

relenteth when you relent and lie at his feet; for to what use doth pardoning mercy serve but to encourage broken-hearted sinners? 'We have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful kings.' Benhadad having lost the day, and in great fear of losing his life with his kingdom, his friends comforted him with the fame they had heard of Israel's kings, 1 Kings xx. 31. We know most certainly it is hard to raise up truly poor, downcast sinners, how presumptuous soever they have been before. God would have these by all means to be encouraged; so that though you have many objections from your unworthiness, the multitude and greatness of your sins. Or is it the power of men, and difficulty of our deliverance? God's mercy is beyond the proportion of their cruelty. The more violent and ungodly our oppressors are, the more hope of God's pity towards us: Ps. lxxxvi. 14, 15, 'O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul, and have not set thee before them: but thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.'

[2.] Let us magnify it as to gratulation: Gen. xxxii. 10, 'I am not worthy of all the mercy,' &c. Less than the least of all thy mercies. Let us consider our unworthiness; that God may have all the glory.

Use 2. To press us to be merciful: we should be like God, let us put on bowels of mercy: Col. iii. 12, 'Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;' Luke vi. 36, 'Be ye therefore merciful, as your heavenly Father also is merciful.'

SERMON CLXXV.

Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.—VER. 161.

In this verse we have—

First, David's temptation.

Secondly, The godly frame of his spirit.

First, In David's temptation, take notice of—

1. The nature of it, it was a persecution.
2. The instruments of it, Saul, and the chief men about him, *princes*.
3. The malice and groundlessness of it, *without a cause*.

Secondly, The godly frame of his heart, *but my heart, &c.* And there we have—

1. The seat of his affection, *my heart*.

2. The kind of the affection, *standeth in awe*.

3. The object of it, the *word* of God.

First, With David's temptation I will not meddle any further than an introduction, or the necessity of an exposition enforceth me a little to reflect upon. And—

1. From the nature of it. Persecution is one of the ordinary trials of God's children. As God chasteneth them because they are no better,

Isa. xxvii. 9, so the world persecuteth them because they are so good, John xv. 19. This ever hath been and ever will be the lot of God's children while there are two seeds in the world: Gen. iii. 15, 'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' And the apostle saith, Gal. iv. 29, 'But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, so it is now.' The first place speaketh of the antipathy between the church and its open opposites; the second was in Abraham's family, and it is brought to comfort the true members of the Christian church against those persecutions which they sustained from the false apostles and such as adhered to the Jewish synagogue. Isaac was begotten by the power of God's Spirit, according to the tenor of the promise; Ishmael by the ordinary strength of nature, a figure of the regenerate and unregenerate, John i. 13. Persecution is a thing common to the church in all ages, then and now; therefore, as they grow worse, let us grow better; and let us be content to take the ordinary way, by the cross, to come to the crown.

2. The instruments of his trouble were Saul and his chief men about him. The man of God had said, 'Many are my persecutors,' ver. 157; now he showeth they were not mean ones, and of the inferior sort, but such as by their power were able to crush him, such as by their place should be a refuge to him. I observe, the trial is the sorer when our trouble cometh not only from the basest of the people, but from the rulers themselves. No doubt a great part of the people followed Saul in his persecuting of David, yet the nobles most troubled him. In the primitive times, *lapidibus nos invadit inimicum vulgus*—the base riff-raff were most ready to stone the Christians; but this was mere brutish rage: a multitude, though they have power, yet they have no authority. But when the rulers were set against them, and persecuted them with edicts and punishments, then the greatest havoc was made of them. To see God's ordinance abused maketh the trial the more grievous. The godly should be defended by their governors, for therefore they are called the shields of the earth, Ps. xlix. 9. But now when they persecute them for righteousness' sake, it is a sore but no strange temptation. They may do so partly out of ignorance: 1 Cor. ii. 8, 'Which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;' and partly out of prejudice and blind zeal; so the corner-stone is refused by the builders, Ps. cxviii. 22, applied to Christ's persecutors: Acts iv. 11, 'The stone that was set at nought by you builders is become the head of the corner;' and partly by the instigation of evil men. Wicked men labour to engage those who are in power against the people of God, and make them odious to them: Prov. xxix. 10, 'The bloodthirsty hate the upright.' Flattery giveth the first onset to the work of impiety, Acts xxiv. 1-3. And partly because riches and power efferate men, swell them with pride, fill them with enmity against the ways of God: Ps. cxxiii. 4, 'Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and the contempt of the proud.' Well, then, let us not be dismayed though great men be prejudiced against us, and we have powerful enemies in church and state: Mat. x. 17, 18, 'But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and

they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.' Though we be persecuted with censures, civil and ecclesiastical, and both judicatures thunder against us: John xvi. 1, 2, 'These things have I told you, that you should not be offended; they shall put you out of the synagogue; yea, the time cometh when they that kill you will think they do God good service.' It is a stumbling-block to see power, which is of God, bent against God and his interest; the beast in the Revelations pushed with the horns of the lamb. But Christ hath told us of these things beforehand, that we should be fore-armed against them. Christ's followers must not only look for injuries from wicked men in a tumultuous way, but ordinarily carried by fixed judicatures; thrown out of the church by excommunication, and out of the world by death. Let us bless God that our rulers deal more Christianly by us; and let us not irritate them, but show all love and meekness and obedience; and let the mild government of our gracious sovereign move us to pray to God for the continuance of his life, and the prosperity of his affairs: it is but a necessary gratitude that we should pay him for the rest and peace we enjoy under him.

3. The malice and groundlessness of this persecution, 'without cause.' David did not suffer for his deserts as an evil-doer; he had done nothing disobediently against Saul's authority; when he had spared him in the cave, he giveth him an ample testimony: 1 Sam. xxiv. 17, 'Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good, but I have rewarded thee evil.' Again, he had another testimony when he surprised his camp sleeping: 1 Sam. xxvi. 21, 'Return, my son David; I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes: behold I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.' Theodoret expoundeth this of the next verse, with application to these passages. When David found Saul asleep he would not kill him, and this was more comfort to him than if he had slain and obtained all their spoils. Observe, we may the better represent our case to God when we suffer without a cause; then our sufferings are clean sufferings, more comfortable to us, and honourable to God. It was Daniel's glory that they could find no occasion or fault against him, but only in the matter of his God, Dan. vi. 4, 5. Blameless carriage disappoints the malice of wicked men, or shameth them. *Cajus Sejus vir bonus nisi quod Christianus.* Now a pretended crime doth not take away the glory from us. Saul pretended that David was an enemy to his life and crown, but David declared the contrary by word and deed; he might have slain him twice. 'Put to silence the ignorance of foolish men,' 1 Peter ii. 15. There may be in man's court a cause which before God is no just cause, as when we are punished for the breach of law which is contrary to our duty to God: Ps. xciv. 20, 'Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?'

Well, then, whatever we suffer, let it be without a cause. There is cause enough on God's part to afflict and strike us for our sins; but on man's part, let us not procure sufferings to ourselves by our provocations. We shall hereby have more peace in sufferings, and bring more honour to religion: 1 Peter iii. 17, 'For it is better, if the will

of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing;’ 1 Peter iv. 15, 16, ‘But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer. Yet if any suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in that behalf.’ Surely Christ’s cross is more comfortable than the cross of Barabbas.

Secondly, Let us come to his gracious frame of heart, to stand in awe of the word, *but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.*

Doct. It is a gracious frame of heart to stand in awe of the word of God.

God’s people are often described by it: Prov. xiii. 13, ‘Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed; but whoso feareth a commandment shall be rewarded.’ There are many fear a judgment, when, to visible appearance, it is like to tread upon the heels of sin; yea, and some fear a threatening, at least when it is like to be accomplished; but who fears a commandment but a gracious heart? This is reason enough to draw back if a commandment stand in the way; it is more than if there was a lion in the way, or a band of armed enemies, or an angel with a drawn sword, such as stood in the way to stop Balaam. They have a deep reverence of God’s authority, and dare not break through, when God by his law hath fenced up their way. So Isa. lxvi. 2, ‘To him will I look that is of a poor and contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word;’ a man that is affected according to his doom and sentence passed in the word; if the word speaketh bitter things, or the word speaketh peace, accordingly the man is affected; this is the man that God will look at: Ezra ix. 4, ‘Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel.’ None so careful to redress disorders, to use all the means they can to prevent judgment, as those that tremble at God’s word; and therefore they above others did assemble to Ezra. A man hath gained a great point when he doth not value his condition by external probabilities, but by the sentence of the word. It is hopeful if the word speaketh good unto it, sad when the word speaketh bitter things. This man will be otherwise affected than the most are, and more careful to please God. Once more: Ezra x. 3, ‘Those that tremble at the commandment of our God.’ Shechaniah referreth the reformation to them. These are persons exactly conscientious; they make God’s commandments their rule, and tremble at the apprehension of having anything done against God’s will. None so fit as they to judge of cases of conscience and to regulate affairs; men that enlarge themselves, and do not stand so nicely on the will of God, will be more lax and complying with their own lusts and the humours of men.

1. I will show you what it is to stand in awe of the word.

2. Then give you the reasons why they that are godly will do so.

First, What it is to stand in awe of the word. We will determine it by opening the circumstances of the text. And—

1. Let us take notice of the seat of this affection, the heart, ‘My heart standeth in awe of thy word.’ A true reverence of the word of God must be planted in the heart, or else all outward profession of respect is but hypocrisy: Ps. l. 16, 17, ‘Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and

castest my words behind thy back.' Many may solemnly pretend to piety, and talk of it, and perhaps preach of it, to others, but do not exactly reform their carnal practices; they do but abuse themselves and deceive others. So strangely are many bewitched with their own deceitfulness of heart and power of Satan, that they can without remorse of conscience profess the true religion, pretend to a covenant with God, yet affront that religion by being loose and scandalous, and can break the covenant without any scruple; such are contemners of God's word, however they seem reverencers of it. That psalm speaketh of the collection of the gospel church: 'Gather my saints together, who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice;' not that of bulls and goats, but by Christ Jesus. But many profane this covenant, and are carried away by every temptation, some as greedy thieves and extortioners, some as filthy adulterers, some as haters of godliness, some as injurious slanderers and whisperers and backbiters. In the Christian world, this prediction is too plainly verified; the carnal Christian and the serious Christian profess respect to the same Bible, to believe the same creed, to enter by the same baptism, to claim privilege by the same covenant, yet hate one another, and are as contrary one to another as perfectly as infidels and pagans. On the one side, there is mouth-respect to the word, on the other, heart-respect; the one in outward covenant with God, the other brought into the inner court. God beareth long with the former sort, but will not bear always: so Jer. xii. 2, 'Thou art near in their mouth, but far from their reins.' They profess thee in word, but deny thee in heart and in deed; draw near thee in show and pretence as a people in league with thee, but their hearts, love, and affection are wholly estranged from thee; and would take it ill to have their religion disproved or questioned, yet are not brought under the power of it. So Isa. xxix. 13, 'This people draw near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips honour me, but have removed their heart from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men;' because of tradition, teaching by authority, maintaining or enjoining the worship of God. A worship and respect to God they will have, but such as doth not proceed from an impression upon their hearts, but only in compliance with their customs.

2. The kind of the affection, 'standeth in awe.' There is a twofold awe of the word—(1.) One that driveth us from it; (2.) Another that draweth us to it.

[1.] Fear and awe of the word which driveth us from it is spoken of John iii. 20, 21, 'For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.' Carnal men, who live contrary to the light of nature and scripture, that they cannot endure anything which should put them into serious remembrance of God. This is an effect of legalism and slavish fear, which as it bewrayeth itself in its carriage towards God himself, so also in its carriage towards his saints and word. Towards God himself: a slavish fear of God is always accompanied with an aversation or turning away from him; as guilty Adam was afraid of God, and hid himself in the bushes, Gen. iii.

10; and still an unsound conscience is shy of God, and hangeth off from him. So towards the saints, who have God's image printed upon them; they fear the saints and hate them; as Herod feared John, and put him to death, Mark vi. 20. Still men malign what they will not imitate. Natural conscience in them doth homage to the image of God, shining forth in the lives of his people; they see an excellency in them which they have not; and because all those who keep up the majesty of their profession are objects reviving guilt, they hate them; and if their hatred be more than their fear, they destroy them when it is in their power. So for the word; they are afraid of the word, so as to stand at a distance from it, and cannot endure it, no more than sore eyes can the light of the sun. They have a mind to cherish their lusts and carnal practices, and therefore hate the light which disproveth them; as they that would sleep draw the curtain to keep out the light; whereas, on the contrary, the godly delight to have their ways tried and made manifest by this light; it is a refreshing light to them, but a reproving and discovering light to others; it convinceth them to be what they are. Now they shun all means of searching and knowing themselves, by wishing such things were not sin, or not desiring to know them so, and that there were not a God to punish them. But a sincere man is otherwise affected; he is jealous and suspicious of himself, he bringeth his work to God's balance, and cannot quiet his conscience without God's acceptance.

[2.] There is an awe of the word, not that maketh us shy of it, but tender of violating it, or doing anything contrary to it. This is not the fruit of slavish fear, but holy love; it is not afraid of the word, but delighteth in it, as it discovereth the mind of God to us, as in the next verse. This is called by a proper name, reverence, or godly fear; when we consider whose word it is, God's; who is our God, and hath right to command what he pleaseth; to whose will and word we have already yielded obedience, and devoted ourselves to walk worthy of him in all well-pleasing; who can find us out in all our failings, as knowing our very thoughts afar off, Ps. cxxxix. 2; and having all our ways before him, and being one who will not forgive our wilful transgressions: Josh. xxiv. 19, 'He is a holy and jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions and your sins,' that would impenitently continue in them; and so we receive the word with that trembling of heart which God so much respects.

3. The object, 'thy word;' that is, the whole word of God—the precept with its double sanction, the threatening and the promise; the precept is the rule of our duty; the sanction, of God's proceeding. We are to stand in awe not only of the threatening, but the precept itself; for love to God hath a great influence in producing this awe of the word. It is in angels and heavenly creatures, whose happiness is absolutely secured to them, Jude 4. The great ground of it is God's authority; and that is seen in the precept as much as in the sanction. God's will is the reason of our duty, and his will declared in his word is the rule of it; and the saints obey *intuitu voluntatis*—a bare sight of his, though no inconvenience should follow of it: 1 Thes. iv. 3, 'For this is the will of God;' 1 Thes. v. 18, 'For this is the will of God concerning you in Jesus Christ;' 1 Peter ii. 15, 'For so is the will of

God,' &c. But yet I would not exclude the sanction ; no, not the sad part of it ; neither the threatening, nor the promise ; because I dare not contradict any of the Holy Ghost's methods ; nor exclude his argument from having an influence upon our obedience, as he telleth us of Moses, who had an eye to the recompense of reward, Heb. xi. 26. So of Job, who was tender of doing anything contrary to the will of God, because destruction from God was a terror to him, Job. xxxi. 23. To be afraid of God's judgments in a holy manner is not sin, but a grace, a great point of our duty ; yea, a matter of faith to apprehend that destruction which God in his word threateneth to sinners. Unbelief of the threatening had a great predominancy in the first sin : 'Ye shall not surely die,' Gen. iii. 4 ; and still it is a main ingredient. Men embolden themselves to rebellion because they look upon God's wrath as a vain scarecrow, and that he doth only frighten us with a deceitful terror and a flash of false fire. But yet reflection upon the threatening must not be alone, that breedeth legalism ; nor yet upon the promises alone ; but a deep awe and reverence of God's authority must be the main thing that swayeth the conscience. A Christian should have no more to move or stop him, than to know what God will have him do or not do. That terror that doth arise from a mere slavish fear of God as a judge and avenger is not right ; but such an awe as doth at once arise from looking upon God at once as a wise lawgiver, a gracious father, and righteous judge. A son, a child, if he take liberty to break the bonds of duty, shall smart for it : though a believer obeyeth and keepeth off from sin upon higher and nobler terms than wrath, yet he maketh a good improvement of these terrors also ; for godly fear is influenced by God's being a consuming fire : Heb. xii. 29, 30, 'Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear ; for our God is a consuming fire.'

Secondly, We come to the reasons why we should stand in awe of the word of God.

1. From the author of it ; it is God's word, not the word of a weak man, but of the great and mighty God. His authority is supreme, his power infinite, his knowledge exact, his truth unquestionable, his holiness immaculate, his justice impartial. The same reasons which move us to fear God do move us also to reverence his word ; and add this above all the rest, that therein his truth is impawned to us, and by it he obligeth himself to make good both his threatenings and his promises. Three things I shall take notice of, which showeth God's stamp and impress upon the word :—

[1.] Its authority in searching the heart : Heb. iv. 12, 13, 'The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow ; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart ;' that is, as a sharp sword doth pierce asunder between joints and marrow, so doth the word divide soul and spirit ; and is a discerner, that is, of the convictions of the mind, and the disposition and inclination of the soul, or sensual appetite. The soul cleaveth to the sin when the mind or spirit disliketh it ; or plotteth pretences to hide it from himself or others, even in those sins which lie as hidden in the

mind as the marrow in the bones. Secret purposes fall under its judging power as well as practices accomplished. And what use must we make of this, but that we stand in awe of the word, avoiding what it forbiddeth, and following what it commandeth. Now, to evidence this property of the word, he urgeth the omniscience of God, whose word it is: ver. 13, 'Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; for all things are naked and open to him with whom we have to do.' As the sinner's secret thoughts are under the sight of the all-seeing God, so they are under the piercing power of his word; for God joineth with his word, and giveth it that discovering and piercing virtue. So the apostle of the word preached or explained it: 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25, 'He is convinced of all, and judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.' The word is the rule, God is the judge; and the word being assisted by God, God is there where the word is; and so doth ransack the conscience, and discover men to themselves in order to judgment.

[2.] It hath a mighty power and force, because of the spirit that goeth along with it: Rom. i. 16, 'It is the power of God to salvation;' 1 Cor. i. 22, 'The gospel is the power of God, and the wisdom of God.' It is powerful to convince, even there where it converts not; as Felix trembled, Acts xxiv. It is powerful to convert from one religion to another, from one state to another. (1.) From one religion to another: 'Have any of the nations changed their gods?' Jer. ii. 11. There needs much ado to bring men from a false religion wherein they have been brought up, how vain and foolish soever it be; yet this power the word hath. Though the doctrine of a crucified Christ were so distasteful, partly as now drawing men from their old temples, and altars, and ceremonies, wherein they were educated, especially as incredible, offering life by one that died; and partly as contrary to the carnal gust, as requiring duties distasteful to flesh and blood, and engaging in troubles and persecutions, yet it prevailed. (2.) Converting men from a state of nature to a state of grace, so that they are as it were born. To bring men to hate what they naturally love, and love what they naturally hate; it is hard to alter the nature of things, Isa. xi. 6; to quicken the dead, to purify the unclean, confirm the weak, to meek the proud and passionate: Oh! who would not reverence such a word, such a law and doctrine, as can do all this? Yet this and much more hath the word done.

[3.] Its authority: Eccles. viii. 3, 4, 'Where the word of a king is, there is power,' or authority to back it. How is it where God is? We reckon not of the words of a private person, though never so wise: Eccles. ix. 16, 'The poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.' Where the command of a king cometh, it cometh with authority; for he hath power to back it, and to avenge himself on whosoever shall contradict it; but wise counsel, where there is no authority to enforce it, is little regarded. But now with God is sovereign majesty, and in his word, wherein sentence is pronounced concerning every person and action, according to which judgment doth proceed and will be executed.

2. The second reason is taken from the matter of the word; it is

direction about our everlasting concernments: Deut. xxxii. 46, 47, 'Set your hearts unto all the things which I command you this day; for it is not a vain thing, it is your life.' In a matter of life and death a man cannot be too exact and nice; yea, in the obedience or disobedience of the word, life or death eternal is concerned; yea, in every action morally considered, the word telleth you what is the merit of it, and what will be the event, or an evil or a good estate. Man would fain know his destiny, whether happy or miserable; here you may know whether you shall live for ever with God. Man in his laws doth not threaten or promise beyond his power; his power reacheth to men's outward estate, and no further, and is only limited to the bounds of the present life; therefore the sanction of their laws are never extended beyond the promises or threats of present and outward good, to give or take away men's liberty, wealth, estate, life at most. But God threateneth everlasting fire, Mat. xxv. 41; promiseth an inheritance immortal, 1 Peter i. 4. As God commandeth inward holiness, righteousness, love, so eternal rewards, and eternal penalties, things that concern us more nearly than estates, liberties, peace, yea, our lives themselves.

3. The third reason, because of the profit of standing in awe of the word.

[1.] It fortifieth us, and preserveth us in such temptations as arise from the fear of man. Where there is a reverence and awfulness of God's word, the greater awe overcometh the less. In such a temptation a man may miscarry two ways—by distrust of God, and disobedience to him. The one is the cause of the other. Now that we may not distrust him, it is good to set fear against fear, God against the creature: Jer. i. 8, 'Be not afraid of their face, for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. His powerful protection should encourage us against their wrathful disposition: Isa. li. 12, 13, 'Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man, that shall be as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy maker?' The immortal and almighty God is able to bear us out. A due sense of the power of the Almighty checketh the fear of men. Or by disobedience we dishonour him: certainly a gracious heart feareth more to offend God than to fall into any temporal inconvenience: Isa. viii. 12, 13, 'Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid; but sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear and dread;' 1 Peter iii. 14, 15, 'But if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.' But let him be your fear and your dread. Be afraid to offend so holy a majesty. The countenance of princes is very awful unto men, but the fear of God's wrath should overcome the fear of man's displeasure, even of the greatest: Heb. xi. 27, 'He feared not the wrath of the king, because he saw him that was invisible.'

[2.] It maketh a man sincere. When a man standeth in awe of the word, he obeyeth in presence and absence, Phil. ii. 12, and avoideth secret as well as open sins, Gen. xxxix. 9, sins of thought as well as in deed—heart-sins, which the laws of men cannot take hold of; but the fear of God is instead of all laws, 2 Cor. i. 12. Conscience is to them more than shame of men. Something without keepeth back wicked

men; but something within, the godly. Abner's question was not good, 'How shall I hold up my face to thy brother Joab?' 2 Sam. ii. 22. He should have said, How shall I hold up my face to the Lord thy God? Though an upright man might do wickedly, uncontrolled of man, and nobody seeth him or punisheth him, yet reverence of God and his word restraineth him.

[3.] It maketh a man punctual and exact [when afraid to do anything contrary to God's revealed will. It is universal, and it is powerful. It is universal; the soul that maketh conscience of the word is more thorough in obedience: there will be failings, but, for the main, his heart is sound with God; and lesser failings are retracted by repentance, Ps. cxli. 1, 2. And powerful: 'Stand in awe, and sin not,' Ps. iv. 4; this will cause us to stop in an evil course, on the remembrance of our duty; as David's heart smote him when he cut off the lap of Saul's garment. Some think the text then verified, 'My heart standeth in awe of thy word;'] a commandment was in his way.

Use 1. To show us what frame of spirit they are under who despise the word.

1. All do so who deliberately and voluntarily prefer their own will before the will of God: 2 Sam. xii. 9, 'Wherefore hast thou sinned in despising the commandment?' They obey their own inclination, whatever the word saith to the contrary. Despising the commandment is the root of all sin, as formality of wilful sin. Oh! that men did regard this as they ought! considering that to despise commandments is to despise the Lord himself, and what it is for poor worms to despise the God of heaven and earth. Nay, that God that is our judge, he hath power to cast both body and soul into hell-fire—the God whom we are bound by so many ties to obey.

2. When swayed by delight and profit against the course of our duty. Esau sold his birthright to keep him alive, yet despised it, Gen. xxix. 31, and Heb. xii. 16.

3. The case is more aggravated when we cast a precept behind our backs for a light pleasure or small profit; the greater is our contempt to break with God for a little trifle; sell the righteous for a pair of shoes.

Use 2. To press us to get this blessed frame of heart, to stand in awe of the word.

1. It is a great curb in actual temptations: Gen. xxxix. 9, 'How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?'

2. It is a great help in reading and hearing: Acts x. 33, 'Now therefore we are all present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.'

3. A great help in humiliation and suing out our pardon: Ps. cxxx. 3, 4, 'If thou shouldest mark iniquity, who could stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'

For means to get this awful frame of heart.

