, the equity and condescension of man's law to speak of a reward; it commands many things, forbids many things, but still under a penalty; that is the great design of man's power; in very few cases doth it invite men to their duty by a reward; only in such cases where every good man would not do his duty. It is more exact and vigilant in its proper and natural work of punishing the disobedient, that wickedness should not go unpunished; the common peace requireth that; but that good should be rewarded, there is no human necessity. Human laws were not invented to reward good, but prevent evil.

Use. Let us humble ourselves that we bear so little respect to God's word, that we so boldly break it, and are so little affected with our breaches of it. Do we indeed consider that this is God's law? The greatest part of mankind fear the prince more than God, and the gallows more than hell. If every vain thought or carnal motion in our hearts were as the cutting of a finger or burning in the hand, men would seem more afraid of that than they are of hell. Nay, I will tell you, men can dispense with God's law to comply with man's: Hosea

v. 11, 'Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment.' A little danger will draw men into the snare, when hell will not keep them from it. Oh, let us rouse up ourselves! Is not man God's subject? Is he not a more powerful sovereign than all the potentates in the world? Doth he not in his word give judgment on the everlasting estate of men, and will his judgment be in vain? Hath not God appointed a day when all matters shall be taken into consideration? If you can deny these truths, go on in sin and spare not; but if conscience be sensible of God's authority, oh! break off your sins by repentance, and walk more cautiously for the time to come! Every sin is *ἀνομία*, 1 John iii. 4, a breach of God's eternal law; and will God always wink at your disloyalty to him?

Nothing remaineth to be spoken to but the last clause, 'Thy law is truth.'

Doct. God's law is truth.

1. I shall show in what sense it is said to be truth.
2. The reasons why it is truth.
3. The end of this truth.

First, In what sense it is said to be truth.

1. It is the chief truth; there is some truth in the laws of men and the writings of men, even of heathens; but they are but sorry fragments and scraps of truth, that have escaped since the fall; but the truth of the word is transcendent to that of bare reason. Here are truths of the greatest concernment, matters propounded that are very comfortable and profitable to lost sinners, 1 Tim. ii. 16. Here moral duties are advanced to the highest pitch: Deut. iv. 6, 'Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations.' The end of these is not only to regulate your commerce with men, but to guide you in your communion with God, and help you to the everlasting enjoyment of him.

2. It is the only truth, that is, the only revelation of the mind of God that you can build upon; it is the rule of truth. A thing may be true that is not the rule of truth. There is *veritas regulata*, and *veritas regulans*; the word is the measure and standard, and they are true or false as they agree or disagree with it. Every custom and tradition must be tried upon it; from the beginning it was not so; from the beginning, my Christianity is Jesus Christ. We must not attend to what others did, but what Christ did, who is before all; every dictate of reason must be tried by it, for here is the highest reason. It is written to make the man of God perfect, or else it cannot guide you to your happiness, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16. Every revelation must be tried by it, Gal. i. 8. If an angel or man bring any doctrine which differs from or is besides the written word, it is a cursed doctrine: this is the rule.

3. It is the pure truth; in it there is nothing but the truth, without the mixture of falsehood; every part is true as truth itself. It is true in the promises, true in the threatenings, true in the doctrines, true in the histories, true in the precepts, true in the prohibitions. God will make it good to a tittle. True in moralities, true in the mysteries of faith; not only true in duties that concern man and man, but in the

sublimar truths that concern commerce with God, where nature is more blind: Ps. xix. 9, 'The testimonies of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.' It is true where a carnal man would not have it true, in the curses and threatenings. If God's word be true, woe to them that remain in a sinful way, they shall find it true shortly, and feel what they will not believe. It is true where a godly man feareth it will not be true; no promises contradicted by sense but will prove true in their performance. Whatsoever, in the hour of temptation, carnal reason may judge to the contrary, within a while you will see your unbelieving fears confuted.

4. It is the whole truth; it containeth all things necessary for the salvation of those that yield up themselves to be instructed by it: John xiv. 26, 'He shall teach you all things,' and remember you of all things;' John xvi. 13, 'Lead you into all truth;' in all things that pertain to religion and our present conduct towards everlasting happiness. Therefore nothing is to be hearkened to contrary to what God hath revealed in his word; there is no room left for tradition, nor for extraordinary revelations; all that is necessary for the church is revealed there; it is a full perfect rule.

Secondly, The reasons.

1. From the author; God is a God of truth, and nothing but truth can come from him, for God cannot lie, Titus i. 2. The truth of the law dependeth upon the truth of God; therefore it must needs be without error; yea, it corrects all error; if God could deceive or be deceived, you might suspect his word.

2. The matter itself; it commends itself to our consciences by the manifestation of the truth: 2 Cor. iv. 2, 'Approving yourselves by the word of truth,' 2 Cor. vi. 7. If the heart be not strangely perverted, and become an incompetent judge by obstinate atheism and corrupt affections, it cannot but own these truths to be of God: 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost,' 1 Cor. iv. 4.

3. The end of it, which is to regulate man and sanctify man. Now it were strange if he should be made better by a lie and a cheat: John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.' Certainly it is the most convenient instrument to reduce man to his wits, and make him live like a man.

4. It pretends to be the law of God; it is so, or else it would be the greatest cheat in the world; for it speaketh to us from God all along, and by virtue of his authority. None can be so brutish as to think that the wisest course of doctrines that ever the world was acquainted with is a mere imposture.

Use 1. To commend the word of God to us; we cannot have true doctrine, nor true piety, nor true consolation without the scriptures. Not true doctrine: Isa. viii. 20, 'To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them.' It is to be condemned of falsehood, if not according to the word. You cannot have true holiness, for holiness is but scripture digested and put in practice, James i. 18. The foundation of the spiritual life is laid in the word; scripture faith and scripture repentance are still fed by the word. It teacheth us how to believe, and how to repent, and how to pray, and how to live, especially the heavenly life; and there

can be no true comfort and peace without the word: Rom. xv. 4, 'That ye through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.'

Use 2. 1. We should consider the truth of the word, partly in the general, for the strengthening and settling of our faith, and to make it more clear and solid and certain: Eph. i. 13, 'In whom ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth.' When boisterous temptations would carry us to some evil, which God hath forbidden and severely threatened, that the point of the sword of the Spirit be put to the bosom of it, Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

2. When you are settling your souls as to the main point of acceptance with God: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' The word will never deceive them that seek righteousness there.

3. When difficulties arise that oppose the promise or expectation of relief according to the promise, you should urge the truth of the word in the very face of difficulty: 'Thy law is truth.' Take Paul's instance, Acts xxvii. God by promise gave all that sailed with Paul in the ship their lives, yet how many difficulties came to pass! At first, when they were in the Adriatic Sea for so many days and nights, and had neither seen sun nor stars, they knew not where they were, nor whither they should go; here was little appearance of God's making good his word to Paul. Another difficulty fell out, they feared they were near some country; they sounded and found they were near some land, but what land they could not conjecture, and were afraid of being split in pieces against the rocks; but the shipmen, that knew the danger of these seas, they must go out of the ship, they would make use of their long boat, and so they were ready to miscarry in the sight of the land, but Paul prevented them. And after it was day, the men were so spent because of long fasting and conflicting with the waves, they could not ply the oar. Another difficulty, they were where two seas met; they ran the ship aground and resolved to kill Paul and the rest of the prisoners, lest they should swim to land; but the captain, willing to save Paul, prevented that purpose; and so at length they came all to shore, though followed with difficulty upon difficulty. God made good his promise to a tittle, ver. 44. Pray observe how Paul urged God's promise against the greatest difficulties, as sufficient ground of encouragement to expect relief: ver. 25, 'For I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.'

SERMON CLX.

Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me, yet thy commandments are my delights.—VER. 143.

IN the words we have—

1. David's temptation, *trouble and anguish have taken hold of me.*

2. David's exercise under that temptation, *thy commandments are my delight.*

3. The benefit of that exercise, notwithstanding the greatness of the temptation, *yet*. It is propounded with a *non obstante*.