1. Faith is necessary. Sundry articles of religion have influence upon it. God's power: Mat. x. 28, 'Fear not them that can kill the body, but fear him that can cast both body and soul into hell-fire.' God's providence, that he observeth human affairs, and accordingly doth reward and punish: Hosea vii. 2, 'And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness, now their doings have

beset them about, before my face ;' and Heb. ii. 2, ' And every transgression and every disobedience received a just recompense of reward.' A day of judgment: Rom. ii. 5, ' But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God ;' eternal recompenses of heaven and hell, or the state of the world to come. Those who believe not these things are bold and venturous, and out of a daring confidence will put it to the trial whose word shall stand, God's or theirs: Jer. xlv. 28, ' And all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose word shall stand, mine or theirs ;' which shall be fulfilled or made good: Heb. xi. 8, ' By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, being moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.'

2. Love is necessary, for reverence ariseth from love. David was afraid to displease so good a God, to whom bound by so many ties. Surely love breedeth a greater tenderness than a bare sense of danger: Hosea iii. 5, ' Fear the Lord and his goodness.' That which maketh a wicked man presumptuous maketh a child of God awful; he hath to do with a good God, and therefore would not offend him, nor cross his will.

3. A humble penitent spirit is necessary for this frame of heart. Josiah, when he heard the words of the law, he rent his clothes: 2 Kings xxii. 19, ' Because thy heart was tender, and thou humbledst thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, I have heard thee, saith the Lord ;' and 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27, ' Because thy heart was tender,' &c.; troubled at God's anger. To some, nothing is of less consideration with them.

4. A good stock of knowledge, or frame of divine truths: Ps. cxix. 11, ' Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee ;' Prov. vi. 21, 22, ' Bind them continually upon thy heart, and tie them about thy neck; when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou wakest, it shall talk with thee.' A treasure of knowledge not only got by heart, but impressed on us by his Spirit. The great new-covenant blessing, Heb. viii. 10, is God's law written upon the heart by the finger of the Spirit, as before on tables of stone, on the directive and imperative powers, the heart and mind; and this maketh us conformable to it in heart and life. God's law is said to be in the heart of the godly, that maketh them willing to obey: Ps. xl. 8, ' His law is in my heart ;' tender to offend: Ps. xxxvii. 31, ' The law of God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide.' He loveth what is commanded, and hateth what is forbidden; he hath a sense of it, to keep from usual guilt.

5. Advised consideration and watchfulness: ' Let thine eyes look right on, and thine eyelids straight before thee; ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.' When you are about to do anything, examine and consider it, whether God alloweth it, yea or no. Will it please or displease, honour or dishonour God? If he disallow, forbear, how safe, profitable, or comfortable soever it be; if he allow it, then engage: this holy fear must never be laid aside: Phil. ii. 12, ' Work out your salvation with fear and trembling ;' 1 Peter i. 17, ' Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.'

SERMON CLXXVI.

I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.—VER. 162.

IN the text—

1. An assertion or declaration of his delight in the word, ‘I rejoice at thy word.’

2. An illustration of it by a similitude, taken from those who have gotten some notable prey and booty, ‘As one that findeth great spoil.’

First, The similitude is very expressive, taken from the joy which a conqueror in battle doth find in the spoil of his defeated enemies. The same similitude is used Isa. ix. 3, ‘They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.’ He speaketh there of the highest joy; in a time of peace, joy of the harvest is the greatest joy; in a time of war, victory obtained after a hazardous fight, and rich spoil and booty gotten. To heighten that joy, several circumstances concur:—

1. Deliverance after a doubtful conflict. No man goeth to war but carrieth his life in his hands, and the event is very uncertain. Now when it is unexpectedly determined on our side, there is great rejoicing.

2. The joy of victory, especially to be victorious in a battle.

3. There is booty and spoil, whereby men are enriched, and so profit as well as pleasure.

4. The joy of honour and triumph over fallen enemies.

5. Peace and ease from toil. All these make the joy of victorious men in a battle to be a great joy.

Secondly, It was a fit similitude for David to use, who was a great warrior, and so a man not unacquainted with the joy of victory. A gracious heart spiritualiseth every occasion that falleth out in their ordinary callings: here is great joy, but this is nothing to the knowledge of God’s will.

Thirdly, Every Christian is a warrior against Satan, the world, and the flesh; so it is a fit similitude for them. Victory over sin and Satan is above all the conquests in the world; this is a part of the good news the word bringeth to us, Col. ii. 14, 15; John xvi. 33.

Now observe, in the former verse David had expressed his reverence to the word, now his delight.

First, Our trembling at the word doth not hinder our delight in it; none more cheery than the awful soul: Acts ix. 31, ‘They walked in the fear of God and comfort of the Holy Ghost;’ and Ps. cxii. 1, ‘Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.’ Those who are most observant of God’s will, and careful to follow it, have the greatest contentment in their souls.

Secondly, Joy should be mingled with reverence, lest it degenerate into slavery and a scrupulous fear.

Doct. That God’s people do greatly rejoice in his word.

1. It is not an ordinary delight which is here set forth, but such as is high and intense, such joy as the richest and most gainful victory

can raise in any worldly man. It is incredible, and cannot be expressed, how much joy and comfort the word of God yieldeth to good men; therefore so many similitudes used: 'More than in all riches,' Ps. cxix. 14; 'Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb,' ver. 103; 'I love it above gold, and above fine gold,' ver. 127. A joy greater than the joy of worldly men.

2. It is not a light flash, or a fantastical impression, but a solid consolation, such as is affliction-proof and death-proof, when the strength of this joy cometh to be tried and assaulted by deep afflictions. Therefore the heirs of promise are said to have strong consolation, Heb. vi. 18. So ver. 50 of this psalm, 'This is my comfort in mine affliction, thy word hath quickened me.'

3. This joy, which is the mark of a sound believer, is delighting to know, believe, and obey God's word. For it is in the way of his testimonies, Ps. cxix. 14. It is in his commandments they delight greatly. Study and contemplation breedeth a pleasure, but nothing like practice. The pleasures and delights of the mind do certainly exceed those of the body, for the more noble the faculty is, the more capable of delight. A man in study hath a truer pleasure than the greatest epicure in the most exquisite enjoyments of sense. Now moral delights exceed those which are the mere result of contemplation, as they give us a more intimate feeling of the worth of things. Again those delights which are supernatural, and come from the Spirit, as the pleasures of faith and obedience do, exceed those of the natural mind as much as those do bodily pleasures, as being exercised about nobler objects, which are the sense of the favour of God, and reconciliation with him, and the hopes of eternal life; and as coming from a higher cause, the Spirit of God. Therefore, upon the whole, there is no true delight and contentment but what proceedeth from a careful performance of God's commands, strictly abstaining from what may displease him, and cheerfully practising all that he requireth of us. Truly the present gratefulness of such an employment, and the succeeding comforts of such practices, are a continual feast; all other pleasures to this are nothing worth. The obedience of faith to a believer is more than any worldly advantage. It is a sweet thing to be exercised in the word of God, in reading and hearing it with serious meditation, but much more to be brought under the power and practice of it.

Reason 1. The godly find glad tidings in the word, suitable to their soul's necessities, and therefore rejoice in it. For the object of delight is *bonum conveniens et sufficiens*; here is enough to content them, and it is very suitable. There is pardon of sins, and that is ground of joy: Mat. ix. 2, 'Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee;' there we hear of a Saviour: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' When the gospel was preached at Samaria, Acts viii. 8, 'There was great joy in that city.' Zaccheus received Christ joyfully, for he brought salvation to his house, Luke xix. 6. There is the true way of mortifying sin and sanctifying the heart: Ps. xix. 8, 'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the soul; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.' There we are

told of the joys of the world to come: 1 Cor. ii. 9, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' We should exult for joy to hear of those things. Thus you see the word of God affordeth such comforts, such matter of rejoicing, as cannot be paralleled. A poor man, when he findeth a treasure, receiveth it with a joyful heart. Oh! what inestimable treasure do we find in the word of God! the way of eternal salvation is there made manifest.

Reason 2. The saints have felt benefit by it; they have been renewed and sanctified by it, therefore they prize it: James i. 18, 19, 'Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. Therefore be swift to hear.' There they have found powerful heavenly truths, by which their souls are made new; they have tasted God's love in the doctrines and promises thereof, and against a taste there is no disputing, 1 Peter ii. 2, 3. Experimented sweetness is beyond all arguments; they have been revived and comforted by it in their troubles, as at the 93d verse of this psalm more largely, 'I will never forget thy word, for by them thou hast quickened me.' God hath done their souls good by it. It is the charter of their hopes, ver. 111 of this psalm. Whatever calamities they meet with in the world, there they see ground of peace, and composedness in their soul.

Reason 3. They love God, and they hear more of him in the word than they can elsewhere. The soul that loveth God heareth and seeth his blessed name in every leaf; they find the effects of his goodness in creation, some fruits and pledges of his love in daily providence, but there they find his great eternal and wonderful love in Christ; there they know God's will, and it is their desire to be subject to it, and therefore value it, not only as the charter of their hopes, but as the rule of their duty.

Use 1. To condemn them—

1. That find no sweetness in the word of God; they do not mind the business of salvation, and then no wonder if they have a slight and mean esteem of the word.

Two reasons of this contempt:—

[1.] Their scope is not fixed. All means are regarded with respect to the end. Now, if they do not make the everlasting enjoyment of God their end, the scriptures are of little use to them, a trouble rather than a comfort, because they disturb them in pursuing their lusts; but a man that would enjoy God, get to his holy hill, is apprehensive of the benefit.

[2.] They are not affected with their wants, and therefore esteem not the word; for the great benefit of the word is to teach us a remedy for sin and misery. Now they that mind not the misery and danger in which they stand go on carelessly and despise the word of God: Prov. xxii. 3, 'A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself, but the simple pass on, and are punished.' They little think of the evil which is near them, and so slight the counsel of God.

2. Those that will not believe them that find sweetness in it, as if all were fantastical and imaginary. Are the wisest and most serious part of mankind deceived? and hath the carnal fool only the wit to discern

the mistake? Surely in all reason it should be otherwise. These tell us of those delights and transports of soul in meditating on the promises, in purifying their hearts by the precepts; and though a stranger intermeddeth not with their joys, yet surely these find them. All that is spiritual and supernatural is suspected by those who are drowned in matters of sense, John xii. 29; a voice from heaven is thunder; the motions of the Spirit, fumes of wine, Acts iii. 13; joy in the Holy Ghost but a fancy, &c.

3. Them that count it an alphabetary knowledge fit for beginners. David was no novice, yet he rejoiced in the word as one that found great spoil; the more conversant he was in these holy writings, the more he delighted in them. No; it is not only children's meat; there is not only milk there, but strong meat also, Heb. v. 14. It is our rule to walk by, till our blessedness be perfected. The continual storehouse of our comforts, Rom. xv. 4. It is the continual means of growing into communion with God in Christ.

Use 2. To exhort us to delight in the word of God. It is the work and mark of a blessed man: Ps. i. 2, 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' As far as the necessities of the present life will bear it, they are still getting more knowledge of true blessedness, and the way that leadeth to the enjoyment of it. This is their business and pleasing study. His work is to form his heart to a sincere, uniform, impartial obedience. And as he doth increase in godliness by the help of the word, his soul is more satisfied; all the joys of the world to this are nothing to him. Are your hearts thus set to know the Lord and his revealed will, and the way of life?

SERMON CLXXVII.

I hate and abhor lying; but thy law do I love.—VER. 163.

IN this verse the man of God showeth his affection to the word by the hatred of those things which are contrary to the word. Observe here—

1. Affection set against affection.
2. Object against object.

First, Affection against affection, hatred against love. Love and hatred are natural affections, which are good or evil according to the objects to which they are applied. Place love on the world, sin, and vanity, and nothing worse; place hatred on God, religion, holiness, and it soon proveth a hellish thing. But now, set them upon their proper objects, and they express a gracious constitution of soul; let us hate evil, and love good, Amos v. 15, and all is well. Man needeth affections of aversion as well as choice and pursuit. Hatred hath its use as well as love. Love was made for God, and things that belong to God, and hatred for sin. It was put into us that, at the first appearance, sense, or imagination of evil, we might retire ourselves and fly from it; and is anything so evil as sin, so contrary to God, so baneful

ful to the soul? The office of love is to adhere and cleave to God, and whatever will bring us to the enjoyment of him; and the office of hatred is that we may truly and sincerely turn from all evil with detestation, according to the nature and degree of evil that is in it. The emphasis of the text is notable, 'I hate and abhor;' it must be a thorough hatred, which David, Ps. cxxxix. 22, calleth a 'perfect hatred.'

Secondly, Here is object set against object. As love is opposed to hatred, so the law to lying; for the word of God is truth, and requireth truth of all that submit to it; pure sincerity and simplicity. Some render the word more generally. The Septuagint *ἠδικίαν ἐμίσησα καὶ ἐβδελύξάμεν*, 'I hate and abominate iniquity.' Other translations render it not so; they expound it so that one kind is put for all the rest, and fitly; for every sin is a falsehood, and often called in this psalm, 'A false way, and a lie,' and will fail and beguile all them who are delighted with it. And the purport and drift is, that we should admit, omit, commit nothing which is contrary to the word of God, which is the great object of a holy man's love.

The points are three:—

Doct. 1. They that love the word of God must hate sin.

Doct. 2. That a slight hatred of a sinful course is not enough, but we must hate and abhor it.

Doct. 3. That among other sins, we must hate falsehood and lying, and all kind of frauds and deceits.

For the first point.

Doct. 1. They that love the word of God must hate sin.

This implieth four things:—

1. That our love must be demonstrated by such effects, otherwise it is but pretended, if we do not avoid what it forbiddeth; for our love to God and his word is mostly seen in obedience and dutiful subjection to him and it; for God's love is a love of bounty, our love is a love of duty. He is said to love us when he blesseth us, and bestoweth on us the effects of his special grace and favour; we are said to love him when we obey him. These propositions are clear in scripture, that our love to God is tried by our love to the word, and our love to the word by our hatred of sin: John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me;' and ver. 23, 'If any man love me he will keep my words.' On the contrary, our enmity to God and his word is determined by our love to sin. Enmity to God: Col. i. 21, 'Enemies in your minds by evil works.' To his word: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be.' Habitual sin argueth a malice or hatred of God and his holy law; and actual sin, an actual hatred. It is *finis operis*, if not *operantis*; whether a man thinketh so or no, it is the intent of the action; a rebellion or an act of disloyalty against God. Yea, there is not only a virtual hatred in sin, but a formal hatred; not only implied, but expressed: they wish there were not a God to punish them and call them to an account, such a law to forbid such practices as they affect, or that such things were not sin. Well, then, it is not some kind of pleasure in the study of the word will show our love to the word, but an impartial, entire, and uniform obedience, strictly abstaining from

such things as it forbiddeth, and carefully practising what it requireth at our hands.

2. That our hatred of sin must flow from such a principle. A man may hate sin upon foreign and accidental reasons, and so that abstaining from sin is not a true hatred, but a casual dislike; as when we forbear some sins, but retain others that suit better with our condition, callings, employment, temper, or because of some difficulty in compassing, shame in practising, or repugnant to our natural temper. No; it must be out of a principle of love to God: Ps. xcvii. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord hate evil.' So Ps. cxix. 113, 'I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.' A hatred of sin arising from love to God and his word is the only true hatred; that is hatred of sin as sin, as it is *ἀνομία*, 1 John iii. 4, 'A transgression of the law;' as it is ingratitude to God, contrary to our obligations to him, not only as destructive to ourselves; not principally *timore pœnæ*, but *amore virtutis*. The word of God furnisheth us with divers reasons and arguments to move us to hate sin. They all have their place, but some are more noble and excellent than others; as when a man hateth sin because God hath forbidden it. True hatred cometh from a love of the contrary; therefore he that hath a vehement love to the law hateth all things which are contrary to it: Mat. vi. 20, 'He will hate the one, and love the other.' There is no serving two masters; love to the one enforceth hatred of the other. To love the good and hate the evil are inseparable.

3. The more we hate sin the more prepared we are to love the law. A carnal heart hateth the law: John iii. 20, 'He that doeth evil hateth the light;' and Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is not subject to the law.' He that doth not hate sin hateth the word of God. We cannot delight in it till our affections be purified and sanctified. Men's evil practices and dispositions cause them to hate the light; it is a reprov'g heart delight in that which will so ransack and search the conscience?

4. According to the degree of love, so will the degree of our hatred be. They that have the highest love of the law will have most hatred of sin; they hate every lesser contrariety, a vain thought, Ps. cxix. 113. They do not only hate open and scandalous sins, but sin carried on in a more close and cleanly manner; yea, they groan under the relics of corruption, and feel it a heavy burden: Rom. vii. 22-24, 'For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members;' and then, 'O wretched man that I am!' Next to the object of our affection, the principle or spring of it must be regarded; and next to the spring and rise of it, the degree must be looked after, that we love the good and hate the evil proportionably; that is to say, that our hatred must be proportionable to the evil of the thing hated, and our love to the good of the thing loved. And indeed, where the one is the other will be; where a great love, a great hatred; where a little love, a little hatred: Ps. cxix. 127, 128, 'I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold; therefore I esteem thy precepts in all things to be right, and hate every false way.'

Use. Well, then, if we would show our love to the word, we must

truly, sincerely, and constantly turn from all known sin with detestation and abhorrence; for hatred of sin is an infallible evidence of love to the word. Now hatred of sin, if it be right—

1. It is universal, *εἰς τὰ γένη*, to the whole kind; as Haman thought scorn to lay hands upon Mordecai alone, but sought to destroy the whole race of the Jews, Esther iii. 6. One sin is as inconsistent with the love of God as another. There may be as much contempt of God's authority in a sin of thought as in a sin of practice, in a small sin as in a greater. There may be much crookedness in a small line, and in some cases the dye is more than the stuff: 'I hate every false way.' It is twice repeated in this psalm, in ver. 104, and ver. 128. To hate what God hateth: Prov. viii. 13, 'The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.'

2. It is implacable; it aimeth at the utter extirpation and expulsion of sin. They seek to remove the guilt, to weaken the inclination; they groan sorely under the very being of sin, that anything of sin is left: 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Rom. vii. 24.

3. It is still growing. At first it is a dubious case. Men that are convinced have some mind to let sin go, or a wish that Christ would save them from it; but it is with such reserves, that they have rather a mind to keep it than let it go; as Pharaoh had no mind to dismiss Israel, and therefore stood hucking with God; or as David, when he sent out forces against Absalom, yet 'be tender of the young man.' Pleasing lusts, we have but a remiss will against them; our love to it is greater than our dislike of it; therefore so unstable, James i. 8. But when the soul is converted, the soul is armed with a resolution, 1 Peter iv. 1. Then the love of sin is weakened in their hearts, and the strength and vigor of it abated; the soul is armed with a serious purpose to give it up, and shake off this servitude, in the confidence of that grace which is purchased for them by Christ's death; there is a godly inclination and bent of soul to live unto God. Again, as our communion with God and sense of his love is increased in us, so our hatred of sin groweth more keen and fierce. When God had told what he would do for Ephraim, 'What have I any more to do with idols?' Hosea xiv. 8. I have had too much to do already. What! any more? In what proportion there is a sense of God's love, in the same proportion a hatred of evil. Moses, when he had talked with God in the mount, at his return he is full of indignation, and broke the tables. So those that have had sweet communion with God have a more severe displicency against their corruptions, and there is a more lively principle at work in their hearts, for the expulsion of them. Every act of kindness on God's part layeth a new obligation, and their hatred is awakened by the holy use of the ordinances.

4. The constant discoveries of hatred against sin are watching and striving against it; they are ever careful that they may not offend God: Acts xxiv. 16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to keep a conscience void of offence both towards God and men;' and keep striving, and a serious resistance, even when they are foiled: Rom. vii. 15, 'The evil that I hate, that do I.' A Christian always hateth sin, though he doth not always prevail against it. In sins of daily infirmity,

striving is conquering ; but in other sins, they prevail against them by degrees ; sin doth not carry it freely, nor reign in them : ' For sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law, but under grace,' Rom. vi. 14.

Doct. 2. That a slight hatred of a sinful course is not enough, but we must hate it and abhor it : Rom. xii. 9, ' Abhor that which is evil ; cleave to that which is good.' Hate it as hell, as the word signifieth. We do too coldly speak against evil, too slackly follow after that which is good. If our pursuit after God were more earnest, and our hatred of evil more serious and severe, we should be other manner of Christians than we are. There is a twofold hatred—(1.) The hatred of offence and abomination ; (2.) The hatred of enmity and opposition. By the one our hearts are turned from sin, by the other turned against it. Now both these are necessary for a Christian that would be safe. Hating and abhorring implieth not only a naked abstinence, or a simple refusal, but an enmity ; not a forbearing the act, but a mortifying the affection. We must not only leave off evil, but abhor it ; and not only abhor it, but pursue it with a hostile hatred, purposing, watching, striving, praying against it, thwarting the flesh, and contradicting the motions thereof.

Reason 1. It is not else a hatred becoming sin, which is so great an evil, so opposite to God's law, and derogatory to God's glory, so mischievous to us. There is a great deal of evil in sin, a great deal of evil after sin, that we can never hate it enough. It is the evil of evils, that brought all other evils into the world ; it is the violation of a righteous law, 1 John iii. 4 ; a contempt of God's authority : Exod. v. 2, ' Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice ?' Ps. xii. 4, ' Our tongues are our own ; who is lord over us ?' It is a defacing of his image, and a casting off the glory and honour of our creation : Rom. iii. 23, ' We have sinned, and are come short of the glory of God.' Ps. xlix. 12, ' Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not ; he is like the beasts that perish.' A despising of his power by a silly worm, as if we could make good our party against him : 1 Cor. x. 22, ' Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy ? are we stronger than he ?' It separateth from communion with God : Isa. lix. 2, ' Your iniquities have separated between me and you.' It preferreth base satisfactions before the enjoyment of him : 2 Tim. iii. 4, ' Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God ;' as if the base and brutish pleasures of the flesh were to be preferred before the love of God.' This and much more may be said of sin ; and is any hatred too great for it ? Ps. ci. 3, ' I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes : I hate the work of them that turn aside ; it shall not cleave to me.'

Reason 2. No other hatred will serve the purposes of grace. A love that is cold will soon fail ; so also will a hatred. Where our zeal is not set against sin we soon fall into a liking of it ; therefore the soul is not sufficiently guarded by a slight hatred. If sin be not detestable, it will soon seem tolerable. There is a brabble between many and their lusts, and in all haste sin must be gone ; but the quarrel is soon taken up, and sin stayeth for all that. Where the enmity is not great, a man's agreement with sin may be soon made. Therefore not only an offence, but a hostile hatred is required, such hating and abhorring as

will not admit of reconciliation. Like the hatred of Amnon to Tamar, 'The hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he loved her,' 2 Sam. xiii. 15; he hated her with hatred greatly. Did we more strongly dissent from sin, it would not so easily prevail over us. Sin dieth when it dieth in our affections, when our hearts are set against it: 'Get you hence,' Isa. xxx. 22. Get you gone; be there from henceforth an utter divorce between me and you. This is to hate and abhor.

Use 1. To show us the reason why so many are entangled again in the sins they seemed to renounce and forsake. They have frequently resolved to forsake their sins, but these resolutions have come to nothing; they have striven against them, but as a great stone that hath been rolled up hill, it hath returned upon them with the more violence; or as in rowing against the stream, when the tide hath been strong against them, and they have been driven the more back, and therefore are discouraged. Yea, they have prayed, and found little success, and therefore think it is vain to make any further trial. What shall we say then to these? If the premises were clear, yet the inference and conclusion is wrong and false; for we are not to measure our duty by the success, but God's injunction. God may do what he pleaseth, but we must do what he hath commanded. Abraham obeyed God, not knowing whither he went, Heb. xi. 8. Peter said unto Christ, 'We have toiled all night, and have caught nothing; nevertheless at thy command we will cast forth the net.' Though the first attempt succeed not, yet afterwards sin may be subdued and broken. In natural things we do not sit down with one trial or one endeavour, but after many disappointments pursue our designs till we complete them. A merchant will not leave off for one bad voyage, nor an ambitious man because his first essays were fruitless; and shall we give over our conflicts with worldly and fleshly lusts? That showeth our will is not fixedly bent against them, because we cannot presently subdue them. 'He that will be rich,' 1 Tim. vi. 10. If you had such a will to be holy and heavenly.

2. There is a fault in these purposes, in these strivings and prayers; they do not come from a heart thoroughly set against sin.

[1.] These purposes are not hearty and real, and then no wonder they do not prevail. There may be a slight purpose, and there is a full purpose, Acts xi. 23. If thy purposes were more full and strong, and thoroughly bent against sin, they would sooner succeed. Is it the fixed decree and determination of thy will? When you are firmly resolved, your affections will be sincere and steadfast, you will pursue this work close; not be off and on, hot and cold, unstable in all your ways; your full purpose, or the habitual bent of your hearts, are known by your drift and scope. Or it may be this purpose may be extorted, not the effect of thy judgment and will, but only thy conscience awakened by some present fear. Many are by some pangs and qualms of conscience frightened into some religiousness; but this humour lasts not long: Ps. lxxviii. 35-37, 'And they remembered that God was their rock, and the Most High their redeemer; nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied to him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.' In their

dangers they remembered God, but their hearts were not right with him. Ahab, in his fears, had some relentings; so had Pharaoh. The Israelites turned to the Lord in their distress, but they turned as fast from him afterwards; resolves not of love, but fear. So are these resolutions wrested from you by some present terrors, which, when they cease, no wonder that they are where they were before. Violent things never hold long; they will hold as long as the principle of their violence lasteth. Or it may be you rest in the strength of your own resolutions. Now God will be owned as the author of all grace, who reneweth and quickeneth every affection in us; still we must have a sense of our own insufficiency, and resolve more in the strength and power of God, and rely upon the grace of Jesus Christ, by his Spirit mortifying the deeds of the body, as knowing that without him you can do nothing, neither continue nor perform our resolutions. Men fall again as often as they think to stand by their own power. There is much guile and falsehood in our own hearts; we cannot trust them. The saints still resolve, God assisting: Ps. cxix. 8, 'I will keep thy precepts; oh, forsake me not utterly;' ver. 32, 'I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.' They beg God to keep up their inclination and bent against sin: ver. 36, 'Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.'

[2.] As to striving. Let us examine that a little; if it be so serious, so diligent, so circumspect as it should be. Certainly that is no effectual striving when you are disheartened with every difficulty; for difficulties do but influence a resolved spirit, as stirring doth the fire. No question but it will be hard to enter in at the strait gate, or walk in the narrow way. God hath made the way to heaven so narrow and strait, that we may the more strive to enter in thereat, Luke xiii. 24. Now shall we sit down and complain when we succeed not upon every faint attempt? Who then can be saved? This is to cry out with the sluggard, 'There is a lion in the way.' Should a mariner, as soon as the waves arise, and strong gusts of wind blow, give over all guiding of the ship? No; he is resolved upon his voyage. To give out upon every difficulty is against all the experience and wont of mankind. Again, this striving and opposing is but slight, not accompanied with that watchfulness and resolution which is necessary. Many pretend to watch against sin, yet abstain not from all occasions of sin. If we play about the cockatrice's hole, no wonder we are bitten. Never think to turn from thy sins, if thou dost not turn from the occasion of them: Prov. iv. 15, 'Go not in the way of evil men, avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.' This is a practice becoming the hatred of sin. Evil company is a snare. If thou hast not strength to avoid the occasion, which is less, how canst thou avoid the sin, which is greater? He that resolveth not to be burnt in the fire must not come near the flames. Job made a covenant with his eyes, Job xxxi. 1. Our Saviour taught us to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation.' He doth not say, into sin. Temptation openeth the gate to it. Certainly it argueth a hankering of mind when we dally with temptations; as the raven, when he is driven from the carrion, loveth to abide within the scent of it, so they have an inclination to sin when they forbear the practice of it.

[3.] For praying. We oftener pray from our memories than from our consciences, and from our consciences enlightened than hearts renewed by grace. Prayer, as it is the fruit of memory and invention, is but a few slight and formal words said of course, a body without a soul; as dictated by conscience, it may be retracted by the will, *at noli modo*. Austin, when he prayed against his youthful lusts, *timebam ne me excluderet Deus*, was afraid lest he should be heard too soon; at best but half desires, faint wishes, like Balaam's wish to die the death of the righteous. The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing. God never made promise that lazy wishes should be satisfied. If you pray against sin with your whole heart, he will hear you. The great fault is the want of this thorough hatred of sin.

Use 2. Take heed of two things:—

1. A secret love to your sins.
2. A remiss hatred against them.

1. A secret love to sin. Job speaketh of some that hid sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues, Job xx. 12, loath to let a lust go; and David of regarding iniquity in our heart, Ps. lxxvi. 18. First there is a secret liking of sin, which in time will prove baneful to the soul; some lust is spared, and continueth unmortified. It doth not remain so much, as it is reserved, and there keepeth possession for Satan. This will in time eat out all our other virtues, and bring a stain upon those good properties wherewith God hath endowed us. Sin was never heartily cast out, therefore they are in time ensnared again, and drawn away by some sensitive lure.

2. A remiss hatred of sin. No; there must be a total and full aversion. Hatred and indignation is the soul's expulsive faculty; it cannot be kept in good plight without it. It is the lively and active principle which sets the soul a-work, in avoiding what is hurtful to the spiritual life: it concerneth us to keep it up in strength and vigour. The reason why even believers do so often sin through weakness is because the will doth not so strongly dissent as it should. Though we do not deliberately give our assent, it should more potently awaken our displeasure. But certainly the reason of wilful sin is want of a strong hatred. Though convinced of evil, yet we go on like a fool to the correction of the stocks, Prov. vii. 22.

Doct. 3. That among other sins, we must hate falsehood and lying, and all kind of frauds and deceits.

1. I shall open the particular notion of lying in the text.

2. Show you the reasons against it.

First, To open the particular notion of lying.

1. In the vulgar acceptation and sense of it, we take it to be speaking an untruth, or that which is false, with an intention to deceive. Now this is a sin contrary to the new nature: Col. iii. 9, 'Lie not one to another, since ye have put off the old man with his deeds.' It is not only contrary to that natural order which God hath appointed between the mind and the tongue, but to that sincerity and true holiness which is our great qualification and the fruit of regeneration. Therefore God saith, Isa. lxiii. 8, 'Surely they are my people, children that will not lie.' God presumeth that his people will not deal falsely,

but speak as they think, and think of what they speak as it really is; and that Christians will not deceive and circumvent others, since they are members of the same mystical body, and should seek one another's welfare, as much as they do their own: Eph. iv. 25, 'Wherefore put away lying; speak every one truth with his neighbour; seeing ye are members one of another.' No; it is more unseemly in a Christian, more inconsistent with grace. In short, no sin maketh a man more like the devil: John viii. 44, 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.'

2. Concealing the truth which should be confessed. God would not have his people hide themselves in necessary truths; he would have them believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, Rom. x. 9, 10. And Christianity is called a confession, Heb. iii. 1; and all Christians are saved either as martyrs or as confessors.

But how far we are to confess lesser truth is a great case of conscience. Certainly we must do nothing against a truth, not appear in the garb of a contrary party, nor must we lie hid when God in his providence crieth out, Who is of my side, who? We read of some, John xii. 42, who 'believed in Christ, yet they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.' Faith is in a very weak condition when confession is not joined with it, when men will not own Christ in troublous times, and appear in their own shape. Men that have much to lose have many worldly considerations; they think these lose more than they can gain, and lose by the praise of God rather than the praise of men. Now the sincere Christian saith in these cases, 'I hate and abhor lying.'

3. It is contrary to that obedience to God which we do profess. There is a practical lie as well as a virtual lie, when our practices do not correspond with our profession; there is a lie acted, as well as a lie told. So Ephraim is said to compass God about with lies, Hosea xi. 12. To say we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, is a lie, 1 John i. 6, a lie that tendeth to the disgrace of religion, *in opprobrium Christi*: 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.' So he that speaketh much of the Spirit, and walketh after the flesh.

Reason 1. God is a God of truth. God cannot, nor will not lie, and his people must be like him.

Reason 2. His word is the word of truth, his law requireth truth; and all falsehoods and deceits are contrary to that justice and charity which it establisheth. His gospel is a gospel of truth: Eph. i. 13, 'After ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.'

Reason 3. He requireth and worketh truth in the reins and inward parts: Ps. li. 7, 'Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts.'

Use. Oh! then, hate and abhor lying. You cannot be accepted of God else: Jer. v. 3, 'O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth?' You cannot have grace in your own hearts: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is our rejoicing, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our con-

versations in the world;’ nor long continue undiscovered before men: Prov. xxvi. 26, ‘His wickedness shall be showed before the congregation.’ Let us not lie to God in our promises we make to him: Ps. lxxviii. 34–36, ‘When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the Most High their redeemer: nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.’ In your worship, do not compass him about with lies, complain of burdens which you feel not, express desires which you have not. In your profession, do not make it a veil and cover for your lusts. A wicked or carnal design is inconsistent with uprightness of heart. As to men, abhor all false and deceitful practices and speeches. When the apostle biddeth us abhor that which is evil, he first saith, Let love be without dissimulation, Rom. xii. 9. You are not to live by interest, but by conscience. Therefore abhor all hypocrisy, falsehood, treachery, which are unworthy any ingenuous man, much more a Christian.

SERMON CLXXVIII.

Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments.—
VER. 164.

IN these words the man of God giveth further proof of his love and delight in the word, by praising God for that benefit.

His praise is illustrated—

1. By the frequent repetition of that duty, *seven times a day do I praise thee.*

2. The subject-matter, *because of thy righteous judgments, i.e.,* God’s dispensations agreeing with his word.

First, The frequency of the duty, ‘seven times a day;’ that is, very often; *numerus definitus pro indefinito*, a number certain put for an uncertain. Seven is often used for many, as Lev. xxvi. 18, ‘I will punish you seven times more for your sins;’ that is, not exactly seven, but many and divers times: Prov. xxiv. 16, ‘A just man falleth seven times a day, and riseth up again: Prov. xxvi. 25, ‘There are seven abominations in his heart;’ 1 Sam. ii. 5, ‘She that is barren hath borne seven, and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.’ So here, I give thanks to thee as often as I meditate of them. Some of the Jewish rabbis stick in the very literal number, seven—twice in the morning, before the reading of the law, and once after it, and at noon, and so in the evening as in the morning; so Rabbi Solomon. Indeed elsewhere, Ps. lv. 17, ‘Evening and morning and at noon will I praise the Lord;’ but whether with such scrupulous observation of hours is not certain.

Secondly, The subject-matter, ‘Thy righteous judgments,’ whereby is meant—

1. God’s most righteous laws and precepts, called the ordinances of judgment and justice, Isa. lviii. We cannot sufficiently bless God for the benefit of his word.

2. The dispensations of his providence suiting therewith, whether they concern us or others. The word is fulfilled in the punishment of the wicked, and in giving the promised reward to the righteous. All God's dealings are righteous judgments, and matter of praise is still offered to us from the comforts and blessings of his providence. There is no question of that; the smallest of his mercies should not be overlooked, though notable mercies should be continually remembered, Ps. lxxviii. 19. Not only daily benefits, but great deliverances are a standing ground of thanksgiving: Ps. lxxvi. 2, 'Sing forth the honour of his name, make his praise glorious, show forth his salvation from day to day,' especially now the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the great salvation is more clearly revealed, we should never think of it, nor read it, nor hear of it, without some considerable act of joy and thankfulness. Again, so for the dispensations of God to others, in protecting his people, in punishing his enemies. It is a great confirmation of faith to see promises and threatenings fulfilled on others, how punctually God maketh good his word to all that trust in him, Ps. xviii. 30; on all those that reject it and despise it: 'As we have heard, so have we seen,' Ps. xlviii. 8. They that believe the word of God, and do mark what is foretold in the word, shall find the event and work of providence suitable to the prediction.

3. God's righteous judgments afflicting of us doth also yield matter of praise, as they work together for good to such as love him, Rom. viii. 28; and the saddest corrections afford necessary and profitable instructions: Ps. xciv. 12, 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest him out of thy law;' Ps. exix. 71, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes;' though not barely for the afflictions themselves, yet for their fruit and issue, that our souls are bettered and humbled by them, and as we see the faithfulness of God in them.

Doct. That the people of God should never cease lauding and magnifying the name of God because of his righteous judgments.

David was never weary of praising God; every day he praised God, and often every day: love sweetened it to him. We shall praise him evermore in the world to come, there it will be our sole employment; but even in this world we should not count it a burden, but praise him yet more: Ps. lxxi. 14, 'I will yet praise him more and more,' still magnifying his greatness.

Here I shall speak—

1. Of the duty, that we should praise God.
2. Of the continuance, that we should not cease praising God.
3. The grounds of it in the text, because of thy righteous judgments.

First, The duty.

Secondly, The motives to it.

First, The duty, and there we have—(1.) The nature of it; (2.) The grounds of it; (3.) The formality; (4.) The fruit of it.

1. The nature of it. There are three words used in this matter—blessing, praising, giving thanks. Sometimes they are used promiscuously, at other times there is a distinctness of notion to be observed. Blessing is used: Ps. ciii. 1, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul.' Blessing

relateth to his benefits ; it respects the works of God as beneficial to us ; his mercy, love, and kindness to us. We bless him who hath blessed us, Eph. i. 7. Praise relateth to his excellences, as we may praise a stranger for his excellent endowments, though we are not benefited by them : Ps. cx. 1, 2, ‘ Praise ye the Lord ; I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation : the works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.’ It is a great part of our work to praise the Lord ; not that he at all needeth it, for he is infinitely perfect, but he deserveth it, and by this means we testify our love and reverence of him, and strengthen our own dependence on him, and gain others to him, when we speak good of his name. The other word is thanksgiving : Ps. cvii. 1, ‘ Oh ! give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good.’ This differeth from the two former, because praise may be expressed in words, gratitude and thankfulness in deed ; also it hath respect to benefits as well as blessings ; but we show our gratitude by obedience. But these are often coincident ; indeed, there is a mixture of all in the true praising of God ; excellences and benefits are to be acknowledged with heart, mouth, and life.

2. The grounds of it. Faith and love must be at the bottom of our praise, if we would not have it slight and formal ; for the more lively apprehensions we have of God’s perfections, which is the work of faith, and the more sensible of his goodness and mercy, which is the work of love, the better is this service performed. Therefore, unless these praises flow from a believing, loving soul, they are but an empty prattle and a vain sound. Faith is necessary, that is the eye of the soul to see the invisible one, Heb. xi. 27. It giveth us an apprehension of the Lord’s excellences in order to love and trust. So also, in order to praise, faith sets us before the throne, and doth withdraw the veil, and showeth us the eternal God, who liveth and reigneth for ever, dispensing all things powerfully, according to his own will : that is all the sight we have of God in this life—a nearer vision is referred to our future glory ; here we see him by faith. Again, love, or a deep sense of the goodness of God, which enlargeth the heart towards him, and forceth open our lips, that our mouths may show forth his praise, Ps. li. 15. There he meaneth God’s giving a sweet and renewed sense of pardoning mercy : Ps. lxxiii. 3, ‘ Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.’ An intimate sense of the Lord’s love sets the tongue a-work to speak of it. Praise, then, is the result of faith and love. None else do it seriously, delightfully, but where these graces reign and prevail in the heart.

3. The formality of it is an acknowledgment of the divine virtues, benefits, and perfections, manifested to us in his word or works, or both. These must be acknowledged by some outward expression : words, whereby we express our inward thoughts and apprehensions. Our tongues are called our glory : Ps. lvii. 8, ‘ Awake up, my glory ;’ Ps. xvi. 9, ‘ My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth.’ When that scripture is quoted, Acts ii. 26, it is said, ‘ My tongue is glad,’ ἡ γλῶσσο μου. So the Septuagint. So called, not only as speech is our excellency above the beasts, but because God is thereby glorified and praised ; given us to this end and purpose, to bless God,

James iii. 9. As our understanding was given us to know God, and think on him, so our speech to speak of God, to declare his excellent perfections, and to stir up others to praise him with us.

4. Holiness, the fruit of it; for as Job said, the sides of the poor blessed him, Job xxxi. 20, so must our lives praise God, 1 Peter ii. 9, show forth his virtues, not in word only, but in works. Our lives must be a constant hymn to God, though we should be silent. We remember the Lord's excellences, that we may imitate them, and express them to the life. The children of God serve only for this use, to represent God to the world, as the image in the glass representeth the person that looketh in it. So Isa. xl. 21, 'This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.' The impression of all the divine attributes and perfections must be left upon us, and copied out by us, plainly represented in our wisdom, purity, faithfulness, and godliness.

Secondly, The motives, because there is no part of God's worship to which we are more indisposed. Self-love will put us upon prayers and supplications, but love of God upon praises. We are inclined to the one by our own necessities, but we need to be stirred up to the other by pressing arguments. I will only mention those which are heaped up together in one place: Ps. cxlvii. 1, 'Praise ye the Lord, for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely.'

1. It is good and profitable, a piece of service acceptable in God's sight: Ps. l. 23, 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.' It is a part of that spiritual worship required under the gospel, beyond all the sacrifices of the law. In other duties we expect something from God, but in this we bestow something on him.

All God's praises are a believer's advantage; every attribute is his storehouse: 'This is my beloved and my friend,' Cant. v. 16; Ps. cxxxv. 5, 'For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.' Yea, it is profitable as it is acceptable: Ps. lxxvii. 5-7, 'Let all the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee; then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our God, shall bless us; God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.' Pliny telleth us of a fountain that would rise, and swell, and overflow, at the playing of a pipe or flute, and when that ceased, would stop again. The fountain of mercy riseth, and swelleth, and overfloweth with new supplies of mercy when we praise and acknowledge the old.

2. It is pleasant and delightful, full of sweet refreshment. He that knoweth not this work is pleasant is unacquainted with it; for this ravishing, transporting joy is matter of experience. When is the gracious heart more delighted than when it feasts with God? All acts of obedience have a pleasure accompanying them, especially acts of worship, being the nobler part of the spiritual life; and among them praise: Ps. cxxxv. 3, 'Sing praises unto his name, for it is good and pleasant.' It is our duty in heaven to praise God, when we are in our highest felicity; therefore this is a work wherein we should rejoice to be employed. It is our reward rather than our work, the heaven that we have upon earth; and nothing so fit to cheer up the spirit as to

remember what a God we have in Christ. The very nature of it hath allurements enough to a gracious heart: Ps. xcii. 4, 'For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy works;' when God blesseth our meditations of his works with gladness.

3. It is comely and honourable to be about the employment of angels, to be heralds to proclaim the Lord's glory; nothing so comely for us as creatures, who have our whole being from him. As new creatures, we are set apart to be to the praise of his glorious grace in Christ, Eph. i. 12. It beareth all men as a debt, which they owe to God, though the wicked have no power to perform it. Indeed the new song doth ill become the old heart; but when there is an obligation and a capacity, then it is comely indeed. It becometh them to pay, and God to receive it from them: Ps. xxxiii. 1, 'Praise is comely for the upright.' All are bound to praise God, yet none will do it cheerfully and acceptably save the godly: they have obligations above all people in the world; they have a capacity and a heart to do it, and from them God most expecteth it.

Secondly, The continuance, that we should never cease praising God. David saith here, 'Seven times a day,' which is the number of perfection; and elsewhere you shall find equivalent expressions: Ps. xxxiv. 1, 'I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be continually in my mouth.' So Heb. xiii. 15, 'Let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually, giving thanks unto his name.' So Eph. v. 20, 'Giving thanks always unto God for all things.' What is the meaning of these extensive particles, 'continually,' 'always,' 'and at all times'? I answer—It is not to be understood as if we were without intermission to be employed in the actual exercise of formal and distinct thanksgiving. No; there are other necessary duties, which sometimes must divert us from it; but the meaning is—

1. That there is continual occasion of praising God. God is continually beneficial to us, blessing and delivering his people every day, and by new mercies giveth new matter of praise and thanksgiving. And there are some standing mercies which should never be forgotten, but be remembered before God every day, as redemption by Christ, with all the abundant benefits; and therefore the gospel church is represented by four beasts, or four living wights, together with four-and-twenty elders, who 'rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty,' Rev. iv. 8. This is spoken to show that matter doth still continue of lauding and blessing God; and David saith, Ps. lxxi. 8, 'Let my mouth be filled with thy praise, and with thine honour all the day.' There is no moment of time wherein we are not obliged to praise and glorify God.

2. This must be understood of the preparation of the heart without intermission. We must cherish that disposition of heart which is necessary for it. A habit of thankfulness, a heart deeply affected with the Lord's excellences and mercies, should ever be found in us, and never laid aside; the instrument must be kept in tune, though it be not always played upon. David saith, Ps. lvii. 7, 'My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing, and give praise.' There must be a prepared heart, or a fixed purpose to praise the Lord. A renewed sense of God's favour, and fresh experience of his goodness to us, do

draw forth this preparation into act; yet the preparation must still remain with us, and we are to watch against dulness and indisposedness for this holy work. This preparation is more or less at times, for special mercies do raise, enliven, and inspirit the heart; but some measure of a thankful disposition, or bent and inclination to praise God, must never be wanting. As the Vestal fire among the Romans was ever kept in, on special occasions it was blown up; so there should be a habitual frame of heart to praise God at all times, but upon some special occasions it must more especially be excited and stirred up to it.

3. We must keep a constant course, and certain order of worshipping and praising God, both in public and private. In scripture they are said to do a thing always who do it upon stated occasions; as Mephibosheth did eat continually at David's table, 2 Sam. ix. 13; not as if always eating, but at the eating times; and the disciples are said to be continually in the temple, praising and blessing God, Luke xxiv. 53; that is, at the appointed times of worship. So we are to set forth certain times to bless and praise the Lord, who is continually good to us; especially on the sabbath. See the 92d psalm, the title, with the first verse, 'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High!' We are not to omit any occasion of formal and direct thanksgiving; acknowledge mercy and faithfulness, the two pillars of our confidence; as it is to be done constantly, which the former head called for, so frequently, that is, we must take every just occasion to perform it, let no special opportunity pass. The Lord's mercies are new every moment, Lam. iii. 21, and he loadeth us with his benefits daily, Ps. lxxviii. 19. Therefore as God's hand is ever open to bless, so should our mouths be ever open to praise; and we should never go from this exercise *nisi cum animo revertendi*, but with a purpose to return to it again. We have poor temporary affections towards God, and are very rare and infrequent in these duties; though we are daily receiving more and more benefits, yet we are slow and backward to this work. Every hour, every minute, every moment, God is obliging us to it anew; therefore we should say, 'I will praise him more and more.'

Thirdly, The ground of praising mentioned in the text, 'Because of thy righteous judgments.' Here observe—

1. The term is one of the notions by which the word of God is expressed. Surely all kind of mercies are the matter of praise, especially spiritual mercies; and among these, his word, for this is a great favour in itself; the church can as ill be without it as the world without the sun. Ps. xix., he compareth the sun and the law together. This is a peculiar favour: Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20, 'He hath given his word to Jacob; he hath not dealt so with every nation; praise ye the Lord.' The benefit of the scriptures is a precious gift of God to the church, and so it should be valued and esteemed; not counted a burden, as it is to them who are wholly earthly, and mind not heavenly things. Alas! what should we do without this help to ease our burdened minds, to understand God's providences, and learn the way to happiness, without these pure precepts and heavenly promises? What is it that raiseth in us the joy of faith, the patience of hope, that directeth us to a

straight and certain way to glory, but the word of God? This is the book of books, the food and comfort of our souls: Ps. lvi. 10, 'In God I will praise his word, in the Lord I will praise his word.' The best hold that faith can have of God is by his word. Let us own his word, and then, whatever his dispensations be, we have cause to praise him; here is a sure hope to fix upon, and a sure rule to walk by. It cannot be told in a breath what benefit we have by it: here is matter of glorying, and firm confidence; we need not fear men or devils as long as we have such a firm bulwark to secure us: here we have God's will made known, to give us notice of a blessed estate, and God's promise to give us an interest in it.