First, The temptation was very great, for he speaketh of trouble and anguish. The joining of synonymous words, or words of a like import and signification, increaseth the sense; and so it sheweth his affection was not ordinary; yea, both these words have their particular use and emphasis. Trouble may imply the outward trial, and the difficulties and straits he was in; anguish, inward afflictions: the one, the matter of the trial, and the other the sense of it. The other expression also is to be observed, 'Have taken hold of me;' in the Hebrew, 'have found me;' so the Septuagint renders it, *θλάψεις καὶ ἀνάγκαι εὗροσάν με*; and the vulgar Latin out of them, *tribulatio et angustie invenerunt me*, 'have found me,' that is, 'come upon me,' as the expression intimateth. Troubles are said to find us, because they are sent to seek us out, and in time will light upon us. We should not run into them, but if they find us in our duty, we should not be troubled at them. Sometimes in scripture we are said to find trouble, and sometimes trouble to find us. We are said to find trouble. David said, Ps. cxvi. 3, 'I found trouble.' And so now here in the text, trouble and anguish found him. There is no difference, or if any, the one noteth a surprise. Trouble findeth us when it cometh unlooked for; our finding it noteth our willingness to undergo it, when the will of God is so, especially for righteousness' sake.

Secondly, David's exercise under this great temptation, 'Thy commandments are my delights.' Where we have—

1. The object, 'thy commandments.' The commandment is put for the word in general, which includeth promises as well as precepts, the whole doctrine of life and salvation. However, the property of the form is not altogether to be overlooked; even in the commandments or the conscience of his duty, he took a great deal of comfort.

2. The affection, 'delight.' He had said before that he did not forget God's statutes when he was small and despised, ver. 141; now he delighted in them. This was his great love to the word, that he could find sweetness in it when it brought him trouble, such sweetness as did allay all his sorrows, and overcome the bitterness of them.

3. The degree, 'delights,' in the plural number; he did greatly delight in it. *Omnis oblectatio mea*, saith Junius—thy commandments to me are instead of all manner of delights and pleasure in the world.

Thirdly, The next is the opposition of this exercise to that temptation, 'yet.' It is not in the original, but necessarily implied, and therefore well inserted by our translators, to show that the greatness of his straits and troubles did not diminish his comfort, but increase it rather. The points are these:—

1. God seeth it necessary sometimes to exercise his people with a great deal of trouble.

2. This trouble may breed great vexation and anguish of spirit, even in a gracious heart.

3. Notwithstanding this trouble and anguish, gracious hearts will manifest their graciousness by delighting in the word.

4. They that delight in the word will find more comfort in their

afflictions than troubles can take from them, or such sweetness as will overcome the sense of all their sorrows. This was always David's help to delight in the word, and this brought him comfort though in deep troubles.

For the first point, that God seeth it necessary sometimes to exercise his people with a great deal of trouble. Though they are highly in favour with God, yet they have their share of troubles as well as others. This is true if you—

1. Consider the people of God in their collective body and community, which is called the church. It is the church's name: Isa. liv. 11, 12, 'Oh thou afflicted, and tossed with tempest!' Names are taken *a notionibus*; things are known and distinguished by their name; it is one of the way-marks to heaven: Acts xiv. 22, 'Through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God;' as the way to Canaan lay through a howling wilderness. If we were told before that we should meet with such and such marks in our journey to such a place, if we found them not, we should have cause to suspect we were out of our way. From the beginning of the world, the church hath always been bred up under troubles, and inured to the discipline of the cross: Ps. cxxix. 1, 'Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say.' The spirit of enmity wrought betimes. The first family that ever was in the world yielded Abel the proto-martyr, and Cain the patriarch of unbelievers. While the church kept in families, the outward estate of God's people was worse than their neighbours. Abraham was a sojourner, though owned and blessed by God, when the Canaanites were possessors, and dwelt in walled towns. Jacob's family grew up by degrees into a nation, but Esau's presently multiplied into many dukes and princes. And as they grew up, they grew up in affliction. Egypt was a place of retreat for them for a while, but before they got out of it, it proved a house of bondage. Their deliverance brought them into a wilderness, where want made them murmur, but oftener wantonness. But then God sent fiery serpents, and broke them, and afflicted them with other judgments. After forty years' wandering in the wilderness, they are brought into Canaan, a land of rest; but it afforded them little rest, for they forfeited it almost as soon as they conquered it; it flowed with milk and honey, but mixed with gall and wormwood. Their story, as it is delivered in the book of God, acquaints you with several varieties and intermixtures of providence, till wrath came upon them to the utmost, till God saw fit to enlarge the pale and lines of communication by treating with other nations. Now, if the Old Testament church were thus afflicted, much more the New. God discovered his approbation and improbation then more by temporal mercies and temporal judgments. The promises run to us in another strain; and since life and immortality were brought to light in the gospel, we must not expect to be so delicately brought up as never to see an evil day. He hath told us, 2 Tim. iii. 12, 'We must be conformed to our head,' Rom. viii. 29; and expect to pledge Christ in his bitter cup, and our condition must inform us that our hopes were not in this world, 1 Cor. xv. 19. In the gospel dispensation God would deal forth temporal blessings more sparingly, and spiritual with a fuller hand; the ex-

perience of all ages verifieth this. When religion began first to fly abroad into all lands, the pagans first persecuted it, and then the pseudo-Christians; the holiest and best people were maligned, and bound, and butchered, and racked, and stoned, but still they multiplied. It were easy to tire you with various instances in every age. Those that went home to God were those that came out of tribulations, and had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. vii. 14. There is always something set afoot to try God's servants, and in the latter times the roaring lion is not grown more gentle and tame, rather more fierce and severe: Rev. xii. 12, 'For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.' Dying beasts struggle most. As his kingdom beginneth to shake, so he will be most fierce and cruel for the supporting of it.

2. As to particular persons: 'The whole creation groaneth,' Rom. viii. 22; and God's children bear a part in the concert; they have their share in the world's miseries, and domestical crosses are common to them with other men in the world; yea, their condition is worse than others: chaff and corn are threshed in the same floor, but the corn is grinded in the mill and baked in the oven. Jeremiah was in the dungeon when the city was besieged. The world hateth them more than others, and God loveth them more than others. The world hateth them because they are so good, and God correcteth them because they are no better. There is more care exercised about a vine than a bramble. God will not let them perish with the world. Great receipts call for great expenses first or last. God seeth it fitting, sometimes at first setting forth, as the old Germans were wont to dip their children in the Rhine to harden them, so to season them for their whole course; they must bear the yoke from their youth or first acquaintance with God, Heb. x. 32. Sometimes God lets them alone while they are young and raw, and of little experience, as we are tender of trees newly planted, as Jacob drove as the little ones were able to bear: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able.' They are let alone till middle age, till they are of some standing in religion: Heb. xi. 24, 'Moses when he was come to years,' μέγας γενόμενος. Sometimes let alone till their latter time, and their season of fighting cometh not till they are ready to go out of the world, that they may die fighting, and be crowned in the field. But first or last, the cross cometh, and there is a time to exercise our faith and patience before we inherit the promises. I will not enlarge in the common-place of afflictions, and tell you how necessary the cross is to subdue sin, which God will do in an accommodate way to weaken pride, to reclaim us from our wanderings, to increase grace, to make us mindful of heavenly things; these are discussed in other verses: to make us retreat to our great privileges, to stir us up to prayer, &c. *Tribulatio tam nobis necessaria, quam ipsa vita, immo magis necessaria, multoque utilior quam totius mundi opes, et dignitates*, saith Luther—we think wealth is necessary for us, dignity and esteem is necessary for us; no, affliction is necessary for us: 1 Peter i. 6, 'If need be, you are in heaviness,' &c.