2. It noteth the dispensation of his providence, fulfilling his promises unto the faithful, and executing his threatenings on the wicked. He is the same in his works that he is in his word. His judgments are declared in his holy word, and executed in his righteous providence; and therefore it is said of them that have not his word, Ps. cxlvii. 20, 'As for his judgments, they have not known them; praise ye the Lord.' Where they have not his word, the Lord's dealing with men in justice and mercy, and the course which he observeth in ruling the world, is not understood; it lieth much in the dark, so that his providence is complicated with his word; and as it is the sentence of his word executed, is matter of praise. Well, then, we must praise God for his righteous government of the world, according to his word; whether it concern the church in general, or us in particular: Rev. xvi. 7, 'True and righteous are thy judgments.' But because particular providences come nearest home, and do most affect us, I shall instance in them:—

[1.] Let me show you how we should praise God for his favours, and fulfilling of promises to us, and hearing our prayers, and remembering us for good in our low estate. Joshua leaveth this note when dying, Josh. xxiii. 14, 'I am going the way of all the earth; and ye know in all your hearts and all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord hath spoken to you; all are come to pass, not one thing hath failed thereof.' Trust God, and try him, and you will return the same account with this, which was the result of all his experience. And Solomon taketh notice of God's fulfilling promises, 1 Kings viii. 20, 24, 'And the Lord hath performed his word that he spake; who hath kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him; thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand.' There is none of any acquaintance with God but find much of this. Now they should therefore praise the Lord, and love him; so David, Ps. cxvi. 1, 'I will love the Lord, who hath heard the voice of my supplication.' When we have put promises in suit, and challenged God upon his word, he hath stood to it, justified our confidence; every fresh experience in this kind should excite new love and praise.

[2.] In time of affliction, when divine dispensations go cross to our affections, and it may be to our prayers, yet even then should we praise the Lord. Job when the Lord had taken away, he blesseth the name of the Lord, Job i. 21. The Lord is worthy of praise and honour when he giveth and when he taketh away, when he emptieth and when he

fillet us with blessings. A child of God is of a strange temper; he can fear him for his mercies, Hosea iii. 5, and praise him for his judgments, as in the text. It argueth a great measure of grace to give thanks to God at all times and for all things: 1 Thes. v. 17, 18, 'Rejoice ever more; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks.' Simply we cannot give thanks for afflictions as afflictions, as we cannot pray for them, nor joy in them, but as they are a means of good to us. A thankful frame of heart bringeth meat out of the eater, encouragement out of the saddest providences, and taketh occasion to lift up itself in the praises of God even from those things which are matter of greatest discouragement and heartless dejection to others. It seeth the hand of God working for good to him. And then, on the other side, an unthankful, repining, murmuring spirit soureth all our comforts, is ever querulous, whether crossed or pleased; it entertaineth crosses with anger, and blessings with disdain. It is hard to be in any condition on this side hell wherein we have not cause to praise God; even in great calamities, either for their fruit and issue, as our souls are bettered and humbled by them: Ps. cxix. 65, 'Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, according to thy word.' Wherein? In giving him faith, and sensible and seasonable correction, ver. 67; and presently, 'Thou art good, and doest good,' ver. 68. Or else for their mitigation, as to deem them not insupportable, 1 Cor. x. 13; that we are not consumed, Lam. iii. 22; that not to the full merit of our sins: Ezra ix. 13, 'Thou hast punished us less than we have deserved;' that comforts come along with them; that our afflictions do not exceed the measure of our comforts, 2 Cor. i. 5; that we have a good God still, who knoweth how to turn all to our advantage. Let us be persuaded he is well affected to us in Christ, and we will take anything kindly at his hand. All this is spoken that poor murmuring souls may not set out from so blessed a work; yea, when other arguments fail, we may see the wisdom, justice, and faithfulness of God in his sharpest corrections: Ps. cxix. 75, 'I know that thy judgments are right, and in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.' It is a great honour to God to speak good of his name when his hand is smart upon us.

Use. Let me press you now to three things:—

1. To the work.
2. Frequency and constancy herein.
3. To suit often God's word and works together.

First, To the work of praising God. Many are often complaining or begging, but seldom praising or giving thanks. Oh! surely this should be more regarded, not always taken up with complaints against ourselves, and supplications for mercies; but should some time give thanks, and praise the Lord; it is the noblest part of our work, it is nearest the work of heaven. As love is the grace of heaven, so praise is the duty then in season. It is good to be preparing, setting our hearts in order for our eternal estate; it is the work of angels; when we praise God, we do the work of angels. The angels, according to the opinion of the ancient Hebrews, do every day sing praises to God, and that in the morning; which they gather because the angel said to Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 26, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh;' which place the Targum of Jerusalem thus explaineth, Let me go, for the pillar

of the morning ascendeth, and behold the hour approacheth that the angels are to sing. However that opinion be, sure we are that the angels ever bless God, and laud his holy name: Isa. vi. 1-3, the angels cried one to another, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.' They were blessing God for creation; then the morning stars sang for joy, Job xxxviii. 4-6, for the nativity of Christ, Luke ii. 13, 14. They apprehend more of God's excellency and perfection in himself and in his works than we do, and are more sensible of his benefits than we are. Now if this be the work of angels, the highest and greatest of them, surely this work should be more prized by us. It is nobler than other duties; we serve God in our callings, but this work is a part of our misery, this burden was laid upon Adam after his fall, that in the sweat of his brow he should eat his bread, Gen. iii. 19. Though honest labour be a part of our obedience, yet it is also a part of our trouble and exercise. There are works of righteousness; as to give every man his due, these are good works; but they concern the benefit of man, the good of human society; whereas praise is more immediately directed to the honour of God. There are works of mercy, to relieve the poor, to help the distressed, to support the weak, to comfort the afflicted; these are good works indeed, and a very noble part of our service, to be reckoned to our thank-offerings as praise: Heb. xiii. 15, 16, 'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name: but to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' It is godlike to do good, and a more blessed thing to give than to receive, Acts xx. 35; as God giveth to all, and receiveth of none; but still this redoundeth to men. There are *opera cultus*, the fourth sort of works, works of worship; internal, as humbling our soul, repenting of our sins, and asking pardon; these are good works indeed, but such as imply our misery and imperfection. External, as prayer, hearing, and reading, and other acts of communion with God; but when we give thanks, this is more noble. In other duties, God is bestowing something on us; but here, in our way, we bestow something upon God. In prayer, as beggars; in hearing, as scholars and disciples, we come to expect something from him. Here we come to put honour upon God; in our way it is a kind of recompense, or paying our debts to him, by word or deed.

Now the reasons why men are so backward to this work are—

1. Because we have so little of the love of God. Self-love puts us upon supplication, but the love of God upon praise and thanksgiving. It is a token of great love to praise God without ceasing. We are eager to have blessings, and then forget to return and give God the glory.

2. And partly neglect of observation. We do not gather up matter of thanksgiving: Col. ii. 4, 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same, with thanksgiving.' We should continually observe God's answers and visits of love, manifestations of himself to the world. The reason, then, why we have no more pleasure in praising God is, because we observe not so heedfully as we should his mercy and truth fulfilled.

Secondly, To frequency and constancy therein. Frequency in this

duty doth not beget a satiety and loathing, but rather a greater delight to continue in it. But here arise two questions:—

Quest. 1. What time must be necessarily spent in acts of worship and adoration, prayer, praise, and immediate converse with God?

Ans. 1. It is a truth that our whole time must be given to God, for a Christian is a dedicated thing, a living sacrifice, Rom. xii. 1. Now the beast offered in sacrifice with all the appurtenances was God's; a Christian, by the consent of his own vows, is not master of anything. After a vow of all, we must not keep back part, as did Ananias and Sapphira. A Christian hath given his whole self, time, and strength to God.

2. Though our whole time be given to God, yet for several uses and purposes. God's service is not of one sort, and he is served in our callings as well as in our worship. Man in paradise was to dress the garden, Gen. ii. 15, as well as to contemplate God. Common actions may become sacred by their end and use: Isa. xxiii. 18, 'And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord.'

3. These several duties must not interfere and clash one with another, for God's commands are not contrary, but subordinate. We must not so attend upon religion as to neglect the service of our generation, as instruments of God's providence; nor suffer the lean kine to devour the fat, the world to encroach upon religion.

4. The particular seasons for each duty are not determined and set down in scripture.

[1.] Partly because God trusteth love, and will see whether we have a mind to cavil and wrangle and dispute away duties, rather than practise them.

[2.] And partly because he would leave something to the conduct of his Spirit, and the choice of spiritual wisdom: Ps. cxii. 5, 'A good man will guide his affairs with discretion.'

[3.] And partly because men's occasions and conditions are different, and he would not have his law to be a snare.

[4.] And partly because there are so many occasions to praise God, that if we do not want a heart, we will be much and frequent in this duty.

5. Though there be no express rules, there is enough to prevent carelessness and looseness. God calleth to us in very large and comprehensive terms, 'always,' 'continually,' 'and in everything.' The example of the saints who night and day were praising God: 'Paul and Silas at midnight sang praises to God,' Acts xvi. 29. So Ps. cxix. 62, 'At midnight will I rise to give thanks to thee, because of thy righteous judgments.' And in the text, 'Seven times a day.' Besides, there are daily solemn services, personal and domestic, to be performed, Mat. vi. 11; 'Watching daily at my gates,' Prov. viii. 34. Morning and evening they were to offer a lamb, Num. xxviii. 4.

6. There are general hints and limits enough to become¹ love: Ps. lxxi. 14, 'But I will hope continually, and will praise thee yet more and more.' Enough to keep the heart in good plight, and maintain faith and hope in God, and keep up a spiritual intercourse of communion with God by daily offering up prayers and praises to him.

¹ So in original.—Ed.

Quest. 2. Whether it be convenient to state and fix a time?

David had his set times, so had Daniel; and surely, all occasions, opportunities, and abilities considered, it may be a help to us, and make the spiritual life more orderly, to have set, stated, fixed times for the performance of this duty.

Thirdly, To suit God's word and works together, laws and judgments: Rom. i. 18, 'God hath revealed his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness;' Heb. ii.2, 'Every transgression and every disobedience received a just recompense of reward.' Deliverances and promises fetch all out of the covenant: Ps. cxxviii. 5, 'The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion;' that relateth to the covenant made to the church; this checketh atheism, sweeteneth our duties, allayeth our fears, and resolveth our doubts, and helpeth us in the delightful exercise of praising God.

SERMON CLXXIX.

Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.—VER. 165.

ALL that live in this world find this life a warfare, Job vii. 1; much more must the godly expect difficulties and conflicts: Ps. xxxiv. 19, 'Many are the troubles of the righteous.' To the eye of flesh, no condition seemeth worse and more obnoxious to misery than the condition of those that serve God; yet in reality none are in a better estate; whatever happeneth, they are at peace, built on the cornerstone which God hath laid in Zion, and therefore in all the commotions and troubles of the world they are safe. This is that which David here observeth.

In the former verse he had told us that it was his custom to praise God seven times a day for his righteous judgments, and now he showeth the reason, namely, from the ordinary course and tenor of these judgments, or dispensation of his providence, which was to give peace to them that keep his law, 'Great peace,' &c.

In these words you have—

1. A privilege, *great peace have they.*
2. The qualification, *that love thy law.*
3. The effect, *nothing shall offend them.*

Let me open these branches.

First, The privilege is peace, and that is threefold—(1.) External;

(2.) Internal; (3.) Eternal.

1. External, in the house, the city, or country, and societies where we live. In this sense it is taken, Ps. cxxii. 6, 7, 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee; peace be within thy walls.' Now this is not all that is meant here, for this is a common benefit, though often vouchsafed for the sake of them that love God; as music cannot be heard alone, though intended but to one person. yet others share with him in the benefit of it. Or if you understand it of his own personal peace, or being at amity with men, they do not always enjoy that. God's best children are often forced to be

men of contention, that is, passively; they are contended with and troubled in the world, Jer. xv. 10. And therefore the apostle saith, Rom. xii. 18, 'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.' It is not always to be had, but we should endeavour to live in peace with all men.

2. There is internal peace, arising either from justification, Rom. v. 1; or sanctification: Isa. xxxii. 17, 'The fruit of righteousness is peace;' or from contentment with our condition, Phil. iv. 7. By justification we have peace, when God is reconciled and made a friend; by sanctification we have peace, when we walk evenly with God; and by contentment we have peace, when our affections are calmed and rightly ordered, or set upon more worthy and noble objects, so that we are not troubled at the loss of outward things. These are the ingredients necessary to eternal peace, which is, I suppose, principally intended here—inward comfort and contentment of mind.

3. There is eternal peace, that happy and quiet estate which we shall enjoy in heaven, when we are above all desertions, temptations, and the trouble of hostile incursions, when we shall never have frown more from God's face, when our sun shall always shine without cloud or night, when our strife is over, and our enemies that do infest us now are all overcome. There is no Satan to tempt us, no serpent in the upper paradise, no world to trouble or divert us; for all the wicked are bound hand and foot, and cast into unquenchable fire; there is no flesh to clog us, for all is perfect. This glorious estate is called peace in scripture; as Rom. ii. 10, 'God will give glory, honour, peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile;' and Rom. viii. 6, 'To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.' By death is meant the torments of hell, and by life and peace the joys of heaven. And, speaking of the blessedness of those that die in the Lord, he saith, Isa. lvii. 2, 'They shall enter into peace.' Now this cannot principally be intended here, for the man of God speaketh of what we have, not of what we hope for; and he speaks of God's righteous dispensations here in the world, for which he praised him; and therefore it is meant of our peace here; but yet it is the sense of peace and happiness we shall have in heaven that hath an influence upon the tranquillity of our hearts and minds here.

Secondly, Let me a little explain the qualification, 'that love thy law.' The word 'law' is sometimes taken in a limited sense for the decalogue or moral law; or else, more generally, for the whole doctrine of the covenant, the whole tenor of religion, law, and gospel. So here and elsewhere; as 'The isles shall wait for thy law,' Isa. xlii. 4; that is, shall readily receive and embrace his doctrine. So Dan. vi. 5, 'We shall not find occasion against this Daniel, unless we find it in the law of his God;' that is, in his religion. So Ps. i. 2, 'But his delight is the law of the Lord.' By the law of the Lord is meant the whole word of God. Well, now, it is said they love his law; not only keep it, but love it. A child of God is sometimes described by his faith, sometimes by his hope or by his fear, but more often by his love, that commanding and swaying affection that sets the whole soul a-work. They love thy law; there is emphasis in that.

Thirdly, Here is the consequent, 'Nothing shall offend them.' The Septuagint renders it *οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῖς σκάνδαλον*, they have not scandals, they have their troubles, but no stumbling-blocks: 1 John ii. 10, 'There is no occasion of stumbling in them.' There is the same word used there which the Septuagint useth here. Scandal is either active or passive, given or taken; that which is taken out of weakness, as young professors, or out of pride and malice; they interpreted many things in a worse sense when they knew it might be interpreted in a better. Now, nothing shall scandalise them. Peace with God prevents the scandals of weakness, and love to the law prevents scandals out of pride and malice. Nothing shall scandalise them. Many things are apt to scandalise men, as God's judgments, for which David did so often every day and so solemnly praise God. But they that love his law, and thereby obtain great peace, they will not stumble at God's dispensations, let them be never so cross to their desires and expectations, because they have a sure covenant, that is, a sure rule, and sure promises. They are not scandalised by the miscarriages of men; they can distinguish between the art and the artificer; if the artist fail, the art is not to be blamed. The reproaches that are cast upon the ways of God, it doth not offend them, for they have found God in that way others speak evil of. Gold is gold though cast into the dirt; dogs will bark at the moon when it shineth brightest. Would any man be troubled if a cripple mock him for going uprightly? Shall we leave the ways of God, wherein we have found comfort and peace, because others speak against them? He is not offended at this. But that which is meant here is such an offence as turneth them from God, otherwise a good man may fall and stumble, but not into final apostasy, and he is usually kept from lesser offences. A child of God may be offended in lesser cases, but not so offended as to fall and break his neck.

But why is it called great peace? It noteth the excellency of this kind of peace; it is not only peace, but great peace, such as is rich and glorious: Phil. iv. 7, 'A peace that passeth all understanding;' or it may note the degree and quantity of it, abundance of peace, as it is, Ps. xxix. 11, and Ps. lxxii. 3; I speak peace to them that are afar off; or peace like a river, Isa. xlvi. 18, or pure peace.

Three points I shall handle—

Doct. 1. That it is the property of God's children to love his law.

Doct. 2. Those that love the law shall have great peace.

Doct. 3. This blessed peace maketh a man hold on in the way of obedience, whatever impediments, stumbling-blocks, or discouragements he meets withal.

First point, That it is the property of God's children, not only to keep his law, but to love his law.

This is often spoken of in this psalm; now I prove it thus:—

Reason 1. They love God, and therefore they love his law: how doth that follow? The love that passeth between God and us is not an arbitrary love of equals, but the necessary dutiful respect that inferiors owe to their superiors, such as children owe to their father, servants to their master, subjects to their prince and governor. Therefore it is not a fellow-like familiarity, but a dutiful submission

and subjection to God's authority ; and therefore, if we love God, we will love his law. It is God's condescension that he will use us like friends in regard of communion, and converse with us, as Abraham was called God's friend, James ii. 23 ; yet we are but servants, though we are used like friends, and there is a debt and bond of duty lying upon us ; and so if we bear any respect to God, it must be determined by our respect to his laws, and demonstrated by our obedience to them, not by acts of ordinary courtesy and kindness. 'This is often spoken of : John xiv. 15, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments ;' and ver. 21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ;' John xv. 14, 'Ye are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you.' Though none condescendeth to such acts of kindness and friendship as God in Christ hath done, yet still he standeth upon his sovereignty : 'If ye love me, keep my commandments.' God's love to us is indeed a love of bounty, but our love is a love of duty and service. I have not yet done with this reason. It necessarily follows from the love of God, though you abstract him from the notion of a sovereign and lawgiver, and should love him only because of the excellency of his nature. Now thus I argue : The same reasons that carry us to love God, do carry us also to love his law ; for he that loveth God, will love anything of God, wherever he finds it. He will love his word, he will love his saints ; but chiefly his word, for that is most to be loved, because that hath most of God in it. The law is a copy of his holiness ; the tract of God is in the creatures, there is his *vestigium*. His image is in his saints, they resemble his divine qualities, but his most lively print and character is upon his word. The image of God in his saints is obscured by their infirmities, but the law of God is perfect, there is no blemish there ; this is the fairest copy and draught of his holiness. Nay, once more, in this argument abstract the consideration of his authority and the perfection of his being, yet our obligations to God as our benefactor will enforce this love to his word, and make it sweet to us, because it is the letter of our friend and benefactor, and the signification of his will to whom we owe life and breath and all things ; and therefore, though the law did not deserve to be loved for its own sake, yet it should be sweet for his sake from whom it cometh. He hath evidenced much love to us, as we are creatures ; but much more love in Christ, as we are sinners ; and it should be acceptable to us upon his account. Love and gratitude will constrain us to do his will and regard his commands, 2 Cor. v. 14. If we have any sense of our great obligations to him, it must needs be so.

Reason 2. God's children find such an excellency in his law that they must needs love it. As it is—

1. A plain clear word, that doth fully discover the will of God, and not leave duty to our own uncertain guesses. It puts duty into a plain stated course, how we may come to be blessed for ever more ; Ps. cxix. 105, 'Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.' Light is pleasant, but darkness is uncomfortable. When Aristotle was asked why all men do love the light, his answer was, That was the question of a blind man ; sense discovereth sufficiently why we should love the light. Certainly if you ask why men do not love the word of God, it is because the god of this world hath blinded their eyes, 2 Cor. iv. 4.

2. It is a good word, because it is suited to our necessities; so we read, Heb. vi. 5, 'If so be ye have tasted the good word.' Is food good when a man is hungry? Is drink good when a man is thirsty? Then the word of God is good, for it suiteth with the necessities of our souls, as these things do with our bodies: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' The gospel is a doctrine fitted for hungry consciences. If our inward senses were not benumbed, and we were not so Christ-gluttet and gospel-gluttet as we are, oh! how precious would these tenders of grace be to our souls!

3. It is a pure word; so David gives the reason in the 140th verse of this psalm, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' Hypocrites will now and then relish the comforts of the gospel, be affected with the word, because it speaketh such good things to poor sinners; but God's children love the word for its purity and holiness. It meeteth with every sin, and directeth them to every duty necessary for the enjoyment of the blessed God. It is not comfort only must draw our love, but holiness. This argueth the life and power of grace, when we would not have the law of God less strict and holy than it is, but love it for this very reason, because it is pure, strict, and holy. You would not think a beggar loves you because he liketh your alms, but he is loath to stay with you for your service, and live under the orderly government of your family. Most men's love to the word is such, they delight in the comforts of it as an alms, but they hate the duty of it as a task; they had rather let the duties of it alone, if it could be without danger, and forbear them if they durst. Oh! but when your hearts consent to the purity of the law, and you would choose that life which it points out unto you rather than any life in the world, or the most absolute freedom that the heart of man can imagine, so that you love your master the more because he hath appointed you such work, this is true affection to God and his word: you had rather live in holiness than sin, if you had your freest choice; it is a sign then you love holiness for holiness' sake, and admire that in the word which is most worthy, its strictness.

4. It is a sublime word: ver. 129, 'Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my soul keep them.' Here are excellent truths, glorious mysteries, fit to exercise the sharpest wits in the world, a study fitter for angels than men, 1 Peter i. 12. I do not speak this to stir up curiosity, which is a moral itch, a lust of the mind, and nothing more opposite to true love than lust, but to raise men to a due esteem of the scriptures, which they are wont to contemn for their simplicity and plainness; it is full of high mysteries, though it may be read with profit by simple people, or any who desire knowledge. Sensual men, that are drowned in worldly delights, only look to the comfort of the animal life, and value all things as that is gratified; but those that look to the spiritual life, and the ennobling of their souls, they will find the only sublime wisdom in the word of God: Deut. iv. 6, 'Keep these statutes and do them; for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' What pitiful notions had the philosophers, and the wisest of the heathen, concern-

ing God, and angels, and providence, and the creation of the world, and the souls of men, and the happiness of the other world, and the way to attain it! When the heathen came to be first acquainted with the Jews, they wondered at their wisdom and skill. These things would beget admiration in us if we did meditate on them, and contented not ourselves with a slight and customary rehearsal of them. Here are deep mysteries to exercise the greatest wits, and therefore consider them more.

5. It is a sure word: Ps. xix. 7, 'The testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple.' These directions may be safely relied upon, and will not disappoint us; for they are not the guesses of deceived men, nor the collections only of the most observing and wisest men, or the result of their infallible experiences, but inspiration of the infallible God; and therefore a sensible heart, that knoweth what it is to live in a troublesome world, and hath been exercised with doubts, knoweth the comfort of a sure rule and sure promises. Oh! what a comfort is this in the midst of the uncertainties of the present life!

Reason 3. There is no keeping the law without loving the law. There is a keeping the commandments by way of defence, and by way of obedience; a keeping of them by way of preservation, when we will not suffer them to be violated or wrested from us by others; and a keeping of them by way of observation, when we are mindful of them, are careful to observe them ourselves. This latter is the meaning of the scripture notion of keeping the law. Now this cannot be without love; nothing can hold the heart to it but love. What bonds will you cast upon yourselves! But if a temptation come, you will break them all, as Sampson did the cords wherewith he was bound. It is not your promises, vows, covenants, resolutions; not your former experiences of comfort, when put to no trial; all is nothing to love. To evidence this to you, three things are needful—labour, valour, and self-denial.

1. To keep the commandments is a laborious thing, and requireth great diligence. Now love is that disposition that maketh us laborious and diligent. If anything keep a man to his work, it is love. Labour and love are often put together: Heb. vi. 10, 'God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love;' 1 Thes. i. 3, 'Your work of faith, and labour of love.' It is not a slothful and idle affection, but will make a man take any pains, and endure any toil, *nescit amor molimina*—love never findeth difficulties. The reason why they object difficulties is because they love not. The church of Ephesus, when she lost her first love, she left her first works, Rev. ii. 4. Our Lord Jesus, when he had work for Peter to do, gageth his heart upon this point: John xxi. 15, 'Simon Peter, lovest thou me? feed my sheep, feed my lambs.' No man can endure the toil of the ministry, and the many troubles and difficulties he meeteth with in the discharge of it, without love to Christ. It is love sets all the wheels in the soul a-going.

2. To keep the commandments requireth spirit and courage, not only the labour of an ox, but the animosity and courage of a lion; for we are not only to work, but fight and contend for our duty against the enemies of our salvation. Now the most valorous and courageous

affection is love. A cowardly lover is a monster, one that hath all liver and no heart. The poets in their fictions ascribe the valour of the person whom they would represent as noble and heroic to the strength of their love. Certainly the heroic acts of the martyrs came all from love. Others will not be at the charge of keeping the commandments of God that lie cross to their profits and pleasures; but love will cause us to do the will of God, whatever it cost us. Yea, it is loath to serve God with that which cost nothing: Cant. viii. 6, 7, 'Love is strong as death, many waters cannot quench love.' Death conquereth the stoutest, but cannot conquer love: 'They loved not their lives to the death,' Rev. xii. 11. The waters of affliction cannot quench it, no threatenings, no promises can quench it. Love will not be bribed from Christ, nor frightened from Christ. You will be assaulted on both sides, with hopes and fears, but nothing shall fright or allure the soul from Christ.

3. To keep the commandments there needeth much self-denial and submission, that he may have a heart to stoop to the least intimation of the will of God, though it be against your own will, and against your own carnal sense and inclination and interest. A man can never keep the commandments till he thus deny himself; therefore the world wondereth what is the reason that men do so submit against their humour and interest. And say, If this be to be vile, I will be more vile; as holy David said: nothing can do this but love. When a man loveth you, you have the keys of his heart, you can open and shut it when you please. Sampson like a child submitted to Delilah, because of his love to her. So Gen. xxxiv., Hamor and Shechem submitted to any terms, to be circumcised, because of the delight the young man had to Dinah; the father loved the son, and the son loved Dinah, and therefore both submitted to that hateful, painful ceremony. Jacob's service for Rachel seemed but a few years because of his love to her, Gen. xxix. 20. So if we love the law of God, we will submit to the duties of it, against the hair and bent of our hearts.

Use 1. Examination.

1. Do we receive the truth of God in the love thereof? Do we embrace the offers of Jesus Christ heartily? Acts ii. 41, 'They received the word gladly.' Do you keep up your relish of the gospel, delight to hear of Christ, to read of Christ, to meditate of Christ, and the doctrine of salvation? not one part, but all? Ps. i. 2, 'His delight is in the law of God;' the whole law. Ungodly men will catch at promises, seem to show a love to these, but grudge at the mandatory part of the word. Do you delight when it is pressed upon you, when you are warned of your danger? know most of your duty, and the way how to attain your blessedness? Do you love it most when you feel the tragical effects of it? As the apostle saith, 'The commandment came, and sin revived, and I died.'

2. Do you heartily take Christ's yoke upon you, and frame yourselves to practise what he hath required of you? They that love the law cannot rest in mere speculations, and be careless in the duties required of them. Love cannot be hidden, but it will break forth into action. If it be in your hearts, it will break out in your lives: Ps. xl. 8, 'The law of God is in my heart.' You will make conscience

of duty, 1 John ii. 4. Love is found to be solid and real when we are tender of Christ's laws; in vain else do we talk of the new birth, of the work of grace, or having an interest in Christ, and the like, unless we keep his law.

3. Do you practise it willingly, and without grudging? 1 John v. 3, 'His commandments are not grievous.' They that love the law will not count the work tedious. God doth not look to the work, praying, hearing, strict observing his ordinances, or Lord's day; but minds the will for the deed, not the deed for the will, whether willingly or unwillingly. God dealeth with us as rational creatures. If your ox draw your plough, and your ass carry his burden, you care not much whether it be done willingly or unwillingly; but God dealeth with us as obliged, and looketh that love should constrain us, and influence our actions; and God dealeth with us as renewed creatures, that have a suitableness to their work, Heb. viii. 10; Ps. xl. 2, when rather from him than with him he delights greatly in God's commandments; Ps. cxii. 1, delights to know, believe, and obey God's word; and God expects it from us, because of the pleasures that do accompany well-doing, Prov. iii. 17. The speculation of a worthy truth affects the mind, but practice doth more, as more intimately acquainted with it.

Use 2. It shows—

1. How far they are from the temper of God's people that dispute away duties rather than practise them, cavil at their work rather than readily accept it.

2. They do not love the law that are always full of excuses, and pretend occasions to neglect the service of God; excuses are always a sign of a naughty heart. The sinner's *non vacat* is indeed *non placet*: Luke xiv. 18, 'They all began to make excuses.' If we did not want a heart, we should not want an occasion to manifest our respects to God.

3. It shows how far they are from the temper of God's people that are easily discouraged with difficulties; love will make us break through all, 2 Cor. v. 14. Love hath a constraining force, counts nothing too dear to be parted with for God's sake; they that are weary of well-doing, they are out of their element; as they in Malachi¹ inquired, When will the sabbath be over? They that brought but a sorry lamb, cried out, Oh, what a weariness! Again, they that love the law are not troubled about the strictness of the law, but the unsuitableness of their own hearts. God's children are grieved for that weariness and uncomfortableness they find in God's service, glad of any enlargement of heart. Lust is grievous, but not the commandment: Rom. vii. 24, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me (not from the law, but) from the body of this death?' But others, when the truth shineth round about them, they receive it not in the love thereof.

Doct. 2. Those that love the law shall have great peace. Let me prove this.

1. They shall have peace.

2. Great peace.

First, They shall have peace.

1. Because the God of peace is their God; they are assured of his love and favourable acceptance. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia*—if God be with us, who can be against us? If he smileth on us, it is enough, though all the world should be against us; for it is God's wrath that maketh us miserable, and God's love that maketh us happy.

2. Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of peace, is their Saviour, Isa. ix. 9. He hath made articles of peace between God the Father and us, and drawn them into a covenant of grace, called the covenant of his peace, Isa. liv. 10; and this founded upon his blood, which is the price given to purchase our peace, and to set all things at rights between God and us, Col. i. 20; Isa. liii. 5. Having made peace between God and us. No less would serve the turn completely to satisfy the justice of God for our wrong, and to purchase his favour for us.

3. The Spirit, who is a Spirit of peace, Gal. v. 22; it is one of his fruits; he worketh it in us as a sanctifier and as a comforter.

[1.] As a spirit of sanctification he doth dispossess Satan, and subdueth that rebellious disposition that is naturally in us against God, and maketh us accept the offer of friendship and reconciliation with God, and to yield up ourselves servants to righteousness, unto holiness, and then accordingly to walk as people that are at amity with God.

(1.) Your first resignation in faith and repentance is a ground of peace, and wrought in us by the Spirit: Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' Together with our faith, and in and by our faith, the Holy Ghost worketh this joy and peace! When we come to sue out our pardon in his name, to receive the atonement, and to resign up ourselves to God's use, then is the foundation laid: 'Give the hand to the Lord,' 2 Chron. xxx. 8.

(2.) This peace is confirmed by holy walking in the Spirit, or perfecting holiness through the power of the Holy Ghost: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them;' Jer. vi. 16, 'Ask for the good old way, and walk therein, and you shall find peace to your souls.' Keep close to God and you will have peace, otherwise not. Peace with God and thine own conscience is a very tender thing; you had need be chary of it. If you grieve the Spirit, you will find it to your bitter cost. When sinful dispositions are indulged and nourished, our peace is beclouded, and hangeth on uncertain terms.

[2.] As a comforter, whose office it is to give us a sense of God's love, and to help conscience to judge of our state and actions. The Spirit representeth God as a Father, and showeth us what things are given us of God, and dissipateth and scattereth all the black thoughts that are in the soul: Isa. lvii. 19, 'I create the fruit of the lips to be peace.' Peace is a sovereign plaister, God maketh it stick, and then all the world cannot deprive them of this peace. Creation and annihilation belong to the same power; the world can never give, nor take; it is God's work, and he will maintain it.

Secondly, It shall be great peace, as to the nature and degree of it, as was before explained.

1. For the nature of it : it is not an ordinary peace, but of a higher nature : John xiv. 27, ' My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you : let not your hearts be troubled.' Wherein doth it differ from the world's peace ? The world's peace is oftentimes in sin, a concord in evil, a lethargy portending sadder troubles ; but this is a holy peace, Prov. iii. 17. That is a crazy peace that is soon broken and distorted, depending on the uncertainty of present affairs and the mutable affections of men ; the more secure they are, the sadder trouble at hand : but this is an everlasting peace, which we have now in the way, and shall have in death, and then for ever. The world's peace is outward ; it is but at best a freedom from outward troubles, when they are at enmity with God ; but this is a peace with God himself, Prov. xvi. 7. The world's peace pleaseth the outward man, but this is a solid soul-satisfying peace, a peace that guardeth heart and mind, Phil. iv. 7.

2. For the degree, it is many times in a great measure enjoyed ; it may be more or less, as an interest in God's favour is more or less in us. And it is not perfect in this life ; there may be clouds and interruptions, but as our holiness increaseth, so doth our peace ; a little holiness, a little peace ; but they that love thy law, have great peace.

Object. How have God's children great peace ? None seem more troubled and harassed with outward afflictions, nor walk more mournfully than they do.

Ans. It is true this peace doth not exclude trouble from carnal men in the world ; they may have little outward peace, yet they shall have as much of that as God seeth good for them, Job v. 23, 24 ; but inward peace, which is peculiar to them. They have God for their friend, are quieted with a true sense and apprehension of his love and favour to them. It is true, as to this inward peace, God's children may sometimes be without it ; they that love the law have a greater sense of sin than others. Wicked men swallow sins without remorse ; but they are very apprehensive of displeasing God. But we must distinguish between the time of settling this peace, and when it is settled. For a time they may walk sadly ; their peace is not grown up ; light is sown for the righteous. Many times they sow in tears, but reap in joy. Sometimes their love to the law is intermitted, so their peace may be interrupted : But their worst condition is better than a carnal man's best, as the darkest cloudy day is brighter than the brightest night ; there is some comfort and staying upon God in the worst condition.

Use 1. Let us from hence see the sad condition of carnal men. This clause, ' love thy law,' is exclusive, and confineth it to one sort of men. The unjustified, the unsanctified want this peace. God saith of them, they should not enter into my rest, Ps. xc. 11. The rest is begun in this life in reconciliation with God and peace of conscience, and perfected in an everlasting refreshment in that to come. Their sins are not pardoned, and therefore continually fear ; they have often refused God's peace, and therefore cannot enjoy comfort with any security, nor bear troubles with any patience and quiet of mind, nor come into God's presence with any cheerfulness, nor wait for eternal rest with any certain hope : ' There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,' Isa.

xlvi. 22; Ps. lvii. 20, 21. It is not allowed to wicked men, nor vouchsafed to them. It is true they may have a peace, but it is either in sin or from sin; they do not mind the condition of their souls, a blind presumption that merely cometh from God's forbearance, or worldly happiness in prosperity. Carnal men seem to be in as great quietness as the children of God; as the deep sea in a calm, which seemeth to be as quiet as other waters, until a storm and tempest doth arise, then troubled, and cannot rest.

Use 2. To persuade us to love the law of God by this argument, because we shall have great peace; for the promise is made to this love.

But you will say, How must we show love to the law of God, that we may obtain this effect?

I answer—Practise the duties it calleth for in order to peace.

1. Accept the articles of peace, that are proclaimed between God and mankind in and through Christ. Eph. ii. 17, there is peace preached, not only to them that are afar off, but to them that are nigh; there is not only a price paid, but an offer made. Embrace it, lay hold upon it by faith; God is in good earnest with you, 2 Cor. v. 20. Oh! love this good word; it is the gladdest tidings that ever sounded in the ears of lost sinners. Now is your time, agree with your adversary while he is in the way, before you be cast into prison, Luke xii. 58. If you lose this opportunity, and do not embrace the offered friendship, God will be exceeding angry: Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' 2 Chron. xxx. 8, 'Therefore give the hand to the Lord.'

2. Perform the duty of thankfulness which God requires, Mat. xi. 29. Peace is the fruit of sanctification, as well as justification; it is not to be found elsewhere, Isa. xxxii. 17.

3. Be much in communion with God and trading with heaven: 'Acquaint thyself with God,' Job xxii. 21.

4. Be tender of your peace, when it is once settled, of doing anything that may cause war between God and the soul, Ps. lviii. 8. Take heed of venturing your peace for the vanities of the world, those sinful and foolish courses which will lay you open to God's wrath and displeasure: Ps. xxxvii. 11, 'The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.'

SERMON CLXXX.

Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.—VER. 165.

I now come to the effect, 'Nothing shall offend them.' The Septuagint, *οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῖς σκάνδαλον*, there is no scandal in them. The apostle John applieth the same phrase or form of speech to him that loveth his brother, *οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν αὐτῷ σκάνδαλον*, there is no occasion of stumbling in him. The meaning is, they shall not be in danger of

those snares and temptations which the world is full of, and which frequently bring other men to sin and ruin; or nothing shall wound or hurt them, or cause them to fall in their journey to heaven.

Doct. That the love of God's law is a great means to carry a believer straight on his way to heaven, whatever temptations he hath to the contrary.

Here I shall inquire—

1. What scandals and offences are.

2. How a believer is preserved.

First, What scandals and offences are? I answer—Scandals literally signifieth temptations, or inducements to sin, any stumbling-block or hindrance laid in a man's way, by which the passenger is detained or diverted, or at which, if he be not careful, he is apt to stumble or fall. Spiritually it signifieth anything that may discourage or divert us from our duty to God, or may occasion us to fall, to the great loss or ruin of our souls.

Now, concerning these scandals or offences, I shall give you these distinctions. With respect to the subject, there are three sorts of scandals:—(1.) Taken, but not given; (2.) Given, but not taken; (3.) Both given and taken.

1. There is offence taken where none is given. Thus Christ himself, in his person, sufferings, doctrine, may be an offence to the carnal and unbelieving world. In his person, as he is said to be, 1 Peter ii. 8, 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to them that stumbled at the word, being disobedient, whereunto they were also appointed.' He that is to the believer a corner-stone elect and precious, is to the obstinate prejudiced unbeliever, with allusion to those that travel by land, a stone of stumbling, to those that travel by sea, a rock of offence; his slender appearance was an offence to them. As to his sufferings, it is said, 1 Cor. i. 23, that 'Christ crucified is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.' They had not a Messiah to their mind, though such an one as the scriptures had before described. His doctrine: Mat. xv. 12, 'His disciples said to him, Knowest thou not that the pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?' Again, John vi. 61, when they murmured at his saying, Except ye eat my flesh, 'Doth this offend you?' Flesh and blood are apt to stumble in God's plainest ways: at the doctrine of God, which is strict and spiritual; the worship of God, that is simple and without pomp; the dispensations of God, in chastising and afflicting his people; they are all an offence to carnal and worldly men, and so through their sin prove an impediment to the success of the gospel. But this offence is causeless, and without any just ground; and without special grace, when it prevaieth with men, will prove their eternal ruin and destruction. God never intended to satisfy men's lusts and humours; truth must be taught, whoever be displeas'd; therefore all our care must be to avoid this kind of offence: Mat. xii. 6, 'Blessed is he that is not offended in me,' that doth not stumble at Christ because of the cross, nor the holiness of his doctrine, nor the simplicity of his worship, nor the despicableness of his followers, nor the troubles that attend his service.

2. Offence may be given where none is taken, as when men counsel others to evil, or reproach the holy ways of God; as when Peter dissuaded Christ from suffering: Mat. xvi. 23, 'Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou art *σκάδαλον*, an offence to me.' It was *scandalum in se*, though not *ratione eventus*,—not that Christ was offended by it; when the heart is guarded against evil counsel, or the infection of evil example. So for reproaches, they are a means of betraying the soul into sin, and prejudicing it against godliness; but the godly are well fortified, they can see loveliness in such ways as are hated and discountenanced in the world. As David: Ps. cxix. 127, 'They have made void thy law, therefore I love thy commandments above gold, above fine gold;' and Moses, Heb. xi. 26, 'Esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.' They are no more moved at the world's scorn than a man that is straight and upright would be at the mocks of cripples because he doth not limp and walk after their fashion; they can see honour in disgrace, and beauty in God's despised ways.

3. Offences also may be both given and taken; as when one provoketh, and another is provoked to evil, enticed by false doctrine, corrupt counsel, or evil example. False doctrine: Mat. xv. 14, 'The blind lead the blind, and both fall into the ditch;' not one, but both, the blind follower as well as the blind guide. Or by corrupt counsel, as Ahab was seduced by the false prophets, 1 Kings xxii., and Amnon by his friend Jonadab was drawn to incest, 2 Sam. xiii. 6; he as readily obeyeth the other's wicked counsel, as he was to give it. So for evil example; it secretly tainteth us. The prophet complaineth, Isa. vi. 5, 'I am a man of polluted lips, and I dwell among people of polluted lips.' It is hard to avoid the contagion of iniquities with which we do daily and familiarly converse, as to live in an infected air without taint, or to walk in the sun and not be insensibly tanned. We leaven one another by our coldness and deadness in religion. It is hard to be fresh in salt waters, to live among offences and not be offended.

Secondly, With respect to the object or matter of it. A scandal may be given, *dicto aut facto*—(1.) In word; (2.) In deed.

1. In word, by evil counsel or carnal suggestion: Ps. i. 1, 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.' As carnal friends and parents that relish not the word of life themselves, out of prejudice against godliness and holy zeal, dissuade their children and servants from attending on the exercises of religion, as praying, hearing, meditation, lest they grow mopish and melancholy, and lest a zealous minding God's interest should hinder their preference, had rather see them lewd than holy; but, Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not father and mother,' &c. Or by atheistical, or obscene and carnal discourse: 1 Cor. xv. 53, 'Evil communications corrupt good manners;' Eph. v. 4, 'Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.'

2. In deed, and so three ways:—

[1.] When they do things that are simply unlawful, and so propagate their sin to others by their example: Prov. xx. 24, 'Make no

friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man shalt thou not go, lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.' The violences and furious passions of anger are so uncomely, that a man would think they should rather affright then allure to imitation; but these things insensibly overcome us, and ere a man is aware, he is tainted.

[2.] By the abuse of Christian liberty to the wrong and hindrance of others in a way of godliness; as Rom. xiv. 13-15, 'Let no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way: I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean: but if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably: destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died;' 1 Cor. viii. 10, 'But take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak.' We must not commit a sin, or omit a duty to avoid offence; yet in indifferent things we may expect from others what is lawful to do, and forbear it, as conduceth to edification; for we must have a care of offending little ones, and therefore must drive according to their pace, using our liberty as they are able to bear.

[3.] By persecution enforce others against their duty: Mat. xviii. 6, 'But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe on me, it were better a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the sea;' better he did suffer all extremity. Offending is persecuting, as receiving is countenancing, cherishing, treating them kindly and tenderly. So Mat. xiii. 21, 'When persecution ariseth by reason of the word, by and by they are offended;' Mat. xxiv. 9, 10. 'This opposing, hating, vexing the people of God is one way of offence, and very dangerous to those that practise it, however it succeedeth; for though they be little ones, little in their own eyes, little in the esteem of the world, little in regard of outward interest, and so lie open and liable to offences, little in regard of their spiritual growth, and so apt to take offence, yet they are dear to the great God, who is their patron, and will take their quarrel into his own hands; and it will be a thousand times better they had been the persecuted ones than to be the persecutors.'

Thirdly, With respect to the double faculty the devil seeketh to work upon, which is our irascible or concupiscible faculty, our eschewing or pursuing power; the flesh with its *πάθη καὶ ἐπιθυμίαι*, Gal. v. 24, it is passions and lusts, what we render affections; and these are suited to the temptations that most men are usually overcome by. Such are the terrors and allurements of the world: the terrors of the world, that works upon our passions; the allurements of the world, that works upon our lusts.

1. The terrors of the world are apt to draw men to dislike God, and distaste the way of godliness. Certainly by these the devil seeketh to get us into his power and reach. Therefore it is said, 1 Peter v. 9, 'Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.' Satan's temptations are conveyed to the godly through afflictions, hoping by these to prevail with them to make them quit the truth and their duty

to Christ, and grow weary of the ways of God; and it doth the more prevail when they think they are the only sufferers. This should not be, for the drift of Christianity is to take us off from the hopes and fears of the world, and a full third part of the scriptures serveth to comfort us in tribulations and afflictions for the gospel's sake; and if we were not exposed to troubles, these would be as unsuitable and needless as bladders and arts of swimming were to a man that standeth on dry land, and never meaneth to go into the deep waters; but yet they are a usual stumbling-block to those that have not overcome the sensual inclination, and are not dead to a worldly interest.

2. The allurements of the world, or the baits of sense. Present things have a strange infatuation upon us: 2 Tim. iv. 10, 'And Demas hath forsaken us, having loved the present world.' The troubles of the world are not so dangerous as the snares of the world. Though many be discouraged by troubles, yet many times others are gained by the patience, courage, and constancy of God's servants in persecutions. The offence may be more easily disproved as not justifiable; for men may have a secret liking of the truth, and a purpose to own it in better times; but by the baits of sense men are inveigled and tempted to dislike religion itself, as contradicting their lusts, and nourish a base opinion of it in their hearts. In troubles and persecutions there is not a dislike of religion itself, but of the hard terms upon which it must be received and cherished. And besides, the mischief is greater. They that cast off the profession and practice of godliness upon some great earthly hopes, involve themselves in a more heinous sin than they that shrink from it out of some great fear; for those things we fear, as afflictions, torments, and death, they are in themselves destructive of our felicity, and therefore it cannot be said how much nature abhorreth them. But those things which we hope for and desire are such that nature may easily and without great inconveniency be without them, as great riches, splendour of life, noble affinities and marriages; for these things are not absolutely necessary to the worldly life, but only conduce to the greater conveniency and felicity thereof. Not our worldly being, but our well-being is concerned in them. Our being may be kept up and supported in a far meaner condition. Thence it is that great dangers, when they are at hand, and difficulties sustained, and the fear of them, doth often sway us against the conscience of our duty; but if we lose our great worldly hopes, or be cut short in our condition and worldly expectations, it is no great matter. Wise and gracious men may easily bear it with a quiet and well-composed mind. The sin of those that stumble at great and worldly hopes is questionless the greater transgression, for they are only enticed and drawn away by their pleasures and lusts, which all good Christians are obliged to deaden and mortify. But though to fall out of fear be not so heinous a sin, yet a great and heinous sin it is, for grace should govern fear as well as hope. If the coercion and bridling of it be difficult, it doth not excuse *a toto*, but *a tanto* only; and it is hard to set a Christian in joint again that is fallen by fear. Witness those terrors that do haunt men when once they are gotten into the snare. As 'Peter went out and wept bitterly;' it cost him much sorrow at

heart. Christ is fain to direct a special message to him by name, Mark xvi. 7. Though it doth not exclude all hopes of repentance and pardon, yet it needeth great mercy on God's part, and repentance on ours. Indeed, the church is bound to consider men's weaknesses, and to judge of the fault according to the violent shock and incursion of the temptation; because we know not our own strength, and how soon we may be surprised in like kind, and need indulgence ourselves, Gal. vi. 1. But God is not in our condition, nor obliged to recover all that lapse in this kind, and therefore useth his mercy according to his own pleasure. Sometimes he recovereth them and sometimes not; but for the other temptations, what excuse is it capable of? Heb. xii. 16, 17.

Secondly, Let us consider how a believer is preserved. Unsound professors are turned by scandal from the ways of godliness, which they seemed to walk in; but for the sincere believer, there may be many stumbling-blocks laid in his way, but he falleth not at them, escapeth those heinous sins into which others fall, through his love to God's commandments. Observe here three things:—

1. It is not light, but love that keepeth them from stumbling. The light of saving knowledge is a great matter, for it showeth us a sure rule to walk by, and sure promises to build upon; but love must join with it, to assist us, that we may escape those snares, for many fail because they receive not the truth in the love of it, 2 Thes. ii. 10. Till light be turned into love, it hath not such a powerful influence upon us. Certainly a man is better held by the heart than by the head: Rom. viii. 39, 'Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' The love of God is not principally taken there in a passive sense, for the love wherewith we are beloved of God; but in an active sense, for the love wherewith we love God. For affliction and persecution do expugn or assault God's love to us, but not our love to God; for this maketh us cleave to him, whatever temptations we have to the contrary. Do but consider what you are to love.