Use 1. Let us look for troubles and provide for them. We shall

not always have a life of ease and peace; the times will not always be friendly to religion: 'Then had the churches rest,' Acts ix. 31; halcyon days. The enmity of wicked men will not always lie asleep; we would gather rust and grow dead, therefore look for them. If because you are Christians you promise yourselves a long lease of temporal happiness, free from troubles and afflictions, it is as if a soldier going to the wars should promise himself peace and continual truce with the enemy; or as if a mariner committing himself to the sea for a long voyage, should promise himself nothing but fair and calm weather, without waves and storms; so irrational it is for a Christian to promise himself rest here upon earth. Well, then, let us learn beforehand how to be abased and how to abound, Phil. iv. 12. He that is in a journey to heaven must be provided for all weathers; though it be sunshine when he first sets forth, a storm will overtake him before he cometh to his journey's end. It is good to be fore-armed; afflictions will come, and we should prepare accordingly. We enter upon the profession of godliness upon these terms, to be willing to suffer afflictions if the Lord see fit; and therefore we should arm ourselves with a mind to endure them, whether they come or no. God never intended that Isaac should be sacrificed, yet he will have Abraham lay the knife to his throat. Sorrows foreseen leave not so sad an impression upon the spirit. *Tela promissa minus feriunt*. The evil is more familiarised before it come: Job iii. 25, 'The evil that I feared is come upon me.' When our fears prophesy, we smart less; it allayeth the offence; we meet with nothing but what we thought of before: John xvi. 1, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended.'

Use 2. If you are under afflictions, *μὴ ξενίζεσθε*, 1 Peter iv. 12, do not strange at it, more than at night and day, showers and sunshine; as these things fall out in the course of nature, so do troubles and afflictions in the course of God's providence; it were a wonder if otherwise. We do not wonder to see a shower of rain fall, or a cloudy day succeed a fair: 1 Peter v. 9, 'All these things are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.' All the rest of God's people are fellow-soldiers in this conflict.

Use 3. When we are out of affliction, let us bless God that we are out of the affliction. The greatness of the trouble, danger, misery, straits whereinto God doth cast his own doth lay a greater obligation of thankfulness upon those that are free from those evils. If thou beest not thankful for thy health, go to the lazarethouses, look upon the afflicted state of God's people, and that may quicken you to thankfulness for being freed from them.

Use 4. Advice; do not draw sufferings upon yourselves by your own rashness and folly: James i. 2, 'Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.' We must not seek or desire trouble, but bear it when God layeth it on us. Christ hath taught us to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation.' It is a folly for us to cast ourselves upon it; if we draw hatred upon ourselves, and run headlong into dangers without necessity, we must make ourselves amends by repentance, otherwise God will not. If a man set his house on fire, he is liable to the law; if it be fired by others, or by an ill accident, he is pitied and

relieved. We are to take our own cross when made to our hands by God's providence, not make it for ourselves; not to fill our own cup, but drink it off if God put it into our hands. We must come honestly by our crosses as well as by our comforts, and must have a call for what we suffer as well as for what we do, if we would have comfort in our sufferings.

Doct. This trouble may breed much vexation and anguish of spirit even in a gracious soul. David speaketh of anguish as well as trouble.

1. Partly from nature. God's children have the feelings of nature as well as others. Christ Jesus, to show the truth of our nature, would express our affections; he had his fears and tears, Heb. v. 7, and so hath legitimated our fears and sorrows. It is an innocent affection to have a dislike of what is contrary to us, to our natural interest; to be without natural affection is among the vices. And—

2. Partly from grace. The children of God are more sensible than others, because they have a reverence for every providence, and look upon it as a good piece of religious manners to observe when God striketh, and to be humble when God is angry, Jer. v. 3; slight spirits are not so much affected. Ordinarily they see not God, nor own God in every stroke; but when the windows of heaven are opened, and the mouth of the great deep below, there must needs be a great sense.

3. Yet there is in it weakness and a mixture of corruption, which may come from an impatience of the flesh, which would fain be at ease: Gen. xlix. 15, 'Rest is good.' Therefore we are filled with anguish when troubled, either from distrust, or at least from inattentiveness to the promises. As there is a negative faith in the wicked, not contradicting the truth of the word, so a negative distrust in the godly, not regarding, not minding the promise, or not regarding the grounds of comfort which it offereth to us; as Hagar saw not the well that was nigh her till God opened her eyes, Gen. xxi. 19; so Mark vi. 52, 'They considered not the miracle of the loaves;' therefore are amazed in themselves beyond measure. 'Have ye forgotten the five loaves and two fishes?' Heb. xii. 5, 'And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh to you as unto children.' Yea, sometimes there may be positive distrust, or actual refusing comfort: Ps. lxxvii. 2, 'My soul refused to be comforted.' As they may not mind comfort, so in great troubles refuse comfort in greater distempers.

4. Sorrow and trouble may revive inward trouble. Affliction in itself is a part of the law's curse, and may revive something of bondage in the hearts of God's children, which is good and useful so far as it quickeneth us to renew our reconciliation with God. Spirits entened by religion are more apprehensive of God's displeasure under afflictions: Num. xii. 14, 'If her father had spit in her face, should she not be ashamed?' If it humble under the mighty hand of God, it is well; but when it filleth us with perplexities and amazement, like wild bulls in a net, or produceth uncomely sorrow, roaring like bears, or mourning as men without hope, it is naught.

Use. Let us take notice how affliction worketh. There is a double extreme, slighting the hand of God, or fainting under it, Heb. xii. 5; we must beware of both. There must be a sense, but it must be kept within bounds; without a sense there can be no improvement; to

despise them is to think them fortuitous. They come from God; their end is repentance, their cause is sin. Two things men cannot endure to have despised, their love and their anger. When David's love was slighted, he vowed to cut off all that pertained to Nabal; and Nebuchadnezzar, when his anger was despised, commanded the furnace to be heated seven times hotter. Nor fainting, for that excludeth God's comforts. God hath the whole guiding and ordering the affliction, and while the rod is in his hand there is no danger. He is a wise God, and cannot be overseen; a God of judgment, by whom all things are weighed, 1 Sam. ii. 3; every drachm and scruple of the cross; a just God, and will punish no more than is deserved: Job xxxiv. 23, 'He will not lay upon man more than is right.' As well no more than is meet, as no more than is right. He is a good God, does only what our need and profit requireth: 'For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men,' Lam. iii. 33.

Doct. That it is the property of a gracious soul to delight in God's commandments.

It was David's practice, and it is the mark of a blessed man: Ps. i. 2, 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord;' and Rom. vii. 22, 'I delight in the law after the inward man;' and Ps. cxii. 1, 'Blessed is the man that delighteth greatly in his commandments.' Delight in moral things, saith Aquinas, is the rule by which we may judge of men's goodness or badness—*Delectatio est quies voluntatis in bono*; men are good and bad as the objects of their delight are; they are good who delight in good things, and they evil who delight in evil things.

We shall consider the nature of delight—

1. In the causes.

2. In the effects of it.

First, The causes are—

1. Proportion and suitableness. Sensitive creatures delight much in such food as is agreeable to their nature. Now the commandments are suitable to the renewed heart: 'The law is in their heart,' Ps. xl. 8; and Ps. xxxvii. 31, 'The law of his God is in his heart.' Divine qualities are planted there, which suit with the rule of holiness and righteousness, Eph. iv. 24. And this is the sum of the law or commandments of God.

2. A second cause is possession of it and communion with it. *Oritur*, saith Aquinas, *ex præsentiali connaturalis boni*. Now one may be said to possess the law or enjoy the law in regard of the knowledge of it or obedience to it: John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' The knowledge of the law, so it be not superficial and fleshly, but full and thorough and savoury, is very comfortable, and goeth toward a good note; but obedience to the law is the cause of delight therein. God's servants rejoice when they can bring on their hearts with any life and power in the way of God's testimonies: Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies more than in all riches.' Thence cometh their comfort and obedience.