[1.] We are to love God; there it beginneth. Love God once, and then you will take nothing ill at his hands; how smart soever his chastenings be, they come from a God that loveth you, and whom your souls love: Rev. iii. 19, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.' Now they will not stumble at God's dispensations, be they never so cross to their expectations and desires. But then—

[2.] We must love the law of God, be satisfied with our duty whatever cometh of it. Next to a sincere love to God, there must be a sincere love to his holy law, as the right way to eternal blessedness, and then temptations will have but little force upon us, for they do not love their duty for foreign reasons, but for its own sake; so that whether it be befriended and countenanced in the world, or hated and despised, it is all one; they love the law upon its own evidence, as it is recommended by God, and is a sure direction to true happiness: Job xvii. 9, 'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.' He meaneth notwithstanding all the troubles and assaults which he endureth; they are not scandalised at God's dealings, or permitting them to be thus dealt with, but

do persevere in a course of godliness; this is the way wherein he delighteth.

[3.] He loves the brethren: 1 John ii. 10, 'He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.' They, together with us, uphold Christ's interest in the world. The coals, by lying together, inkindle one another, and so are the better kept from having their zeal quenched, or being ensnared by the manifold temptations in the world.

[4.] By this love the love of the world and its prosperity is much abated: 1 John ii. 15, 'Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' This man cannot part with all when his duty calleth for it. Till we despise worldly things we are still liable to take offence. All our disquiet cometh from too great love of the world, and too little love of the word of God. All this is spoken to show you that it is want of love wherefore men are so easily taken off; and this love begetteth with the love of God, then goeth on to his word, and the obedience it calleth for, and is strengthened by our love to the saints, and is a higher love than that it can be controlled by the love of the world.

2. This blessed peace hath an influence upon it upon a twofold account:—

[1.] This is an experience of the good of that way which the world speaketh evil of. You cannot persuade a man against his experience, that honey is bitter, when he has tasted the sweetness of it, 1 Peter ii. 3. They know the grace of God in truth, they have found much comfort and peace in these ways. Most men know religion and godliness but by hearsay or looking on; the testimony of Christ was never confirmed in them. But these have tried it, and know the good of religion by experience, therefore they cannot be so easily offended as others are, who have only licked the glass, but never tasted the honey. The pleasure they find in the duties and exercises of godliness will with them infinitely outweigh all the transient delights and advantages that are propounded, or offer themselves as the bait to any unlawful practice.

[2.] The particular nature of this experience; it is peace, which doth guard heart and mind, Phil. iv. 7, that they are not disturbed or distracted by anything that befalleth them, but enjoy a calm in their souls, whatever storms overtake or befall them in the way of their duty: Eph. vi. 15, 'Having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.' This is the gospel-shoe; there is no going to heaven without it; and this is peace, that is, peace with God. When all is quiet within, and the quarrel is taken up between God and us, we can the better bear the frowns of the world. And he calleth it the gospel of peace, because it mainly dependeth on the terms of grace revealed to us in the gospel. The law discovereth the enmity and the breach, but the gospel discovereth how peace may be had. He calleth it also the preparation, *ετοιμασία*, because this peace breedeth a firm and ready resolution to go through all difficulties, crosses, and hardships: Acts xxi. 13, 'I am ready not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem.' Well, then, this is the fruit of peace and friendship between God and sinners. It breedeth a resolution to hold on our way to

heaven, notwithstanding crosses and continual hardships, and allayeth the bitterness of all worldly trouble.

3. There is God's providence and care over them, who is concerned in the protection of all that love his law, and take care to love and please him. On the one side, God sometimes threateneth the wicked, that he will lay stumbling-blocks before them, Jer. vi. 21, that is, bring those things upon them that shall be a means of ruin to them. On the other side, Jer. xxxi. 9, that he will lead the penitent believer in a straight way, that they shall not stumble. We must not omit God's concurrence, for it is his promise that nothing shall offend them. His people are very near and dear to him. Our Lord telleth us in his discourse against offending them, that 'their angels do always behold the face of his Father which is in heaven,' Mat. xviii. 10; that is, though the angels be appointed to be their guardians on earth, yet they have their continual returns and recourse to God's glorious presence, to make requests or complaints in their behalf, or to receive commands concerning them; for as God seeth fit they are employed in service for the benefit of those little ones. I remember Solomon saith, Prov. xii. 21, 'There shall no evil happen to the just, but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.' We can easily understand that the wicked shall be overwhelmed with God's judgments; but how shall no evil happen to the righteous, since their troubles are many? The meaning of the place is, as Augustine well glosseth, *non ut non eveniant, sed ut non noccant*—they do not stumble at afflictions, nor are they deserted by God, as others are. God moderateth the evil, 1 Cor. x. 13, or removeth it, Ps. cxxv. 3, or turneth it to good, Rom. viii. 28. Now, by this gracious dealing of God, it cometh to pass that nothing doth offend them. Those that depend on the favour of men, and the uncertainties of a worldly condition, how many troubles are they exposed unto! Therefore we should look to our confidence, whether it be faith or security, whether we rest upon a carnal pillow, or the corner-stone which God hath laid in Sion.

Use. It concerneth us all to look to this, whether we love the law so as to have gotten peace of conscience and assurance of God's protection, because of the multitude of scandals, and the trials and exercises we are put upon by God's correcting hand; the prosperity of the wicked; the disgrace that is cast on the stricter ways of God; the world being so full of snares and temptations, that bring men to sin and ruin. *Omnia timeo*, saith Bernard, *et que placeant, et que tristentur*—I am afraid of everything, of those things that please us, and those that make us sad. What shall a poor Christian do that he may not miscarry?

1. Be sure that your resolutions for God and the world to come be thoroughly fixed and settled; for you will be distracted with everything if you be not at a point, and have not chosen the better part, and fully fixed your purpose. The apostle telleth us, James i. 8, 'The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' A wavering and inconstant Christian will not know which way to turn himself, being disquieted upon all occasions.

2. They never rightly begin with God that do not sit down and count what it may cost them to be holy Christians: Luke xiv. 26, 'If

any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' If you have not a preparation of mind to suffer anything rather than part with Christ, you are not fit for his turn; like a man that sets on building, and hath not a stock to hold out; or designeth a war, and is not provideth with all necessaries to go through with it. You must expect temptations and troubles, because they serve to try whether you will hold your integrity; and if God be not sufficient enough to be your portion, never serve him. Never pretend to religion if you do not resolve to renounce all that is precious to you in the world rather than forsake it.

3. Consider the necessity of standing to God's law, whatever persecutions and sufferings you meet with. There is no other way to be saved: John vi. 68, 'Lord, whither shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.' Such as have a mind to quit Christ have need to consider where they shall find a better master. Change where they will, they change for the worse. Obedience to the word of God is the only way to eternal life; and whatever law you make to yourselves, God will judge you by his own law.

4. Be established in the peace of God, and never break this peace to obtain your outward peace. What a wound will it be to thy soul! and how shiftless and helpless wilt thou be when, to make thy peace with the world, thou hast broken thy peace with God! Therefore rise up against temptations, as the trees refused in Jotham's parable to be ruler over the rest. Shall I lose my fatness; another, my sweetness, to rule over the trees? Shall I, to please men, put my conscience to a continual torment and anguish? sell the birthright for one morsel of meat? The remembrance will come into your minds, when you had joyful communion with God and his people, whose company you have abandoned; every day of solemn assembly will be a new torment to you.

5. When troubles surprise you, consider how unbeseeming it is to take offence at God's providence. It is an ill sign to be so apt to pick quarrels with God and godliness; it argueth little love either to God or his law; for love thinketh no ill of those whom we love. They are murmurers that said the ways of the Lord are not equal, or what profit is there if we serve the Lord? Mal. iii. 14.

6. Consider, the greatest hurt Satan intendeth you is not to hurt your bodies but your souls, to bring you to be offended at the holy and righteous ways of the Lord. He would let you enjoy the pleasures of sin, to rob you of your delight in God and celestial pleasures; let you have all the world, if it were in his power, Mat. iv. 9.

7. Consider how short is the prosperity of the wicked, and those that turn aside to the ways of sin, Ps. xvii. 14. They shall be cut off, they are soon withered and dried up, and all their outward glory perishes with them. It is a more prudent course to adhere closely to God: Job v. 3, 'I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his habitation.' It is a prediction; he foretold that there was a curse at the root of all his prosperity.

SERMON CLXXXI.

Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.—
VER. 166.

THE man of God had said, ver. 165, ‘Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them;’ now he particularly applieth to himself what he had generally spoken before. It is sweet when we can thus comfortably apply promises, and make out our own title and interest. This is David’s work in this and the following verses. Here he maketh profession of two things—his hope and obedience; which indeed are the two great things that belong to a Christian; graces much praised and little practised. *Quarum multa sunt clogia, pauca exempla.* They are fitly coupled together in his plea, ‘I have hoped, I have done;’ for our confidence in God’s mercy is no greater than our fidelity in his precepts; and they are both professed before God, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins: ‘Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.’

Doct. Sound hope of salvation is and must be joined with a care of keeping God’s commandments.

1. I shall speak of the several branches of this profession apart.
2. Then of their conjunction.

First, Separately; and there—

First, Of the profession of his hope, ‘Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation.’

1. The object and thing hoped for is salvation. Salvation is temporal or eternal, of the body or of the soul. Rabbi David Kimchi understandeth it of the latter, but it seemeth rather to imply help and deliverance out of dangers and distresses. Indeed, neither can be well excluded; not eternal salvation, for without that, temporal deliverance is but a reprieve for a time, not a total exemption from evil: not temporal salvation, because before we come to look for our full and final deliverance, God will try us by the way, and train us up in the expectation of other things; as men learn to swim in the rivers and shallow waters, that afterwards they may swim in the ocean and deep waters. So by expecting lesser things we learn to wait for greater. Both must be hoped for, but with a difference; eternal salvation absolutely, but temporal with submission to God’s will. We have not temporal things always *in specie*, in kind, but sometimes in value, for these things may be recompensed and made up another way; but no recompense can be given us for eternal life. The apostle speaketh with submission as to his temporal case, but is peremptory as to his eternal state: 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18, ‘Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.’ Again, though we are not to neglect the meanest promise, yet our hearts should run more upon the things of another world. A Christian honoureth God by his faith about temporal things, when he will not

cast away his hope in the deepest calamities; but much more when the concernments of the world to come are of the greatest force with him, and his heart is wholly taken up about them: 'Looking for the blessed hope,' Titus ii. 13; there is the character of a Christian. Peace and freedom from trouble in the world is not the main thing that we should look after, but perfect conformity to God, and full fruition of him. God is the chief good, and the fruition of him as promised is the utmost happiness of the creature. A true Christian hath a greater indifferency to the things of this life; all his business is to get an assurance of a better: he can look through the troubles of the world, and see sunshine behind the back of the storm: Ps. xlii. 11, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.' But chiefly his hope is laid up for him in heaven, Col. i. 5; his portion is laid up for him, and kept safe for his use in a sure place. Here he knoweth he must be exercised with temptations and crosses. In short, temporal things are desired for the sake of spiritual and eternal, but eternal for themselves; a traveller desireth a horse not for himself, as for the conveniency of his journey; so he expecteth temporal things as helps in his way and passage to heaven. Well, then, salvation is the object of this hope, temporal salvation in order to eternal, that we may have opportunities to glorify God here, and may not faint and be overwhelmed with incident crosses. This sentence is borrowed from good old Jacob: Gen. xlix. 18, 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.' It is notable Jacob speaketh this when prophetically blessing his children; and when he cometh to Dan, the good old man seemed to be carried beside his purpose, breaking out thus of a sudden, but in spirit foreseeing the miseries and calamities with his posterity should fall into for their idolatry; for Dan was the first tribe that made defection, therefore he opposeth his hopes to his fears. We are told in the general, Lam. iii. 26, 'It is good that a man should hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God;' that is, for deliverance out of troubles. It will be of great use to us in our troubles to look to the issue of them. The Lord doth not wholly cast off his people; when he seemeth to break down the hedge and fence of his providence, and leave them in their enemies' hands, he hath salvation for a hoping people. But mark, it is *thy* salvation; it is good to come out of trouble upon God's terms, in God's way, and in God's time; others break prison: Ps. lxxii. 1, 'My soul hopeth in God, from him cometh my salvation.' Expect it from God, and him alone.

2. The act of grace, 'I have hoped.' Hope, in the general, is the expectation of some future good; as it is a grace, it is some good thing promised by God: Ps. cxxx. 5, 'I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in thy word do I hope.' 'I am judged for the hope of the promise,' saith Paul, Acts xxvi. 6. So that hope is the expectation of good things promised. Faith and hope do both work upon the promise, but yet they are distinct graces; they differ in their object. The object of faith is larger; the whole word of God is the object of faith. We believe things past, present, and to come, but hope for things to come only. Among things to come, we believe both promises

and threatenings, but the object of hope is only things desirable. We believe the torments of hell, but do not hope for them. In the promises, faith believeth the promise, and hope looketh for the thing promised. Faith looketh to the authority of the promiser, and hope to the goodness of the thing promised. Faith begets hope, and then hope strengthens faith. Faith holdeth the candle to the soul, whereby we see things invisible and to come, and hope maketh this light comfortable and ravishing to us. We have comfort in believing, because hopes of enjoying. To believe eternal life, if we had not hopes to attain it, were a comfortless thing. Faith is before hope, and leadeth us to the object, and hope followeth as faith leadeth. Faith assents to and applieth the promise, and hope waiteth for the accomplishment. There are several sorts of hope.

[1.] There is a vain and groundless hope, the dream of a waking man; as if a beggar should hope for the succession of a crown. So there are some that dream of peace and safety, 'and sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child,' 1 Thes. v. 3. This is an irrational thing.

[2.] There is rational and probable hope, but yet not so firm and certain; it is likely it will be so, but we have no absolute certainty: 2 Cor. ix. 10, 'He that plougheth, plougheth in hope; and he that thresheth, is partaker of his hope.' This is necessary for the carrying on of all human actions, that a man should have probable hope of success, for without it there is no labour or rational attempt.

[3.] There is a firm and certain hope, when we have assurance of the things hoped for. So in the commerce between us and God, he giveth us assurance in his promises by his word and oath, that our consolation might be the more strong, when we fly for refuge to the hope that is set before us, Heb. vi. 17, 18. There is a blessed and glorious estate reserved to be enjoyed in the heavens; this is set before us, propounded as a prize in the view of the world. Now when we take hold of this, gain a right and title to it, God would have our consolation the more strong, by the assurance he hath given us in the covenant made with us in Christ. Well, then, Christian hope is not a conjecture or probability, but an assurance. Many times all kind of probability is contrary to God's assurance: Rom. iv. 18, 'Abraham believed in hope, against hope.' *Credidit in spe gratie, contra spem nature*. God's assurance prevailed above natural difficulties; there rational and human hope and divine hope are opposed.

[4.] This assurance admits of degrees, for it may be full or not full: Heb. vi. 11, 'And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end.' The full assurance is that which removeth all doubts and fears; and this it may do at some time, and not at another; it may be interrupted, or continue to the end. Now we must give all diligence that it may do so. By slothfulness and negligence it will be lost. Presumption and carnal hope costs a man nothing to keep it, it groweth upon us we know not how; but this certain hope is not kept lively and upon the wing without great zeal and diligence in the spiritual life. Oh! but it concerneth us much so to do. This hope is necessary for us—

(1.) To quicken and enliven our duties. Hope of reward is one of

the bands of a man, the weight that inclineth us to all actions ; much more doth this great reward which the Christian faith propounds : Acts xxvi. 6, 7, ‘ And now I stand, and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers : unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come ; for which hope’s sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews ;’ and Acts xxiv. 15, 16, ‘ And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.’ I run not as one that is uncertain, 1 Cor. ix. 26, not by guess, but sure grounds : Phil. iii. 14, ‘ I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’ It is great and sure ; here is excellency and certainty. A man that hopeth for anything will be engaged in the thorough pursuit of it.

(2.) It sharpeneth our affections after heavenly things ; when we look for them, we will also long for them : Rom. viii. 23, ‘ And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.’ Hope stirreth up serious thoughts of heaven and blessedness to come, and hearty groans after it, and so sets both mind and heart a-work. It sets the mind a-work. A man cannot hope for a thing, but he will be thinking of it ; as the scripture speaketh of the labourer, that he lifts up his soul to the hire which he expects. Thoughts will be sent as spies into the land of promise, to bring us tidings thence. And it sets the heart a-longing and groaning that we were at home : Rom. viii. 19, ‘ For the earnest expectation of the creature,’ ἀποκαταδοκία κτίσεως, stretcheth out the head, to see if it can spy it a-coming ; as when Siser’s mother expected him, she looked through the lattice. There will be strong desires as well as serious thoughts ; not glances and hasty wishes, such as worldly persons may have in their serious moods and sober fits ; these vanish and leave the heart never the better ; but earnest longings, such as settle into a heavenly frame ; that taste which they have already maketh them groan for what is behind.

(3.) It sets the heart at rest, and allayeth our disquiets, and fears, and cares, and sorrows, that so we may go on cheerfully in God’s service. It is the pleasure of God that the heirs of promise should for a while shine as lights in a corrupt world, and be exercised with all kind of temptations, that his power may be manifested in their weakness. Now, that we may ride out the storm, he gave us hope ; not only *veniam sperandi*, leave to hope for his mercy, but *virtutem sperandi*, the grace of hope, strength so to do. And what is the use of it, but to calm the heart under all distempers ? Therefore it is compared to a helmet and an anchor. To a helmet : 1 Thes. v. 8, ‘ Take to you the helmet of salvation, which is hope.’ A helmet is to cover the head ; this maketh a believer hold up head in all his straits and troubles. The policy of the devil is to weaken or darken the hopes of eternal life, and then he knoweth he shall the sooner overcome us ; therefore the life of a Christian should be to keep on his helmet, to keep his hopes of heaven lively and fresh, and then he will not be de-

jected. Again, it is compared to an anchor: Heb. vi. 19, 'Which hope we have, as an anchor, both sure and steadfast, which entereth into that which is within the veil.' As the anchor holdeth the ship in a tempest, so doth hope keep the mind in a constant temper in the midst of the stormy gusts of temptation, that we dash not against the rocks that would break our confidence and profession: it strengthens and quiets the floating heart of man. Things will end well at last, how blustering and stormy soever the weather be at the present. The floods of temptation and the tribulations of this present life are permitted to invade us, but that God hath given us an anchor, that they shall not drive us from the haven of eternal happiness. Whatever our cross be, immoderate grief for the death of near and dear relations: 1 Thes. iv. 13, 'Mourn not as those without hope.' *Cur enim doleas, si periisse non credis? Cur impatienter ferres subductum, quem iterum credis reversurum esse? pro festo est quam putas mortem,* saith Tertullian De Patientia. If for loss of goods and estate: Heb. x. 34, 'And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that in heaven ye have a better and enduring substance.' If a poor man that had all his wealth about him should fall into the hands of thieves and robbers, and be rifled by them, he must needs cry and take on pitifully; for alas! he is altogether undone, and hath nothing left him wherewithal to succour himself and his family. But a rich man, that hath store of money at home, and sure locked up in his chest, will never complain and be much disquieted when he hath twenty or forty shillings taken from him. For worldlings to rage and take on when they must lose their estates, it is no marvel; those whose portion is in this life, and know no better; alas! for when these things are gone, they have nothing left, and are quite undone. But those that are heirs according to the hope of eternal life, they know they have a better and a more enduring substance; they consider what they are born to, what they shall enjoy when they come home to God, therefore their hearts are calmed and quieted. So if it be the oppression of wicked men, and hard sufferings and persecutions for the gospel: 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18, 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' He that hopeth for nothing from God will soon fall off from him, and yield to fainting discouragements; their hearts are turned off and perverted; but when we hope, we do with patience submit to the cross. What troubles will not they undergo that expect undoubtedly their speedy ending in everlasting and endless bliss and happiness? If God hideth his face, that raiseth a storm: Ps. xliii. 5, 'Why art thou so disquieted, O my soul? still hope in God.' Casting anchor upon the rock, as the crying child falls asleep with the teat in his mouth; or when God delayeth the performance of what is promised: Prov. xiii. 12, 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.' Expectation is a tedious thing, as smoke to the eyes, and vinegar to the teeth, an ordinary messenger sent on a trifling errand. Now, Rom. viii. 15, 'If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it;' 1 Thes. i. 3, 'And patience of hope

in our Lord Jesus Christ.' Is a title nothing before possession? It is not a matter of debt. Or is it the fear of approaching death, which is the king of terrors? Prov. xiv. 32, 'The wicked shall be driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death.' The wicked, being arrested by death, is hurried away into hell; but the righteous dismisseth his soul into his Redeemer's hands. Never more cheerful than when our confidence in God's mercy is most put to trial.

Secondly, Here is the profession of his obedience, 'I have done thy commandments.' Here is—

1. The object, *thy commandments*.

2. The act of duty, *done*.

1. The object, 'Thy commandments,' *quia tua*; therefore kept them, because they are thine; things thou hast given in charge. Men were ready to persuade or threaten him out of his duty.

2. The act of duty, 'Done thy commandments;' the act of duty, to do, noteth the substance of the act or omission; the doing things commanded by eschewing things forbidden.

3. The manner of doing, out of knowledge of God's command, and conscience of obeying it, to his glory and our salvation. Now, saith David, 'I have done it;' implying, I have not only care and conscience, but strength and ability, in some measure to do thy will.

But is not this plea a proud word for a creature to say, 'I have done thy commandments'? Who can thus say, and aver it to the face of God?

Ans. There is a twofold keeping or doing of the commandments—legal and evangelical.

1. Legal, when we do them so exactly as is answerable to the rigour of the law, and the rule of strict justice doth require, which exactness is when our obedience is universal in every point, when everything commanded by God is done by us without failing in one point: Gal. iii. 10, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.'

[1.] In all things; and that—

[2.] Continually, in respect of time; from the first minute of our birth till our dissolution; one failing in thought at any time casteth off our plea.

[3.] Full and complete in respect of the degrees and measure of obedience, with the utmost intension and affection of the heart, which the scripture expresseth by all the heart and all the soul. In this sense, never man was able to keep the law, save only the first Adam in innocency, and the second Adam Jesus Christ; and therefore, according to this rigour, there is no hope for us; one sin once committed would undo us for ever, as it did the apostate angels.

2. Evangelical, according to the *ἐπιείκεια* and moderation of the gospel, that is, when we do the commandments according to those terms of grace which God offereth to us in Christ; that doth, as to obedience, mitigate the rigour of the law in two things:—

[1.] It granteth a pardon of course to some kind of sins.

[2.] Accepteth of repentance after any the most heinous sin committed.

[1.] It granteth a pardon of course to some kind of sins, as sins of infirmity, either of ignorance, which if we had known we would not have committed, or sins of sudden surreption, which escape without our observing of them; or sins of violent temptation, which by sudden assault sway against the right rule before we have time to weigh both it and ourselves, or in cool blood to think what we are a-doing; such as do not arise out of any evil purpose of the mind, but out of human frailty, and from which we shall never be free as long as we live in this body of corruption, Rom. vii. 24.—Paul groaneth under these relics; when what we have done is not out of deliberate consent, giving way to the growth and reign of sin: Rom. vi. 14, ‘For sin shall not have dominion over you.’ *Non dixit, non sit, sed non regnet; inest peccatum cum perpetras, regnat cum consenseris*, saith Austin. When we give obedience to it, freely, willingly yield up ourselves to be servants of it, then sin reigns. Therefore he doth not say, Let not sin be in you, or tempt you, or please you; but, Let it not reign in you. It is a misery to be tempted, a snare to be delighted, and a forfeiture or renouncing the grace of the covenant to give up ourselves to the full sway of it.

[2.] The gospel doth herein moderate the rigour of the law, because it leaveth a sinner a way and means of recovery, namely, by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, and upon repentance giveth him a pardon, Mat. ix. 13. Remission or forgiveness is a privilege of the new covenant; the law knoweth no such matter: Ezek. xviii. 21, 22, ‘But if the wicked shall turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, and not die: all his transgressions that he hath committed they shall not be mentioned unto him.’ Well, then, this is to be understood in the gospel sense; it is the plea of a man justified freely by God’s grace, and one that is sincere and upright for the main; one that had received grace to be faithful, though not without his infirmities, and did not make a practice to live in any known sin against conscience.

Secondly, We now come to show the connection between these two.

1. None can and do rightly hope for salvation but they that keep the commandments.

2. None do and can keep the commandments but they that hope for salvation.

1. None can and do rightly hope for salvation but they that keep the commandments. That will appear to you—

[1.] Partly because God hath by a wise ordination conjoined means and end, and offered the promises with a qualification: Rom. ii. 7, ‘To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life.’ God hath not simply promised blessedness, but the promise requireth a qualification and a performance of duty in the person to whom the promise is made; and therefore, before we can have a certainty of hope, we must not only look upon the assurance on God’s part, but make out our qualification. So Ps. i. 1, 2, ‘Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law

doth he meditate day and night.' So Ps. cxix. 1, 2, 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord: blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and seek him with the whole heart;' and many such places, which intimate that blessedness belongeth to such as are of a holy heart, and entirely give up themselves to a holy course; that doing the commandments uprightly, and in a gospel sense, is a necessary condition to qualify those persons which shall be saved. And therefore they that live in any sin against conscience may take notice how fearful their estate is for the present, and how needful it is to begin a good course before they can have any hope toward God.

[2.] And partly because true hope is operative, and hath an influence this way. There are two parts in sanctification—mortification and vivification, and true hope hath an influence upon both. Mortification: 1 John iii. 3, 'And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, as he is pure;' that when we see God, we shall be like him. He that hopeth for such a pure and sinless estate, either to see God, will he appear before him in his filthy rags? Joseph washed himself when he was to come before Pharaoh; so when to appear before God. What! with this wanton, vain, unclean heart? We are to be like him; is this to be like Christ, where there is such a disproportion between head and members? And if this hope be fixed in our hearts, it will set us a-purifying more and more. So for vivification, it urgeth and encourageth to obedience: Titus ii. 12, 13, 'For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world.' Look backward or forward, it urgeth the heart to obedience. Why backward to the duties of holiness? Shall we be lazy in his work when we expect such a great reward?

[3.] Because there is no such thing to damp hope and weaken our confidence as sin. We cannot trust him whom we have offended freely and without restraint; and therefore, while we please the flesh, we break our confidence. Sin will breed shame and fear, and it is impossible to hope in God unless we serve him in love, and seek to please him. If we feel it not presently, we shall feel it. Sin, that now weakeneth the faith which we have in the commandments, will in time weaken the faith that we have in the promises. Every part of God's revealed will cometh to be tried one time or another. Our confidence in God's mercy is not earnestly and directly assaulted till the hour of death, or the time of extraordinary trial. When the evil day cometh, then the consciousness of my own sin, whereunto we have been indulgent, will be of like force to withdraw our assent from God's mercies, as the delight and pleasure we took was to cause us to transgress his commandments: 1 Cor. xv. 56, 'The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.'

[4.] Because our hope is increased by our diligence in the holy life. This fostereth and augments it: Heb. vi. 11, 'And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.' It must needs be so, for since there is a qualification, the more clear our qualification is, the more full is our assurance of

hope ; and so far as a man neglects his duty, and abateth in his qualification, so far doth his assurance abate. To look on one side of the covenant is a groundless presumption.

2. None do and can keep the commandments but they that hope for salvation. This is plain from the order of the words in the text. First I hoped for thy salvation, therefore done thy commandments ; implying that thereby he kept the commandments. Without this none can have a heart or hand to do anything for God. *Peccator*, saith Bernard, *nihil expectat, indeque peccator est ; quod bonis presentibus non modo delectus, sed etiam contentus, nihil in futurum expectat*—he that looketh for nothing from God can never be diligent in his service, nor faithful and true to him. Hope, it is our strength : Lam. iii. 18, ‘And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord.’ We first begin, continue, and go on with God upon the hope he offereth to us.

Use 1. It reproveth those that hope well, but take no care to do anything for God. Every one will say they must hope in God, but none looketh after this lively and operative hope ; their hope is barren and unfruitful. Who are they that can make application of the promises ? 2 Tim. iv. 8.

Use 2. To persuade us to the coupling of these two. When this conjunction is founded, then are we in a right frame. If we would keep the commandments, we must hope for the salvation of God ; if we would hope for the salvation of God, we must keep the commandments. This is most acceptable to the Lord : Ps. cxlvii. 11, ‘The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and hope in his mercy.’ Such as believe, and fear to offend him, they have acceptable communion with him. It is for your comfort, Acts ix. 31. It is for the honour of religion on the one side to avoid the carnal confidence of Papists, on the other the cold profession of Protestants, if you hope for temporal deliverance. They that make no conscience of obeying God cannot hope for deliverance from him, for his salvation must be expected in the way of his precepts : Ps. xxxvii. 3, ‘Trust in the Lord, and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land.’ So wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land : when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it ; then we may commend ourselves and all our affairs to God’s care and trust. It becometh them that look for salvation, and to be helped out of their troubles, to be more earnest than others in keeping his law. If you would enjoy the comfortable assurance that you shall be saved at length, live so as you may never mar your confidence : 1 Peter i. 13, ‘Be sober, and hope to the end.’ Live answerable to your hope, 1 Thes. ii. 12. On the other side hope, study promises : Rom. xv. 4, ‘The God of hope fill you with joy in believing.’ He is not only the object, but the author of it.

SERMON CLXXXII.

My soul hath kept thy testimonies, and I love them exceedingly.—
VER. 167.

THE man of God goeth on in his plea. In the former verse he had spoken of the influence of his hope upon obedience; now of the influence of his love, and so more expressly and directly maketh out this qualification or title to the promise mentioned ver. 165.

Before we go on, let me answer a question or two.

First, How can a gracious heart speak so much of itself, and insist so much upon the plea of obedience? Is not this contrary to our Saviour's doctrine, who, in the parable of the pharisee and publican that went up to pray, Luke xviii., taught us to make use of the plea of mercy, not of works?

Ans. 1. As to that part of the scruple which concerneth *περιαντολογία*, that cannot be imagined to be faulty in David, who was a prophet, and therefore, to instruct the world, propoundeth his own instance, and setteth forth himself as a pattern of obtaining comfort in the way of godliness.

2. As to the plea of works, they may be produced by way of evidence, not by way of merit, as they prove our interest in the promises, not as the ground of self-confidence. The pharisee, he came not to beg an alms, but to receive a debt, and therefore went away without any mark and testimony of the divine favour and approbation. But holy men plead this to God as expecting mercy and favour at his hands; not in regard of any merit in themselves, or of reward deservedly for the same done to them, for they acknowledge all that they do or can do to be but duty, and due debt; but in regard of his gracious promise freely made unto them; in a humble and modest manner they dare appeal to God himself for the sincerity and integrity of their hearts, for serious care and sedulous endeavours to please him, and approve themselves to him.

Secondly, But why is this plea reiterated for three verses together?

Ans. 2. Too much care cannot be used in making out an interest in so sweet a promise; and teacheth us this lesson, that we had need examine again and again before we can put in our claim. Jesus Christ puts Peter to the question thrice: John xxi. 15-17, 'Peter, lovest thou me?' So here, it was David's plea thrice repeated, for the more assurance: 'I have done thy commandments, my soul hath kept thy testimonies;' and again, 'I have kept thy commandments and thy precepts.' After a believer hath found marks of saving grace in himself, it is wisdom for him to examine them over and over again, that he may be sure they are in him in deed and in truth. The heart is deceitful, our self-love is great, our infirmities many, and our graces so weak, that we should not easily trust the search. Truly such a holy jealousy doth well become the best of God's children, and doth only weaken the security of the flesh, not their rejoicing in the Lord.

In the words you have the testimony of David's conscience concerning the sincerity of his heart, evidenced by two notes:—

1. The sincerity of his obedience, 'My soul hath kept thy testimonies.'

2. His exceeding love to the word, 'I love them exceedingly;' or, if you will, by the manner of his obedience, and the principle of it.

First, The spirituality of his obedience, 'My soul hath kept thy testimonies.' Mark, the notion by which the act of duty is expressed is varied in the former verse. It is 'I have done thy commandments;' here it is, 'I have kept thy testimonies.' *Done* more expressly noteth his sedulity and diligence; *kept* his constancy and diligence, perseverance notwithstanding temptations to the contrary. And how kept them? Saith he, 'My soul hath kept them;' not with outward observance only, but with inward and hearty respect. 'My soul,' that is, myself; a part for the whole, and the better part, 'I, with my soul,' and so it showeth his sincerity. It is a usual expression among the Hebrews, when they would express their vehement affection to anything, to say they do it with their souls; as Ps. ciii. 1, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul;' and Luke i. 45, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord;' as, on the contrary, vehemency of hatred: Isa. i. 14, 'Your new moons and appointed feasts my soul hateth;' that is, I hate them with my heart.

The note is—

Doct. God must be served with our souls as well as our bodies. David saith, 'My soul hath kept thy testimonies.'

1. Because he hath a right to both, as he made both, and therefore hath required that both should serve him. He that organised the body, and framed it out of the dust of the ground, did also breathe into us the breath of life, and framed the spirit of man within him; therefore since God may challenge all, it is fit he should have the best: 'My son, give me thy heart,' Prov. xxiii. 26. Look upon it; whose image and superscription doth it bear? 'Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' He hath redeemed both: 1 Cor. vi. 20, 'Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God both in your body and spirits, which are God's.' Shall we rob God of his purchase so dearly bought? We would not rob a man of his goods, and will you rob God? He challengeth a peculiar right in souls: 'All souls are mine;' and therefore they should be used and exercised for his glory. If we use them for ourselves only, and not according to his direction, we do as Reuben did, that went up into his father's bed. To withhold the heart from God is robbery, nay, sacrilege, which is the worst kind of robbery; for God's right in redemption is confirmed and owned by our personal dedication in baptism. Once more, God hath right to the service of both body and soul, because he offereth to glorify both, and reward both in the heavenly inheritance. The body and the soul are sisters and co-heirs, as Tertullian speaketh. If we expect wages for both, we must do work with both. If God should make such a division at death as men do all their life to him, can they be happy if any part of them be excluded heaven? If the body and lifeless trunk were taken into heaven, and the soul left in torments, what were you the better? But that cannot be; God will have all or no part; therefore 'your whole spirit and soul and body must be kept blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus

Christ,' 1 Thes. v. 23. Otherwise your souls cannot be joined to God in heaven, if they be divided from him on earth.

2. Because this is service suitable to his nature, when we serve him and obey him with our souls. God is an all-seeing spirit, and therefore will be worshipped in spirit and in truth, John iv. 23, 24. It is agreeable to his spiritual nature, therefore shows and fashions have little respect with him, but reality and substance; for he searcheth the heart and trieth the reins; it is not the bowing the body, so much as the humble affectionate reverence and submission of the soul. God hath appointed service for the body, and so far as God hath appointed it we must submit to it; but chiefly for the soul, our worship must be chiefly inward, flowing from grace engaging the heart in God's service. Bodily exercise is of little profit; that worship which is most agreeable to God's nature is most pleasing to him: he 'hath not eyes of flesh, and seeth not as man seeth,' Job x. 4. Therefore external duties, without the inward exercise of the Spirit, is scarce worthy the name of worship to God. He is not taken with the pomp of ceremonies and external observances: 1 Sam. xvi. 7, 'For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.' Men are taken with external pomp and formalities; they suit with their fleshly natures; but the more spiritual the more suitable to God. That which you do, be it in worship, it is not done unto God, but unto men, when the heart is not in it: Col. iii. 23, 'And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.' Without the heart, all that we do is but a mocking of God, giving him the shell without the kernel.

3. Because the soul is the principal thing that swayeth the body, and stirreth it up to all that it doth. It being of itself a senseless block, it followeth the disposition and inclination of the heart. I shall make it good in two considerations:—(1.) It is *fons actionum ad extra*; (2.) It is *terminus actionum ad intra*. It is the fountain of all actions that go outward, from man towards God; and the subduing the heart to God's will is the end of all operations inward, from God towards man.

[1.] *Fons actionum ad extra*, the fountain of all actions that go outward from man towards God. All natural actions proceed from the soul or heart. It is not the eye that seeth, nor the ear that heareth, nor the hand that toucheth, nor the feet that walketh; it is the soul seeth by the eye, and heareth by the ears, and toucheth by the hands, and walketh by the feet. So in all moral actions the heart is all: Prov. iv. 23, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.' All our actions proceed thence; all the evil that we do cometh from the heart: Mat. xv. 19, 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.' All that we speak, and think, and do followeth the frame of the heart. This is the burning furnace from whence the sparks fly. The occasion of sin may be without, but the cause of it is ever from the heart. It is the heart that filleth the eyes with wantonness, pride, and fury, and the tongue with blasphemy, slander, and detraction, the hands with blood. So for good actions, thoughts; they come out of the good treasury of the heart: Mat. xii. 35, 'A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things.' The tap run-

ness according to the liquor wherewith the vessel is filled; that a man hath laid up in his heart, that he layeth out in his thoughts, and speeches, and actions. It is the heart that enliveneth all our duties, and we act ever according to the constitution of our souls.

[2.] It is *terminus actionum ad intra*; all actions inward, the aim of it is to come to the heart. The senses report things to the phantasy, the phantasy represents them to the mind, that counsels the heart; so in God's operations upon us, his business is to come at the soul. Wherefore doth he speak, and reason, and plead, but that we may hear? And wherefore do we hear, but that truth may be lodged in the heart or soul? Prov. iv. 4, 'Let thy heart keep my precepts; let thy heart receive my words.' Ay! then God's word hath its effect upon us. We are never subdued to God till the heart be subdued. The word for a while may stay in the memory, and it is good when the memory is planted with the seeds of knowledge, as children receive the principles of religion in catechisms; but the end is not there; at length they exercise their understandings about them, when they begin to conceive of what they learned by rote, and afterwards they begin to have a judgment and a conscience. These truths begin to stir and awaken them, but it must not rest there neither; it soaketh further, and wisdom entereth upon the heart, Prov. ii. 10. Ay! that was God's aim, to bring the work thither, and then the cure is wrought with man: Rom. vi. 17, 'Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you.' So this is the end of all the operations of grace, that the soul and heart may keep God's testimonies. So where is it that Christ would dwell when he taketh up his abode and residence in us? The apostle will tell you: Eph. iii. 17, 'That he may dwell in your hearts by faith.' Till he get possession of the heart, all is as nothing. He will not dwell in the body only; that is the temple of the Holy Ghost at large; there is a holy of holies, a more inward place where he will dwell. He will not dwell in the tongue, or in the brain, memories, or understandings, unless by common gifts. But the heart, the will, and affections of man are the chief place of his residence; there he dwelleth as in his strong citadel, and from thence commandeth other faculties and members. So that the heart is the beginning and ending of the whole work of religion, from thence come all holy actions, and thither tend all holy gracious operations.

4. It is thy hearty soul-service that will only bear weight in the balance of the gospel. There may be many defects in the action, yet if the heart be right, God will accept the will for the deed, and you will find comfort in that another day, when you most need: Isa. xxxviii. 3, 'Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart.' Hezekiah had his infirmities and failings, but his heart was upright: Heb. xiii. 18, 'Willing in all things to live honestly;' that is a gospel good conscience, and will yield comfort to you. God accepts the will without the deed, but never the deed without the will. Infirmities may overtake the action, but when the heart is unfeignedly set to serve God, we shall be accepted. We allow grains to true, but not to counterfeit gold. The church pleadeth, Isa. xxvi. 8, 'The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remem-

brance of thee. When we follow in rugged ways, though we oftentimes stumble, yet if our soul be with him, we may have comfort.

Use 1. This is for the conviction of divers persons, that they do not more serve God in their souls, do not keep his testimonies.

1. There are some that neither serve God with body nor soul, as all loose persons, who do not so much as make a show of his service; they are all for their brutish pleasures, their souls to hunt them out, and their bodies to pursue and follow them. Their soul is a cage of unclean birds, and a sty of all filthiness, and their bodies only a strainer for meats and drinks to pass through, or a channel for lust to run in, so that they have nothing at all to spare for God: the soul is an ill guide, suggesting all manner of evil, and the body a ready instrument to accomplish it. These are those that yield up their members to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity, Rom. vi. 19. Oh! time will come when God will tear them in pieces, and rend the guilty soul from the embraces of the unwilling body. A sad time it will be for these; the soul will curse the body as an ill instrument, the body the soul as a corrupt guide; and curse the day of their first union, when they cannot expect but to meet again in flames.

2. Some that give their bodies to God, but withhold their souls from him. How may this be done?

Ans. 1. Generally, when men content themselves with a naked profession of Christianity, and some external conformity thereunto. It is a stupid religion that consists in outward actions. Judas was externally a disciple, but Satan entered into his heart, Luke xxii. 3. Ananias joined himself to the people of God, but Satan filled his heart, Acts v. 3. Simon Magus was baptized, but his heart was not right with God, Acts viii. 22. Many men may not only make profession, but perform many good actions, be as to external conformity blameless; yet till their hearts are subdued to God, they should not be satisfied with their condition. Though you pray with the pharisee, Luke xviii., pay thy vows with the harlot, Prov. vii., offer sacrifice with Cain, fast with Jezebel, sell thine inheritance to give to the poor with Ananias and Sapphira, it is all in vain without the heart. Many hypocrites are all ear to hear, all tongue to talk, all face to appear, but not a heart to obey. Something must be done for religion for fashion sake and shame of the world. Yea, though thou dost not dissemble, do many things, yet if your hearts be not renewed and changed, all is nothing; you do not keep the testimonies of the Lord with your souls.

2. And more particularly when men make conscience of ceremonies and outsides rather than sincere obedience. As the pharisees, Mat. xxiii. 25, 26, 'They make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within are full of extortion and excess.' Pretend great purity in eating their meat, but care not with how great iniquity they purchase it. Papists think they have done enough if they mutter over a few idle words, without spirit and life; the most part of their service is but that of the body without the soul; they worship in a strange language, not knowing what they do or say. And, nearer home, draw nigh with their lips when their hearts are far from him, Mat. xv. 8. These leave their hearts at home; the devil findeth them other work that suffer their hearts to straggle and to be like the fool's eyes in the

corners of the earth, when with their bodies they are engaged in the serious and solemn duties of God's worship.

Use 2. To press you to serve God with your hearts and souls as well as your bodies.

1. This is the character of true worshippers: Rom. i. 9, 'My God, whom I serve in the spirit;' and 2 Tim. i. 3, 'God whom I serve with a pure conscience.' This was not peculiar to Paul alone; it is the description of the spiritual circumcision: Phil. iii. 3, 'For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.' These are such as are true worshippers.

2. God will accept of no other, for he looketh for the heart, and knoweth whether we give it him, yea or no. Men care not for fawning and the obsequiousness of empty courtships, but look for reality, if they could discern it: 2 Kings x. 15, 'Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?' It was Jehu's question to Jonadab, the son of Rechab. Dost thou as really affect me, as I do thee? And men do not look to the matter of the gift, but the mind of the giver; and will God, think you, who can infallibly judge, and will one day bring the hidden thoughts of the heart to light, 1 Cor. iv. 5, will he be put off with shows and empty formalities? Well, then, see that your souls be in it, otherwise he will not accept of rivers of oil and thousands of rams. All your pomp and cost upon outside services is lost. But it is not every soul that will keep God's testimonies. When the people said, 'All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do it,' Deut. v. 29, 'Oh, that they had such an heart!' It must be such an heart, for man is naturally averse from God; sin sets up its throne in the heart, and thence diffuseth its venom into his actions, Gen. vi. 5. It must be—(1.) A broken heart; (2.) A renewed heart; (3.) A heart purified by faith; (4.) And acted by love.

[1.] A broken heart it must be, Ps. li. 11, for before that, all that we do is forced and superficial. We are never serious till acquainted with brokenness of heart, but serve God in a slight careless fashion. That bruising is to cast into a new mould; it is a preparative to the new heart. Wheat is not bread till it be grinded, and a cracked vessel cannot be renewed till it be melted in the furnace, nor we formed anew till we be first melted, humbled, and broken for sin.

[2.] The heart must be renewed by grace, for it is a renewed soul only that keepeth the commandments: Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 'A new heart also will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put into you; and then I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments to do them.' The hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil, till God change them, and renew a right spirit within them: Prov. x. 20, 'The heart of the wicked is nothing worth.' A vain, sottish, sensual, careless heart will never do God any service; there must be life before there can be action, a supernatural principle before there can be supernatural operation, for all things act according to their form; all that we do else is but like adulterating coin, gilding over copper or brass.

[3.] A heart purified by faith, Acts xv. 9. There are fleshly lusts in us which must be mortified more and more, and deadened to the

pleasures and profits and honours of this world, by remembering our great obligations and expectations from Christ's death and eternal life; for while any fleshly or worldly lust prevaileth with us, and is the chief principle in our hearts, we cannot heartily serve God.

[4.] A heart acted by love: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.' This is the active principle which sets us a-work with cheerfulness. Christ often intimateth that keeping the commandments is the fruit of love, John xiv. 15. All the expression of our love to him is turned into that channel.

Secondly, I come now to the second evidence and testimony of his sincerity, his love to the word, 'I have loved them exceedingly.' Mark—

1. His affection, *I love thy testimonies.*
2. The degree, in the word *exceedingly.*

First, From his affection. Note—

Doct. That it is not enough to keep the commandments, but we must love them, and that obedience they require from us.

This love to the law is often spoken of in this psalm; therefore there needeth the less to be said now. Paul speaketh of this love as well as David: Rom. vii. 22, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man.'

The reasons of the point.

1. We can never thoroughly and constantly keep the law without love to it. It is no easy thing to keep the law of God; there needeth much labour and striving. Now where there is a sincere love of the law of God planted in the heart, there will be this striving and endeavouring to perform it. None so sensible of the weight of sin, none so active for God's glory: there is nothing so difficult, but love maketh easy: *nihil amarum*. In a word, labour and toil prove a pleasure, and pain a matter of delight, where we love. The careful mother bringeth forth the child with pain, and nurseth it up with toil and trouble, is well enough pleased with her work, and cheerful in it, because of the love she hath to the fruit of her womb, and her child is dear to her. Jacob's seven years' labour seemed to be a few days for the love he had to Rachel, Gen. xxix. 29. So God will have us serve him out of love, because nothing is grievous to love, 1 John v. 3. It beareth all things, suffereth all things, poverty, nakedness, bonds, injuries, labours, never tireth or groweth weary, 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

2. Except we obey because we love, our obedience is not sincere and acceptable: 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 'Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal: and though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing,' *οὐδέν εἰμι*. Many are frightened into a course of religion, and go on from duty to duty, out of fear of being damned; this is not true obedience, that is done servilely and by constraint, these

unwilling services which we perform to Christ, out of urging of conscience and fear of wrath: Jer. ii. 27, 'Which have turned the back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise and save us.' They come to God, not out of delight and choice, but out of necessity, and only then, Hosea. v. 6. They that did not care for God at other times will then come with their flocks and their herds. The spirit of bondage is clamorous for duty, as the spirit of adoption sweetly inclineth to it. Many obey God no further than they are forced, as slaves, whom nothing but fear induceth to perform their master's commands; and so do not love the work, nor do it for the work's sake.

3. The next object to God, fit for our love, is God's law. It is clear that God is *primum amabile*, the first thing that is to be loved; but what is the second? Surely that which hath most of God in it; next after God, his word. There is *vestigium* in the creature, there is *imago* in his testimonies: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'For we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.' The fairest draught and print of God that can be taken. His people have his image, but it is overshadowed with weakness; it is but the *ἀποφαίσισμα*, the off-set of his word. It is the word that maketh saints, there is the liveliest stamp and print of God. His testimonies lead not only to the knowledge of God, but also the fruition of him. Whatsoever leadeth us to the fruition of God is incomparably better than any other thing; therefore, if we love God, we must love his precepts, love them so as to keep them; it is the greatest testification of that love we can show to God.