3. A third cause of delight is a precedent love of the object. Love is a complacency in and propension towards that which is good,

absolutely considered both in the presence and absence of it. Desire noteth the absence of a good, delight the presence and fruition of it. Therefore a love of the object delighted in is essentially pre-supposed to delight. So that it is impossible for anything to be delighted in but it is first loved. We have experience that many things are delightful in themselves, and known to be such, which yet do not actually delight if they be hated. A man may taste of the sweetness of honey, yet if he hath an antipathy against it he may loathe it. David in this psalm pre-supposeth love as antecedent to delight: Ps. cxix. 47, 'I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.' Carnal men cannot say so; 'For every one that doeth evil hateth the light,' John iii. 20. The renewed only love the commandments. Yea, it doth not only pre-suppose a love of simple complacency, but also a love of desire; for all things are first desired before delighted in. None can truly delight in obedience but such as desire it. Such as can say with David, ver. 40, 'Behold, I have longed after thy precepts;' and ver. 131, 'I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed after thy commandments.' Now all such are blessed, Mat. v. 5.

Secondly, Let us consider the effects.

1. The first is *dilatatio cordis*, the enlarging of the heart; it openeth and wideneth the heart towards the reception of the law, and maketh it more capacious and comprehensive thereof than otherwise it would be: Ps. cxix. 32, 'I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt have enlarged my heart.' The heart is at ease and in a commodious condition, as a body that is in a large and fit place, where it is not straitened; and this is as oil to the wheels.

2. *Delectatio causat sui sitim et desiderium*. Delight in an object causeth a thirst of itself, and more of itself. Even the angels and blessed spirits feel this effect of delight, that it never cloyeth, but they desire more of their own happiness. Much more doth it work so in us, who are in such an imperfect state of enjoyment, upon a twofold account:—

[1.] The objects of spiritual delight are perfect, but the acts whereby we enjoy and possess those objects are imperfect. God is an infinite and all-satisfying good, but the acts whereby we enjoy him here in this life, whereby we have union and communion with him, are imperfect. We know, believe, love, hope but in part, 1 Cor. xiii. 9. Hereupon that delight which ariseth from the imperfect fruition of God here in this life stirreth up to an eager desire after fuller fruition, and unto a further enlargement and intension of those acts whereby such fruition is attained, or wherein it consisteth; still thirsting after more when tasted, 1 Peter ii. 3, 4.

[2.] Spiritual delights may be said to create a desire, as desire importeth a denial or exclusion of loathing; for the objects of spiritual delight and the acts whereby they are enjoyed can never exceed the degree and measure required in them, unless by accident, by reason of some bodily act concurrent therewith, and subservient unto the spiritual operation. The desire can never be too great; the expression of it may be burdensome. We may easily exceed the bounds of moderation in carnal things, but not in spiritual; they can never be

too high and intense. Therefore fresh desires and earnest longings are still kindled and quickened in us ; it never dulls the appetite, but draweth out the soul further and further, and cannot be too eager and zealous after holiness.

3. Another effect of delight is *perficit operationem*, it makes the operation to its object more perfect than otherwise it would be. As a motive or means, it exciteth to a greater care and diligence in promoting the end which we pursue. The delight in the law helpeth to perfect our meditation therein and observation thereof ; by its sweetness it quickeneth, provoketh, and allureth to a greater zeal in both. Delight maketh all things easy : 1 John v. 3, ‘ All her ways are ways of pleasantness,’ Prov. iii. 17 ; ‘ The Sabbath is a delight,’ Isa. lviii. 13. It facilitates duties, and removes difficulties in working.

Now this delight must be sincere, otherwise they are but like the carnal Jews who did delight to know his ways, Isa. lviii. 2. It must not be on foreign reasons. And then it must be universal, otherwise it is but like Herod, who ‘ heard John gladly, and did many things,’ &c., Mark vi. 20. It must be deeply rooted, otherwise it is but like the seed which fell on the stony ground, ‘ which received the word with joy, but dureth but for a while,’ Mat. xiii. 20.

Use 1. To show how far they are from the temper of God’s children whose delight is in sin or the pleasures of the flesh. These have dreggy, muddy souls ; their hearts are on sports, plays, merry-meetings. These desires are soon cloyed, leave a bitterness in the soul ; till we contemn them, we are never fit for a holy life. See Gregory de Valentia.

Use 2. Have we this delight ? The sincerity may be discerned—

1. By the extent. It is extended to all parts of the word, delight in the promises and precepts. To be partial in the law, hypocrites can well allow, Mal. ii. 9.

2. It will be discerned by the effects of it. You will often consult with it : Ps. cxix. 24, ‘ Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors.’

3. It will be a perpetual delight : Job xxvii. 10, ‘ Will he delight himself in the Almighty ? will he always call upon God ?’ You will own it in affliction, as in the text. Many will delight in God’s word when prosperity accompanieth it, but not in trouble and anguish. You will delight in obedience, and in the way of his testimonies ; not talk of it, but do it. The young man’s delight in Dinah made him circumsise himself, Gen. xxxiv. 19.

Lastly, compare it with your delight in things sensible, temporal, and corporeal. If it be sincere and cordial, it will not only equal, but surmount these : ver. 72, ‘ The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver ;’ and ver. 162, ‘ I rejoice in thy word as one that findeth great spoil.’ Spiritual good is greater than corporal, our conjunction with it is more intimate, greater and firmer. The part gratified is more noble, the soul than the body ; it will make these die that the other may live.

Use 3. Let us be exhorted to do what we can for the begetting, increasing, and cherishing this delight in our hearts. If you love God, you cannot but love his word, which is so perfect a representation of

him. If you love holiness, you must needs delight in the word; this is the rule of it. If you love life and happiness, you must needs delight in the word; this is the way that leadeth us to so blessed and glorious an estate. If you love Christ, you will love the word, which offereth him to you. If you love the new nature, you will delight in the word, which is the seed of it. If you would speed in prayer: ver. 77, 'Let thy tender mercies come unto me, for thy law is my delight.' If you would be supported in affliction: ver. 92, 'Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction.'

Doct. In the days of our trouble and anguish God's word will be a great delight and comfort to us.

Such a comfort as will overcome the bitterness of our affliction. So saith David here. When all comforts have spent their virtue, then God's word will be a comfort to us.

Here I shall show—

1. What comfort the word holds out to us.

2. Why afflictions do not diminish it.

First, What comforts it holds forth.

1. The privileges of the afflicted: Rom. v. 1, 2, 'We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience.' Such may rejoice in tribulations; miseries are unstinged, his rods are not signs of his anger. They are in the favour of God, and his heart is with them, however his hand be smart upon them. The habitude and nature of afflictions is altered in themselves; they are the punishments of sin, and so their natural tendency is to despair and bondage. God seemeth to put the old covenant in suit against unbelieving sinners; but now they are trials, preventions, medicines to believers, that proceed from love, and are designed for their good.

2. The word holdeth forth the blessedness of another world: 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Hope is not affrighted by affliction, but worketh. Before corn be ripened it needeth all kinds of weather. The husbandman is glad of showers as well as sunshine; rainy weather is troublesome, but the season requireth it.

3. It assureth us of what is acceptable to God: Micah vi. 8, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?' So it yieldeth comfort through the conscience of our duty, and cheerful reflections on afflicted innocency. Are not these God's ways which we desire to walk in, and for which we are troubled?

4. The word hath notable precepts that ease the heart: Phil. iv. 6, 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God: 1 Peter v. 7, 'Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you;' Prov. xvi. 3, 'Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.' It biddeth us cast all our cares upon God, and commit ourselves to the guidance of his providence.

5. It giveth us many promises of God's being with us, and strengthening and delivering us, and giving us a gracious issue out of all our troubles: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation also

make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' Now it is a great ease to the soul to fly to these promises which are made to his afflicted servants.

6. It breedeth faith, which fixeth the heart: Ps. cxii. 7, 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' It breedeth fortitude, or cleaving to God under the greatest trials, 2 Sam. vi. 22; and Ps. xlv. 17, 18. Now this becometh a testimony and proof of our love to God, and so bringeth comfort. It breedeth obedience, and the doing of good leaveth a pleasure behind it. After sin a sting remaineth, Rom. ii. 14, 15. It breedeth waiting and patience when all hope is cut off: Micah vii. 7, 'Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation;' when such trouble is on us as no end appeareth of it. Most men's comfort holdeth out but whilst there is hope of turning the stream of things. They are not satisfied in their duty nor comforted with promises, but borne up with hopes of success.

Secondly, Why afflictions do rather increase than diminish this?

1. They drive us to these comforts. Man liveth by sense more than by faith when he hath anything about him, but his sorrows drive him to God. Indeed, men that wholly forget God in prosperity will not find his word a delight in adversity: Ps. xxx. 6-8, 'In my prosperity I said I shall never be moved: Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled: I cried unto thee, O Lord,' &c.

2. They prepare us for them; the sweetness of the word is best perceived under the bitterness of the cross. God and his word are never so sweet to the saints as in adversity: Ps. xciv. 19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul;' and 2 Cor. i. 5, 'As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.'

Use. Let no calamity drive you from the commandments, for there you will find more delight than trouble can take from you, 1 John iii. 1, 2. Shall the reproach of men have more power to make us sad than the honour of being God's children hath power to make us joyful? Let us be ashamed that we can delight no more: James i. 2, 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;' Mat. v. 12, 'Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven;' for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you; and 1 Thes. i. 6, 'Ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.'

SERMON CLXI.

The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.—VER. 144.

IN these words—

1. The excellency of the word is again acknowledged, *the righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting.*

2. A prayer is thereupon grounded, *give me understanding.*

3. The fruit and benefit of being heard in that prayer, *and I shall live.*

Because the righteousness of the word is everlasting, therefore we should beg understanding, and this sound understanding maketh way for life.

First, He beginneth with the praise of the word, 'The righteousness of thy testimonies.' The word of God is contemned by none but such as know not the excellency of it, both in its own nature and the fruits of it. The sum of the whole octonary is here repeated.

Doct. That the righteousness and everlasting righteousness of God's testimonies should be deeply imprinted on our minds, and often thought of by us.

This stuck so in David's mind that he could hardly get off from the meditation. Here I shall show you—

1. Wherein the everlasting righteousness of God's testimonies consisteth.

2. What it is to have them deeply imprinted upon our minds, and when they are so.

3. Why they should be deeply imprinted upon our minds.

First, Wherein the everlasting righteousness of God's testimonies consisteth.

Ans. In two things—in the tenor of them, and in the effects.

1. In the tenor, and in that those terms which God dealeth with us are never repealed, but stand in force to all eternity. It is an everlasting truth that he that believeth in Christ shall be saved, and that without holiness no man shall see God. The moral part of the word is unchangeable, and shall never be altered; the same duties and the same privileges do always continue. Our Lord telleth us, Mat. v. 18, 'Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.' The truth of the doctrine of the law and prophets is more firm and stable than the frame of heaven and earth. Heaven and earth may be dissolved and made void, but his law shall never be made void; both in that part wherein he comforts us by his promises, and that part wherein he sets down our duty; we are eternally obliged to obedience, and God hath eternally obliged himself to reward and bless. There is an everlasting and unchangeable ordinance, by which we are bound to God, and he hath bound himself to us. We should not change, and God will not, having passed his word to us. The everlasting obligation on us dependeth on God's authority; the everlasting obligation on God's part dependeth on his own truth and veracity. And though we are poor changeable creatures, God hath interposed his authority: Mal. iii. 6, 'I am the Lord; I change not;' James i. 17, 'In him there is no change or shadow of turning.' God would change if his truth was changed, but that is everlasting. It is not in the power of men to annihilate and change the law; they may break the law, but they cannot annihilate and change the law. Though it be not fulfilled by them, yet it shall be fulfilled in them and upon them. And God will not annihilate the law, for God cannot change or deny himself; in those things wherein he hath engaged his truth to the creature, he is immutable and infallible. Another expression is, Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21,

‘If you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, that there shall not be day and night in their seasons, then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant.’ The one shall not fail any more than the other. God compareth the firmness of his covenant with those things that are most unalterable, the standing of heaven and earth, the constant course of night and day. The ceremonial law was not abrogated till fulfilled in Christ. This is God’s last will ; the terms of life and salvation are still the same, other conditions are not to be expected.

2. In regard of the effects. These testimonies endure for ever, both in a way of grace and glory. In a way of grace, the word worketh in the heart an eternal principle, and carries us beyond temporal things, 2 Cor. iv. 18 ; 1 Peter i. 23, ‘Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.’ The word worketh in us an eternal principle, which will abide with us as the root of everlasting blessedness. They that have served God faithfully shall not be deprived of eternal glory. Now, in glory the word abideth for ever, for though the souls of men are immortal, yet they have not in them a principle of blessed immortality. Sin is the root of eternal perdition, but grace of incorruption and eternal happiness. The wicked, though the substance of their soul and body shall not be annihilated, but upheld unto all eternity by the mighty power of God in the midst of eternal torments, yet all their glory and pleasure shall be consumed, and they themselves shall ever languish under the wrath of a highly provoked and then irreconcilable God : 1 John ii. 17, ‘He that doth the will of God abideth for ever.’ The wicked shall endure by the word of God ; it is a living death in regard of the execution of eternal wrath upon them that reject it, and the performance of everlasting blessings which are promised to them that receive and obey it ; this will abide when other things fade. The word of God keepeth the godly and wicked alive in some sense.

Secondly, When is the word deeply imprinted upon our minds ? That is discovered by two things—sound belief and serious consideration ; when it is strongly believed, and often duly considered.

1. When it is strongly believed, or else it worketh not : for all things work according to the faith we exercise about them : 1 Thes. ii. 13, ‘The word of God, which worketh effectually also in you that believe.’ Did we believe that our eternal condition depended upon the observance or non-observance of this rule, we would regard it more : Ps. cxix. 66, ‘Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I have believed thy commandments.’ Lord, I believe I must stand or fall by this rule, and therefore let me know all my duty. So Heb. xi. 13, ‘Being persuaded of these things, they embraced them.’ We have not a thorough persuasion about these things ; our persuasions about eternal things are very weak, when God’s expressions about it are very clear and strong. Most men guess at a world to come, but are not thoroughly persuaded. They have a loose or general opinion that the scripture is the word of God, the rule by which they shall be tried ; but do not soundly assent to it, and receive it as the word by which they shall be judged at the last day, John xii. 48. Christ pronounceth as the word pronounceth. There is a non-contradiction, but

not an active and lively faith ; this and nothing but this bindeth the will and conscience to obedience.

2. Often considered. David still insists upon this, the everlasting righteousness of God's testimonies. It is as if he had said, I have said it already, and I will repeat it again and again. It is constant thoughts are operative, and musing maketh the fire burn. Green wood is kindled not by a flash or spark, but by constant blowing. Deep, frequent, and ponderous thoughts leave some impression upon the heart ; the greatest matters in the world will not work much upon him that will not think upon them ; all the efficacy is lost for want of these ponderous thoughts. Why are all the offers and invitations of God's grace of so little effect? Mat. xxii. 5, *οἱ δὲ ἀμελήσαντες*, they made light of it, they would not take it into their care and thoughts. Why do all the injunctions and precepts of God work no more? Men will not consider in their hearts, Deut. iv. 39, 40, all the commendations of God ; and therefore he calls upon them, 'Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver,' Ps. l. 22. It is for want of this that all the promises of God, of heaven and happiness work so little upon us : 2 Tim. ii. 7, 'Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.' The truth lieth by, neglected, unimproved, till consideration take it up, and lay it in the view of conscience, and then it worketh. Till we take it into our thoughts, we have no use of any truth ; therefore set your hearts seriously to consider of these things.

Thirdly, Why the everlasting righteousness of God's testimonies should be deeply imprinted in our minds.

1. It establisheth our judgments against vain fancies, and the humour of other gospelling. The apostle saith, Gal. i. 8, 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed ;' 1 Tim. vi. 3, 'If any man teach otherwise,' &c. There are some that expect *speculum spiritus sancti*, a greater measure of light beyond what the Spirit now affordeth, new nuncios from heaven, to assail the doubts of the perplexed world. No ; the present rule leadeth a believer all along in his way to heaven ; other and better institution shall not be, cannot be. Christ promised to bless this doctrine to the world's end : Mat. xxviii. 20, 'I will be with you to the end of the world ;' to guide and succour them. Christ prayed for no others but those that believe through their word, John xvii. 20 ; this word which the apostles have consigned to the use of the church. An angel is accursed if he should bring any other doctrine, Gal. i. 8. There is no other way of salvation given or to be given, Acts. iv. 12. If an angel should hold out another way, believe it not. The apostle propounds an impossible case to show the certainty of this way ; it is good to be sure of our rule ; now this consideration helpeth that.

2. Because it bindeth and helpeth to obedience, partly as it sheweth the absolute necessity of obedience, because the terms of salvation are indispensably fixed, and will everlastingly stand in force ; therefore I must yield to God or perish. The soul cometh off most kindly to the ways of God when it is shut up unavoidably, without all hope of escape and evasion but by yielding to God's terms. The Lord will have the world

know that there is no hope of a dispensation : Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.' The terms are peremptorily fixed ; there is no relaxation in the gospel covenant. Now this doth bind the heart exceedingly to consider, ver. 152 of this psalm, 'Concerning thy testimonies, I have known them of old ; thou hast founded them for ever.' And partly as it urgeth to speediness of obedience. You will not get better terms, for the righteousness of God's terms is everlasting ; as good yield at first as at last. The laws of Christianity are always the same, and your heart is not likely to be better by delay. Your standing out were more justifiable in the account of reason if you could get better terms. Partly as it engageth to seriousness whilst it carrieth the mind off from the vanities of the world into the midst of the world to come. I am not to mind what will content me for the present, but what will profit me for ever : holiness will abide when other things fade. My ways are to be scanned by an eternal rule. Some distinctions will not outlive time, as rich and poor, high and low ; but the distinction of holy or unholy, sanctified or unsanctified, these abide : 1 Peter i. 24, 'All flesh is grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass ; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.' Nothing stirreth us up more to provide for a better life than to consider the uncertainty of the world's glory, and the everlastingness of God's approbation according to the rule of his word. When all things are dissolved, we are to be tried by a rule that will never fail. Our pomp, and honour, and credit, and all things that we hunt after in the world, are soon blasted, but the gospel tells us of things that are everlasting—everlasting torments and everlasting bliss ; and therefore our thoughts should be more about them : Isa. lv. 2, 'Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ?' and John vi. 27, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life.' And partly as it engageth to constancy in obedience ; for it must last as long as our rule lasteth. You are eternally bound to love God, and fear him and obey him. We must not only begin well, or serve him now and then in a good mood, but so love God as to love him for ever, so cleave to him as never to depart from him. For his law is an eternal obligation ; you must never cease your work till you receive your wages, and that is when you enter into eternity. Yea, much of our work is wages, loving, praising God ; all duties that do not imply weakness are a part of our happiness. Thus it hath a greater influence upon our obedience than we were at first aware of.

3. Because it conduceth much to our comfort. The apostle telleth us that the comfort of believers is built upon two immutable grounds, therefore it is so strong, Heb. vi. 18. Now this everlasting righteousness of God's testimonies is a comfort to us—

[1.] In all the changes of men's affections towards us. Sometimes they smile and sometimes they frown, but the promises ever remain the same. There is Yea and Nay with men, but not with the promises ; they are all Yea and Amen in Christ, 2 Cor. i. 20. Times alter and change, but the tenor of the covenant is always the same.

[2.] It comforts us in the changes of God's dispensations to us.

God may change his dispensations, yet his purposes of grace stand firm, and are carried on unalterably, by various and contrary means. We must interpret providence by the covenant, not the covenant by providence. We know the meaning of his works best by going into his sanctuary. The world misconstrueth his work and dealing to his children many times. If it be rightly interpreted, you will find God's righteousness is an everlasting righteousness. Sometimes God's providence is dark, but always just: Ps. xcvii. 2, 'Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne;' Hab. i. 12, 'Art not thou from everlasting, O Lord my God?' That was the prophet's support in those sad times, when a treacherous people were exalted, when he was embrangled and lost about God's dispensations; this was his comfort and support, God's eternal immutability in the covenant. He is always the same, loveth his people as much as ever, as faithful and mindful of his covenant as ever; only a veil of sense covereth our eyes that we cannot see it.

[3.] It comforts us against the difficulties of obedience, when it groweth irksome to us. The difficulty and trouble is but for a while, but we shall everlastingly have the comfort of it: 2 Cor. iv. 17, 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Then it will be no grief of heart to us to have watched, prayed, striven against sin, suffered, continued with him notwithstanding all temptations: Rom. ii. 7, 'To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life.'

[4.] It is a comfort in death. We change and are changed, but God is always the same, the righteousness of Christ will bear weight for ever: Dan. ix. 24, 'To bring in an everlasting righteousness.' The fruits of obedience last for ever: Ps. cxii. 7, 'His righteousness endureth for ever.' How comfortable is this to remember, that we may appear before God with this confidence, which he hath wrought in us, that the covenant of grace is an everlasting charter, that shall never be out of date nor wax old.

Use. Let it be thus with us; let it be so deeply imprinted upon our minds that it may leave an everlastingness there upon the frame of our spirits; for then we are transformed by the word, and cast into the mould of it. Now, who are they that have an everlasting righteous frame of heart?

1. Such as act out of an everlasting principle, or the new nature which worketh above the world. The word ingrafted is called an incorruptible seed, or the seed of God, 1 Peter i. 23, 'that abideth in us,' 1 John iii. 9; when there is a divine principle in us, such a principle as is the seed and beginning of eternal life; when the word hath rooted itself in our hearts.

2. Such as by their constant progress towards an everlasting estate are going from strength to strength, serving God, and cleaving to him in a uniform constant course of holiness, not by fits and starts, but unchangeably: Acts xxiv. 16, 'To have always a conscience void of offence.' Again, when you are in such an estate wherein you can bear the trial of those everlasting rules: Gal. vi. 8, 'He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to

the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting ;' Rom. viii. 13, ' If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' In short, if you have everlasting ends: 2 Cor. iv. 18, ' While we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' Not making things temporal our scope and aim ; that will not satisfy us : when we are deeply possessed with the thoughts of the other world : 1 Cor. ii. 12, ' We have not received the spirit of the world,' and look upon all other things by the by, and use the world as if we used it not, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30.

Secondly, I come now to the prayer, ' Give me understanding, and I shall live.'

1. Here is the benefit asked, *understanding*.

2. The person asking, David, *give me*.

3. The person from whom it is asked, from God.

First, The benefit asked, ' Give me understanding ;' that is, the saving knowledge of God's testimonies.

Doct. One great request that we have to put up to God should be for the saving knowledge of his testimonies.

The reasons why this should be our great request to God.

1. The necessity of understanding ; that will appear—

[1.] Because of our ignorance and folly, which is the cause of all our sin : Titus iii. 3, ' We ourselves were sometimes foolish and disobedient ;' therefore disobedient because foolish. Every natural man is a fool, blind in spiritual things ; whatever understanding or quickness of judgment he hath in other things, in all things that relate to God and heaven, blind and foolish, and cannot see afar off : 2 Peter i. 9, ' He that lacketh these things is blind.' And you shall find that sinners are called fools : Prov. i. 22, ' How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity ? and scorners delight in scorning and fools hate knowledge ?' Ps. lxxv. 4, ' I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly ; and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn.' They follow their own wit and will, to the ruin of bodies and souls, and all that they have. Their mirth is the mirth of fools, Eccles. vii. 4, 5 ; their service the sacrifice of fools, Eccles. v. 1 ; 2 Sam. xxiv. 10, ' I have done very foolishly ;' therefore give me understanding.

[2.] Knowledge is our cure. The state of grace is called a state of light : Eph. v. 8, ' Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.' So that the new estate is described by light, a directive and a persuasive light. It is very notable in Eph. v. 14, ' Arise from the dead, and God shall give thee light ;' and Acts xxvi. 18, ' To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.' In our natural estate we are all over darkness, slaves to the prince of darkness, doing the works of darkness, and posting on apace into utter darkness ; and therefore it is light must cure us, and guide us into a better course : Col. i. 13, ' Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.'

2. Because of the excellency of understanding ; therefore we should make it our request to God. Here are four considerations :—

[1.] Knowledge in the general is man's excellency. It is our privi-

lege above the beasts ; many of them excel us in beauty of colour, in strength, and nimbleness, and vivacity, and long life, and acuteness of sense ; but we excel them in knowledge. And so God hath taught us more than the beasts of the field. Man is a rational creature, his life standeth in light : John i. 4, ‘ In him was life, and the life was the light of men.’ Other creatures have life, but not such a life as is light, are not endowed with a reasonable soul and a faculty of understanding. The more of knowledge there is increased in us, the more of man there is in us.

[2.] Divine knowledge is better than all other knowledge ; to know God’s nature and will, to know how God will be pleased, and how we may come to enjoy him ; all other knowledge doth but please the fancy, this doth us good to the heart : Jer. ix. 23, 24, ‘ Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man glory in his might ; let not the rich man glory in his riches : but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me ;’ as not in strength, so not in natural wisdom. Here I may take the argument of the text. Men do not properly live if they want the light of heavenly wisdom ; without divine knowledge a man is little better than a beast. The endowment of reason was not given us merely to shift for ourselves, or provide for the animal life ; other creatures do that better by instinct and natural sagacity, and are contented with less. No ; man’s life was given him for some other end, to know and serve his Maker.

[3.] Of all the knowledge of God, practical knowledge is better than speculative ; not so much subtly to be able to discourse of his nature as to obey his will : Jer. xxii. 16, ‘ He judged the cause of the poor and needy ; was not this to know me ? saith the Lord.’ The knowledge of God is not measured by sharpness of wit, but by serious ready practice ; not strength of parts, but a good and honest heart ; so to understand as to keep them : Ps. cxi. 10, ‘ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.’ They understand best, not who can discourse most subtly, but who live most holily. When our faith is more strong, our reverence of God increased, our obedience more ready, then is our knowledge sound ; when we follow those courses which we know God delighteth in, Jer. ix. 24, and study to please him in all things : 1 John ii. 4, ‘ He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.’ He that doth not make conscience of his duty, he knoweth no such sovereign being as God is, that hath power to command, to save, and to destroy : Titus i. 16, ‘ They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him.’ So 1 John iii. 6, ‘ Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him nor known him.’ Well, then, in giving his word, God’s end was not to make trial of their wits, who could most sharply conceive ; nor of their memories, who could most firmly retain ; nor of their eloquence, who could most neatly discourse ; but of their hearts, who would most obediently submit to him : that is knowledge indeed which tendeth to use and practice. Look, as *scire malum non est malum*—to know evil is not evil, for God knoweth evil, yet his knowledge is not evil ; so *scire bonum, non est bonum*, to know that which is good doth not make a man good. This is the distinction between understanding and will ; the under-

standing draweth the object to itself, but the will is drawn by the object to it. If I understand anything, I am not in a moral sense that which I understand; but if I will anything, or love anything, I am what I will and love. This is the difference between the two faculties.

[4.] Transforming, regenerating, saving knowledge is the best part of practical knowledge. I add this because general knowledge may produce good life, or some outward conformity in the unregenerate: 2 Peter ii. 20, 'For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Those that are destitute of the saving knowledge of Christ, they may cleanse their external conversation by that rational conviction, though not spiritual illumination, though strangers to inward mortification, and unrenewed in heart; yea, avoid gross sins, perform external duties. Oh! but the lively saving light, such as subdueth the heart to God, such as maketh a thorough change in us, that is the best: 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.' When we so know Christ as to be like him, this is like heaven's knowledge: 1 John iii. 2, 'And when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' Common truths have another efficacy, when they understand them by the lively light of the Spirit; when men know the torments of hell so as to flee from them: Mat. iii. 7, 'Flee from wrath to come;' as a man would out of a ship that is sinking or a house falling. So when we see heaven so as it maketh us seek after it, Heb. iv. 1, so to know Christ as to be made like him, this will do us good, and this is one of God's best gifts.

Use. Oh! then, beg this gift of God. Lord, give me understanding eyes. Do not beg riches, and honours, and great things in the world, but beg for understanding; it is pleasing to God, 2 Chron. i. 12. This will bring other things with it. Be importunate, take no nay; Prov. ii. 3, cry for knowledge, lift up thy voice for understanding. It will not come at the first call. Follow God as the blind man, Mark x. 5, 'Lord, that my eyes may be opened, that I may receive my sight.' So be earnest with God that the eyes of your understanding may be opened, that you may have such a sight of heaven as that your affections may be set upon things above; such a sight of hell as that ye may flee for refuge as if the avenger of blood were at your heels. Without this there can be no true piety: Ps. xiv. 3, 'There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.' Nay, there can be no salvation without this: Isa. xxvii. 11, 'It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will have no mercy upon them,' &c. Ignorant people have a saying, He that made them will save them; but it is said they have no understanding; therefore he that made them will not save them; and therefore beg of God that he would break in upon your minds with the lively light of his Spirit.

Secondly, Here is the person asking this request, David, one well acquainted with God and his ways.

Doct. None know so much of God and his ways but they still need to know more. Petitions for understanding do not only become beginners, but grown Christians.

Three reasons of this point :—

1. That we may escape the deceits of a subtle devil, who lieth in wait for us, and assaults us on every hand, and maketh great advantage of the relics of our ignorance. The devils are called, Eph. vi. 12, 'Rulers of the darkness of this world.' The dark part of the world is the devil's territory ; and so much of ignorance as is in the children of God, so much advantage hath Satan against us : 2 Cor. ii. 11, 'Lest Satan should get an advantage ; for we are not ignorant of his devices.' The more we know, the less advantage the devil hath of us ; he layeth snares for us where we least suspect.

2. That we may serve a holy God with that exactness and diligence as will become his excellency. The fault of the heathen was that 'when they knew God, they glorified him not as God,' Rom. i. 21 ; because they knew so little, they did not improve the knowledge they had ; and this is true in some degree of every Christian. God would be more loved, feared, trusted, served, did we know more of him. The clearer our sight, the warmer our hearts will be in his service : 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 'Know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and willing mind.' If we did know God, we would devote ourselves to his service.

3. That we may be prepared for our everlasting estate by degrees. Our everlasting estate is called the inheritance of the saints in light. Now we grow more meet for it by increasing in holiness : Prov. iv. 18, 19, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day ; the way of the wicked is darkness, they know not at what they stumble.' The just man is like the light that increaseth as the day groweth ; the wicked are like the night that increaseth to thick darkness, till at last they fall into utter darkness.

Use. Well, then, let not only poor ignorant creatures, or young beginners, take up David's prayer, but also grown Christians of longer standing. Go to God, and say, Give me understanding. Partly because practical knowledge is never at a stand ; knowing of things as we ought to know them, it is possible for a man to see round about the compass of revealed truths. Though extensively no more truths are to be known, yet intensively we may know them better. The best are defective in their knowledge. And partly, too, because it is a very satisfactory thing to be sure we are in God's way ; in some nice debates it is hard to discern God's interest, when all circumstances must be considered, and temptations hinder the sight of our duty. And partly that we may justify the ways of God against cavils, Mat. xxiv. 24. We have to do with men that would even puzzle the very elect, if it were possible.

Thirdly, To whom is this petition made ? To God.

Doct. If we would have the knowledge of divine things, we must seek to God.

I will give you some grounds of this. Partly because he is the fountain of knowledge, the first mind or intellect, called in scripture 'the Father of lights,' James i. 17. He is the sun that must not only shine on us, to make us see things, but shine through us to make us be enlightened ourselves. Ours is but a participation. Now, to show whence we receive all, God will be asked. And partly, too, because God gave the rule, and therefore he must interpret it, *ejus est*

interpretari cujus est condere. He can best show his own meaning ; and therefore in all doubtful cases repair to him, especially since he hath undertaken in necessary cases : Jer. xxxi. 34, 'For they shall all know me from the least to the greatest ;' and loveth to be employed by his people for that end and purpose. Once more, without his Spirit the clearest light we have hath no efficacy, Rom. i. 18. He will have it sought.

I come to the third and last thing, the fruit and benefit, 'And I shall live.' I shall explain the words in the prosecution of this point.

Doct. The saving knowledge of God's testimonies is the only way to live.

There is a threefold life :—

1. Life natural.
2. Life spiritual.
3. Life eternal.

In all these considerations may the point be made good.

First, Life is taken for the life of nature, or the life of the body, or life temporal, called 'this life' in scripture, 1 Cor. xv. 19 ; 1 Tim. iv. 8. Among outward things nothing is more precious than life ; it maketh us capable of enjoying what the world can afford to us. We give all that we have to preserve it, Job ii. 9. Indeed, in competition with worldly things, we do well to value it ; but not in competition with our duty and love to Christ ; so we must not count our life dear to us : Acts xx. 24, 'I count not my life dear to me ;' and Luke xiv. 26, 'Whosoever hateth not father and mother,' &c., 'and his own life.' Out of the conscience of our duty to Christ, we must be willing to expose it, for he can give us a better life, John xi. 24 ; but otherwise so far as we can preserve it with our duty, it must be precious to us, and we must seek the interests of it. Well, then, in this sense it is no unbecoming thing for a Christian to say, 'Give me understanding, that I may live.' My life present, which mine enemies seek to take from me, this life is from God, both originally and in a way of constant preservation. God gave it at first : Gen. ii. 7, 'God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul ;' and still this life is at God's disposing, and he will sooner continue it to us in a way of obedience than in a way of sin : Job x. 12, 'Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit ;' Acts xvii. 28, 'In him we live and move, and have our being.' The same power that giveth us being maintaineth it as long as he pleaseth. All is at the daily dispose of God.

2. Life is better preserved in a way of obedience than by evil-doing ; that provoketh God to cast us off, and exposes us to dangers. It is not in the power of the world to make us live or die a day sooner or longer than God pleaseth. If God will make us happy, they cannot make us miserable. Therefore 'Give me understanding, and I shall live ;' that is, lead a comfortable and happy life for the present. Prevent sin, and you prevent danger. Obedience is the best way to preserve life temporal. As great a paradox as it seems to the world, it is a scripture truth : Prov. iv. 4, 'Keep my commandments, and live ;' and ver. 13, 'Take hold of instruction ; let her not go, keep her, for she is thy life ;' and Prov. iii. 16, 'Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left riches and honour ;' and ver. 18, 'She is a tree

of life.' The knowledge and practice of the word is the only means to live comfortably and happily here, as well as for ever hereafter.

Secondly, Life spiritual; that is twofold—the life of justification and the life of sanctification.

1. The life of justification: Rom. v. 18, 'The free gift came upon all men to justification of life.' He is dead not only on whom the hangman hath done his work, but also he on whom the judge hath passed sentence, and the law pronounceth him dead. In this sense we were all dead, and justification is called justification to life; there is no living in this sense without knowledge: Isa. liii. 11, 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.' We live by faith, and faith cometh by hearing, and hearing doth no good unless the Lord giveth understanding; as meats nourish not unless received and digested.

2. The life of sanctification: Eph. ii. 1, 'And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.' And men live not properly till they live the life of grace; they live a false counterfeit life, not a blessed, happy, certain, and true life. Now this life is begun and carried on by saving knowledge: Col. iii. 10, 'The new man is renewed in knowledge.' Again, men are said to be 'alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them,' Eph. iv. 18. They that are ignorant are dead in sin. Life spiritual cometh by knowledge. hence beginneth the change of the inward man, and thenceforth we live. Give me understanding, *ut vere in te vivam*, that the true life begun in me may grow and increase daily, but never be quenched by sin.

Thirdly, Life everlasting, or our blessed estate in heaven. So it is said of the saints departed, they all live to God, Luke xx. 38; and this is called water of life, the tree of life, the crown of life; properly this is life. What is the present life in comparison of everlasting life? The present life, it is *mors vitalis*, a living death, or *mortalis vita*, a dying life, a kind of death; it is always *in fluxu*, like a stream; it runneth from us as fast as it cometh to us: Job xiv. 2, 'He flieth as a shadow, and continueth not.' We die as fast as we live; it differeth but as the point from the line where it terminateth. It is not one and the same, no permanent thing; it is like the shadow of a star in a flowing stream; its contentments are base and low, Isa. lvii. 10, called 'the life of thy hands;' it is patched up, of several creatures, fain to ransack the storehouses of nature to support a ruinous fabric. And compare it with a life of grace here; it doth not exempt us from sin, nor miseries. Our capacities are narrow, we are full of fears and doubts and dangers; but in the life of glory we shall not sin or sorrow more. This is meant here, 'The righteousness of God's testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.' It is chiefly meant of the life of glory; this is the fruit of saving knowledge, John xvii. 3, when we so know God and Christ as to come to God by him.

Use. Let us seek the saving knowledge of God, that we may live, first spiritually here, and gloriously here. But few mind it; all desire sharpness of wit, and to be as knowing as others; no man would be a fool, but would own a wickedness in morals rather than a weakness in

intellectuals ; but who thinketh of being wiser for heaven, of being seasoned with the fear of God ? Most men choke all the motions and inclinations they have in that kind with worldly delights and worldly businesses, being alive to the world and dead to God, thronging their hearts with carnal vanities, but leaving no room for higher and serious thoughts.

But at length be persuaded ; what do men desire but life ? If you know God and Christ with a saving knowledge, you shall have it. (1.) We were made for this end, to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved, 1 Tim. ii. 4. We do not live merely to live, but to make provision for a better life ; not to satisfy our bodies out of God's storehouse, but to furnish our souls with grace, and exercise ourselves in his law day and night, that we may know his will concerning us, and provide for a better life, and live according to the directions of his word. (2.) No creature is so bad as man when he degenerateth from his end for which he was created : it is not so much for the sea to break its bounds, or to have a defect in the course of nature, as the degeneration of man. (3.) You live not properly when destitute of the life of God and heavenly wisdom : he doth not live the life of a man, nor preserve the rectitude of his nature.

SERMON CLXII.

I cried with my whole heart ; hear me, O Lord : I will keep thy statutes.—VER. 145.

In these words are—

1. An allegation, *I cried with my whole heart.*
2. A petition, *hear me.*
3. A promise of obedience, *I will keep thy statutes.*

1. In the allegation we have a description of prayer, by the two adjuncts of it :—

- [1.] Intension and fervency, ‘ *I cried.*’
- [2.] The sincerity and integrity of it, ‘ *With my whole heart.*’

2. The petition is for audience ; only, what we translate ‘ *hear me,*’ is in the Hebrew ‘ *answer me.*’ Now this being a general, it is uncertain what he prayed for : it may be for deliverance out of trouble ; for in the 146th verse it is ‘ *save me,*’ but in the 149th verse it is ‘ *quicken me,*’ which implieth the vigour of the spiritual life, or grace to keep God's statutes. Whether for the one or the other, David would be heard.

3. Here is a promise of obedience, ‘ *I will keep thy statutes ;*’ which is mentioned either as the end and scope of his prayer, ‘ *That I may keep thy statutes ;*’ or as a holy vow and promise which the saints are wont to mingle with their prayers, ‘ *I will,*’ &c. He would diligently serve God if the Lord would hear him.

First, I begin with the allegation or description of David's carriage in prayer. David devoured not his grief, nor nourished his unbelief, but opened his heart unto God, and that in an affectionate manner :