Use 1. To show us the reason why so many miscarry in the profession of godliness. Many walk in the ways of God for a while, but have no sound love to them; either by-ends, or slavish fears forced them into some profession; but they did not love godliness as godliness, and therefore cannot hold out with God. When a man is biassed and poised by his heart to a thing, you cannot easily divert and break his inclination, that is a rooted thing; others were but forced, and forced subjection will not always hold. Men are hoping they shall shake off an displeasing task, and where they obey from constraint, and the iron yoke of terror, they will not long obey.

Use 2. To press us not only to keep God's testimonies, but to love them.

Let me use some arguments.

1. From its excellency. To love is more than to do, as to love sin is a greater evil than to commit it. *Gravius est peccatum diligere, quam facere.* A man may commit sin out of infirmity, but he that loves it, sin reigneth in him. Practice may be overruled; a man may do evil that hateth it, being overborne by the violence of a temptation; as Paul saith of himself, 'The evil that I hate, that I do.' So a man may do good that hateth it, being influenced by by-ends; but our love is our own, the genuine offspring of the soul.

2. The necessity of it. Unless we love our work, we shall never be the more earnest in the performance of it. Nature of itself is unwilling, the heart hangeth off till it be poised by love: reasons and motives will not do it: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity

against God, for it is not subject to the law.' The commandments of God cross our will, profit, and pleasure; therefore we need not only reasons with us, but a strong inclination of heart to hold us to it, else we shall be off and on with God: Neh. iv. 6, 'The building went on, because the people had a mind to the work.' Nothing else will do it but this.

3. The utility. We shall have more comfort in the sincerity of our affections than we can ever have in the perfection of our actions. The people of God, that cannot plead the perfection of what they do, plead the reality of their love: John xxi. 17, 'Lord, thou knowest all things, and knowest that I love thee.'

4. *Ex debito*. We owe so much love to God, that everything that he requireth should be welcome to us for God's sake: they are his testimonies, therefore your souls should love them, and bind them upon your hearts, and the rather because we are to do our duty not as servants but as friends: John xv. 14, 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.' Not, Ye are my servants. Between friends there is a perfect harmony and agreement in mind and will. To do a thing for love's sake to his friend, this is an act of friendship. Not by servile constraint, but to keep them as they are his. We are to do what Christ commandeth because he commandeth it; and that is to do it in love; otherwise we break the commands when we keep them. Besides the outward act, there must be a ready inclination and delight in our work. Carnal men, the good they do they would not do. That obedience is not worthy the name of obedience that is extorted from us. Men had rather live ungodly if they durst for fear of punishment. It is but a slight kind of religion when fear prevaileth more than love; they do somewhat God willeth, but they had rather leave it undone. A man is never firmly gained to God, till he prefer service before liberty, and loveth holiness as holiness.

But how must we show this love? By two things. By being awful and cheerful; grieved when we offend him, glad when we please him; awful in avoiding what he forbiddeth, and cheerful in performing what he requireth.

[1.] Awful; you dare not break with God in any one point, but are very chary and tender of the commandments; keep them as the apple of the eye, Prov. vii. 2, that is offended with the least dust; or keeping of jewels: Prov. vi. 21, 'Bind them continually upon thy heart, tie them upon thy neck' as jewels; choice of them.

[2.] By being cheerful, ready, and forward to every good work: Ps. cx. 3, 'A willing people.' You need not stand urging and pressing; the inclination of their hearts swayeth them. A man is hardly kept from that he loveth: 1 John ii. 5, 'He that keepeth my word, in him is the love of God perfected.'

Secondly, The degree, 'I love them exceedingly.'

Doct. Our love to the law must be an exceeding love.

1. In the general, it noteth the height and intensiveness of our love; not a cold love, as children love things, but are soon put out of the humour; but a high strong love, that will not easily be broken or diverted, such as doth deeply affect the heart: Ps. cxix. 97, 'Oh, how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day.' We that are

so coldly affected to spiritual things do not understand the force of these expressions. A high and strong love will break forth into meditation, operation; make us sedulous and serious in obeying God: Ps. cxix. 48, 'My hands will I lift up to thy commandments, which I have loved;' 1 John ii. 5, 'He that keepeth my word, in him is the love of God perfected.' Lift up our eyes to the receiving, our ears to the hearing, our hands to the doing of thy commandments; this argueth love.

2. The prevalency; not only high and strong, but to a prevailing degree.

[1.] Such as prevaieth over things without us. 'This is such a love as is greater than our love to all other things, wealth, honour, credit, estate; yea, life itself: for if anything be loved above our duty to God, it will soon prove a snare to us: Mat. xiii. 44, 'Sold all to buy the field wherein the treasure was hid.' All for the pearl of price. A believer seeth such a treasure in the word of God; that he maketh no reckoning of any worldly thing in comparison of it, but will part with whatever is pleasant and profitable to him to enjoy it, rather than be deprived of his grace. If any fleshly sensitive good or interest lieth closer to the heart than the word of God, it will in time prevail so as to make God's will and glory stoop to it, rather than this interest shall be renounced or contradicted. There is no talking of serving God till you have this prevailing love, and hate all things in comparison of your duty to God: Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man hate not father and mother.'

[2.] Such as doth prevail over carnal desires and evil affections within us; if it be not a love that doth eat up and devour our lusts within us, if the bent of your hearts be not more for God than for sin. See Baxter, pp. 273-279, in his directions about conversion. There will be evil in the best, and some good in the worst. The critical difference lieth in the prevalent bent of the heart. When your dislike of sin is greater than your love, then you may say, Rom. vii. 20, 'It is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me.' There must be a renewed self that prevaieth above corrupt self.

Well, then, rest not in some general approbation of the ways of God, or inclination to good, but this prevailing affection that jostleth sin out of the soul.

SERMON CLXXXIII.

I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies, for all my ways are before thee.—VER. 168.

DAVID still goeth on in his plea. He had spoken of his faith and love, and now of his fear. We must—

1. Labour for faith to believe the promises. The man of God beginneth there, 'I have hoped for thy salvation.'

2. This faith must work by love; that is his next step, 'My soul loveth thy testimonies exceedingly.' And—

3. Love must breed in us a reverent fear of God's majesty, and a care to please him in all things. This is the third part of the plea mentioned in the text, 'I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies,' &c. In which words—

1. His integrity is again asserted.
2. The reason and encouragement of it.

1. His integrity is asserted, 'I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies.' Where it is notable the object of his duty is expressed by two words, *precepts* and *testimonies*. *Mandatis adjungit testimonia*, saith Calvin, *ut ostendat se non tantum agere de regula bene vivendi, sed complecti totum salutis fœdus*. He addeth the word 'testimonies' to that of 'precepts,' to comprise the whole covenant of salvation. Precepts signifieth the moral law, and testimonies doctrines of grace.

2. The moving cause or proper reason of this obedience, 'For all my ways are before thee.' Whereby he understandeth either the providence of God apprehended by faith as always watching over him and all his affairs for good, or a sense of God's omniscieny and omnipresence. The interpretations are subordinate one to the other; and in both respects, all our ways may be said to be before the Lord, namely, as he doth govern and dispose of them according to his will. So it is said, Prov. iii. 6, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' Or that he doth know and see all: Job xxxiv. 21, 'His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.' And in this double sense may a parallel place be expounded: Ps. xvi. 8, 'I have set the Lord always before me.' In point of reverence and dependence, as inspector, helper, observer, second. But why is it mentioned here? Three reasons interpreters give for it—either by way of appeal, or as the reason of his obedience, or as evidence of his sincerity.

[1.] By way of appeal, as calling God to witness for the truth of what he had said. Lord, thou art conscious to all my ways, knowest the truth of what I spake. 'Lord, thou knowest all things;' thus Peter useth it, John xxi. 17.

[2.] As a reason why he was so careful to keep all God's precepts. All my thoughts, words, and deeds are known to thee; and so I desire to approve myself to thee in every part and point of my duty.

[3.] Or it is produced as an evidence of his sincerity, that he did all things as in God's sight, and set him before his eyes as the judge of his doings, and so would not offend God to please men; for in this octonary he speaketh as a man in trouble, and ready to miscarry by carnal fear.

Doct. That walking as in the sight of God is a note of sincerity, and a good means to make us keep his precepts.

1. In those few words which God spake to Abraham all godliness is comprehended: Gen. xvii. 1, 'Walk before me, and be thou upright;' walk before me as in the sense of my eye and the confidence of my all-sufficiency, behave thyself as in my sight and presence. Let me give you a note or two concerning this walking as in the sight of God.

[1.] All men are in God's sight, but few think of it; they forget God's eye that is upon them; as Jacob saith in another case, Gen.

xxvi. 16, 'Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not.' God is in them, though they do not see God, and therefore act as if God did not see them. The apostle telleth us plainly, Acts xvii. 27, 'He is not far from every one of us.' Though God be not far from us, yet we may be far from him, at a great distance in our minds and affections. God is near us in the effects of his power and providence, but the elongation and distance is on our parts. We do not consider his eye that is upon us; for many dare do that in the sight of God and angels which they dare not do in the sight of a little child.

[2.] This walking as in the sight of God implieth a looking upon God as witness and judge, as one that seeth for the present, and will hereafter call you to an account; and so it works upon those two great articles of present providence and last judgment; the one consideration puts an edge upon the other, and maketh it more operative. God is to be looked on as one sitting upon his throne; and Solomon telleth us, 'A king sitting upon the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes,' Prov. xx. 8. Would a subject break the laws in his sovereign's sight? So when God looketh on, shall we affront him to his face, the great judge of all the earth? Job xi. 11, 'He seeth wickedness also; will he not then consider it?' As Ahasuerus said, Esther vii. 8, 'Will he force the queen also before me?' The greatest malefactors will carry it demurely in the presence of their judge: Ps. x. 14, 'Thou hast seen it, thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thine hand.'

[3.] We are not only to remember God's eye in the duties of piety which we perform directly to God, but also in the duties of righteousness which we owe to men: Luke i. 75, 'In holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives.' Holiness hath relation to God, and righteousness to men; in both we must act as before him, as in his eye and presence; not only in praying and hearing; then we are before him, immediately speaking to him; but before him as to men; all our respects there must be done as in and to the Lord, performing duties we owe to men as in the sight and presence of the Lord, as it is often said, so as to approve ourselves to God, who seeth the heart; do it unto the Lord heartily: Ps. xxv. 15, 'Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord.'

[4.] God doth not only behold our actions, but our principles and aims, and the secret motions of our hearts. He is neither ignorant of man, nor anything in man. Men may judge of actions, but not of principles, no further than they are discovered; but God judges of principles when the action is fair: 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 'And thou Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imagination of the thoughts;' words that imply an accurate search. God looketh to the bottom and spring of actions, not only the matter, but the principle. A man that standeth by a river in a low place can only see that part of the stream that passeth by, but he that is aloof in the air in a higher place may see the whole course, where it riseth and how it runneth; so God at one view seeth the beginning, rise, and ending of actions; whatever we think, speak, or do, he seeth it altogether. He knoweth our thoughts

before we can think them: Ps. cxxxix. 2, 'Thou knowest my down-sitting and my uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off; before we can conclude anything. A gardener knoweth what roots are in the ground long before they appear, and what fruits they will produce.

2. This is a good means to make us keep his precepts.

[1.] It maketh for the restraint of evil; the sight of God is a bridle to us: Gen. xxxix. 9, 'How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Shall we break God's laws before his face? We take heed what we say and do before informers, and should we not much more before the judge himself? If we be not thus affected, it is a sign we never had a sight and sense of God's eye: 3 John 11, 'He that doth evil hath not seen God.' God taught his people this by the type of covering their excrements: Deut. xxiii. 13, 14, 'For the Lord walketh in the midst of the camp, therefore let thy camp be holy, that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.' The flesh will soon seduce us were it not for the awe of God's eye. Inferiors, when they are in the sight and presence of their superiors, are very careful of their behaviour. He were an unhappy son or a lewd servant that would misdemean himself in the sight and presence of his father or master. Children at school, all is whist when the master cometh. She were a lewd and impudent wife that in the sight and presence of her husband would prostitute herself to another man. This is our case; God is father and lord, and we are always in his sight; if we believe it, and can remember it, would we be so shameless as to sin, he looking upon us? The wise heathens were sensible that such a thought would be a curb to us, therefore admonished their disciples that they should always set before them some Cato or Cælius, some grave and reverend person, that they might behave themselves as in their presence; for saith Seneca, *Magna pars peccatorum tollitur, si peccatoris testis adfuit*—a great part of sin would be prevented if, when we are about to sin, some witness were present with us. They thought this fiction would be a restraint, and the fiction of grave men. But we speak now of the eyes of God, and that not as a fiction and supposition, but as a certain and undoubted truth; no less certain than that there is a God, which, of all truths, is most certain. Therefore, should not the eye of God restrain, who is with us always and in all places?

[2.] For the encouragement to every good work, and so it is a spur to us. God looketh on; he that is thy judge and rewarder, he knoweth how faithfully we keep his law. All the labours, miseries, slanders which thou endurest for his sake are known to him: Rev. ii. 3, 'I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience.' He taketh notice of thy faithfulness. Do not think only that God doth spy out our failings: Prov. xv. 3, 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.' He taketh notice of both, both as rewarder and avenger. Now cowards will adventure much in the presence of their general, and idle servants will work while their master looketh on; and shall not we do the Lord's work, since he taketh notice? He knoweth our work and our discouragements, and will help accordingly: Rev. ii. 13, 'I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name.' See Basil, *Regulis Brevioribus*, quæst. 34.

More particularly.

1. It is a great means to make us serious in all our addresses to God, that we may behave ourselves with that reverence and awefulness that will become the divine majesty. What is the reason men are so slight and customary in their prayers and other acts of religion? They do not see the invisible God, and think of him to whom they speak. From practical atheism and unbelief we have little sense of things unseen. In speaking to a man we behave ourselves with that gravity and reverence that his quality deserveth; but in speaking to God, our thoughts wander, our hearts are dead and vain, because we see not him with whom we have to do: 'Make us gods to go before us,' Exod. xxxii. 1. Ay! that we would have a visible God, whom we may see and hear; but the true God being a spirit and an invisible power, all the service we do him is a task performed more out of custom than affection, in a slight perfunctory manner. Now, when we believe God's eye, and are sensible of his presence, that maketh us more serious. He telleth man his thought. Thoughts speak louder in his ears than our words. Oh! with what reverence should we creep into his presence, before whom all things are naked and open! It was a direction Seneca gave to his friend Lucilius, Epist. x.—*Sic vive cum hominibus, tanquam Deus videat; sic loquere cum Deo, tanquam homines videant*—so live with men as if God saw; so speak with God as if men saw. Shall such a speech come out of the mouth of a heathen, and shall not Christians remember God, and set themselves as in his sight when they come before him? We would be ashamed if our hearts were turned in and out in any duty, and men did know all our light, foolish, sinful thoughts that take up our minds; and doth not God see and hate these things more than men. So that it is a powerful consideration to make us come with humility and reverence into God's presence.

2. It maketh us sincere in our whole course; for this is sincerity, to do all things in order to God: sincerity lieth in the universality of obedience, and purity of intention.

[1.] For universality of obedience, we have an instance here in the text. David, by keeping himself as in God's all-seeing presence, performed a uniform acceptable obedience to him. So will all do that habituate this thought, and make it familiar to them; this is that that maketh them obey in presence and absence, to perform secret duties, Mat. vi. 6. Therefore a Christian is as religious, if not more, alone and in secret as before others. The hypocrite walketh before men, who see the outward man only, seeketh chiefly to approve himself to men, and therefore is more religious before others than alone; but it is otherwise with a heart deeply possessed with a sense of God's omniscieny and omnipresence. So to avoid secret sins, which are only liable to God's cognisance; he that knoweth all the workings of his heart lie open before God, maketh it his business to abstain from fleshly lusts as from sinful practices, which would betray him to shame before the world, and dareth not allow himself to sin anywhere, but there where God cannot see, that is, nowhere. Yea, when God's children forget themselves to be in their Father's presence, and corruption gets the start of grace, they afterwards come to be ashamed, and

grieved for those sins for which the world cannot tax them : Ps. xix. 12, ' Who can understand his errors ? cleanse me, Lord, from secret sins.' All our actions are seen by the Lord ; some of them may be known to men, but others may escape their eye ; therefore, if we look to men only, we are partial ; but if to God, universal in our obedience. If this be all our aim, that men may not impeach us of any crime ; but if this be our aim, to approve ourselves to God, it is a sign we are sincere.

[2.] As to purity of intention, the proper reason of that is, because God seeth our aims as well as our actions, and knoweth all the deceits and tricks of a false heart. Our business is not with men, but with God, the searcher of hearts, who can distinguish between the motions of the flesh, and those inspired by his Spirit. Certainly, if we make him paymaster, we must intend his work : Rom. ii. 29, ' For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly ; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, whose praise is not of men, but of God.' He that maketh God his witness, approver, and judge, must chiefly mind what God looketh after : Prov. xvi. 2, ' All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weigheth the spirit.' That which he chiefly regardeth are men's principles and ends.

[3.] It maketh us faithful in our relations, by considering he appoints them to us, and seeth how we improve them for his glory. Magistrates, there is a special presence of God, not only to direct and protect, but also to note and observe them : 2 Chron. xix. 6, ' The Lord is with you in the judgment ;' Ps. lxxxii. 1, ' God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, and judgeth among the gods.' When they are for the execution of his office, God is there, and therefore they above all must be men fearing God, have a reverent regard to his eye and presence. Diodorus Siculus telleth us of some heathens that had several empty chairs advanced aloof¹ near the tribunals, as for their gods, to show they were present, and had an inspection over all acts of judicature. So for ministers, they must not only give an account at last, but are observed for the present. God hath a watchful eye over them, as they have and should have over the flock. He observeth how we discharge our trust, and what are our aims, whether to promote our own interest or his : 2 Cor. ii. 17, ' But as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.' Our doctrines must not only be sound, but our aims and principles. It is not enough to speak of God, in his name, his truth, but sincerely approve our hearts to him in the faithful discharge of our duty. So 1 Thes. ii. 4, ' We speak not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts ;' in all singleness and sincerity of heart discharging our trust. So masters of families are to walk in their houses with a perfect heart, Ps. ci. 2 ; though they are shut up in their families from the observation of others, yet at home as well as abroad they must be careful to walk with God in their domestical converse, where men are wont most to discover themselves, and should behave themselves prudently, and holily, and faithfully there. The apostle mindeth masters of their Master in heaven, Eph. vi. 9 ; one who noteth and observeth your dealings, and will call you to an account for all your carriage : your sins and graces are not hid from him. So for servants : Col. iii. 21-23, ' Servants, obey in all things

¹ Qu. ' aloft ' ?—Ed.

your masters according to the flesh ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers ; but in singleness of heart, fearing God : and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.' Still the consideration of God's eye is suggested to them ; they must be careful of their master's concerns, whether their master be present or absent, or whether the things they do will come to his knowledge, yea or no ; for though the eye of man will not find them out, yet the eye of God must be regarded ; therefore, with respect to God, they must be careful and faithful. So again, Eph. vi. 5, 6, ' Servants, be obedient to them which are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ ; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.' They should be cheerful, laborious, painful, showing all faithfulness in things committed to their trust, even to a pin or the smallest matter, not saucy, stubborn, and malapert ; because the Lord looketh upon them, and if they so do, will own them and bless them. Thus you see we should have better magistrates, better ministers, better masters, better servants, better fathers, better children, if this principle were once deeply imprinted upon their hearts, that all their ways are before the Lord, and he still observeth what they do in all their actions.

Use. To press us to walk as in the sight of God, and to foresee him before you in all your ways. To press you hereunto, consider these things:—

1. You are in the sight of God, whether you think so or no. We can no more be removed from the presence of God than from our own beings, for he is in everything that subsists, and it subsists by him. The apostle telleth us, Eph. iv. 6, ' There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.' The sun is some representation of God's eye ; nothing is hid from its sight : if the sun were an eye, it would see all things that it shineth upon. So doth God ; only with this difference, the sun cannot pierce through dark and thick bodies, but God is over all, and through all, and in all, upholding and overruling all by his powerful providence. Therefore you cannot lie hid from God ; only this sight is not comfortable and profitable to you, unless you see him as he seeth you. They say of the panther, when it hideth the head it thinketh it is not seen because it seeth not, and so is taken by the hunters. This an emblem of wretched sinners ; they see not God, and therefore think they are not seen by him, and so go on doing evil till their iniquities find them out.

2. What a noble thing it is always to live in the sight of God ; for by this exercise, in some measure, and as this mortal state will permit, you enjoy the happiness of the blessed angels, for this is the privilege of the blessed angels : Mat. xviii. 10, ' That they always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven.' So when you live in the thought of God in some measure, you are doing their work, and your minds become as it were another heaven ; for heaven is where God is, and there God is in that heart that thinketh of him ; not only there by the powerful effects of his providence, and the impressions of his grace, but there by the workings of our hearts.

3. The profit is exceeding great. By conversing with God often ye become like him. As musing of vanity maketh us vain, heavenly and

holy thoughts produce a heavenly mind, and frequent remembrance is one means to introduce the divine nature. Moses, in that extraordinary converse with God, his face shone, he carried away some strictures and rays of the divine majesty in his countenance. We cannot look for that effect upon our bodies, but serious and ponderous thoughts leave some change upon the soul ; there is the lustre of grace, and the beauty of the divine nature, which is a greater thing left upon us. The apostle saith, 2 Cor. iii. 19, ' For 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, as by the Spirit of the Lord.' By seeing him in the word, considering him as always present with us ; the heart is coloured and dyed by the object it often thinketh upon. Oh ! therefore be persuaded to set the Lord before you.

For means.

1. To see God aright we need faith, for God is invisible, and invisible things are only seen by faith, Heb. xi. 1 ; and the instance is in Moses, ver. 27, ' By faith he saw him that was invisible.' Many have an opinion that God knoweth all things, but they have not a sound belief of it ; it is what is owned by the tongue rather than the heart. Cold and dead opinions are easily taken up, but a lively faith is God's gift ; this is a sight not easily gotten.

2. We must often revive this thought, for the oftener we think of it, the more deeply it is impressed upon the soul : Ps. ix. 17, ' The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.' It is not said, that deny him, but forget him. On the other side, there is a book of remembrance for those that thought upon his name, Mal. iii. 16. God takes it kindly when our minds are set a-work upon him and upon his attributes. We have every moment life and breath, and all things from him ; he thinketh of us, and therefore out of a necessary gratitude we should oftener think of God. Nazianzen saith twice, Naz. Orat. de Cura Pauperum, Orat. 10, and Orat. de Theol., Orat. 11 : We should as often think of God as breathe, for we cannot breathe without him, and without his continual providential influence we fall into nothing, as sunbeams vanish when the sun is gone. Therefore the apostle telleth the Ephesians they were in their natural estate, *ἀθεοί*, Eph. ii. 12. There are two sorts of atheists—they that deny God, and they that wholly forget God. The latter are more common, and they are described, Ps. x. 4, ' God is not in all their thoughts.' Oh ! what misery is this, that we have thoughts more than we can tell what to do withal, and yet we will not afford God the least share in them ! He were a cruel man that would cast his provisions and superfluities into the street, and deny them to the poor, that should let his drink run into the kennel rather than that they should taste a drop of it. Such are we to God. We know not what to employ our thoughts upon, and yet we will not think of his name. We go musing of vanity all the day long, and be grinding of chaff, rather than take in good corn into the mill.

3. There are certain seasons when we are bound not only habitually but actually to think of God.

[1.] In a time of temptation, when the flesh, being enticed by profit or pleasure, or scared by fears, tempts us to do anything contrary to the

will of God. Thus did Joseph, when he might have sinned securely and with advantage, Gen. xxxix. 9; the thoughts of God's eye and presence dashed the temptation. We forget him that seeth in secret, and therefore take the liberty to indulge our lusts. Can I consider that God looketh on, and do thus unworthily? It is a daring him to his face to go on with these thoughts; therefore God seeth what I will now do; it is a seasonable relief to the soul.

[2.] We should actually revive this thought in solemn duties, when we come to act the part of angels, and to look God in the face. Surely God is greatly to be had in fear of all that are round about him. It would prevent a great deal of carelessness in worship to remember who is the party with whom we have to do, who is speaking to us in the word, and to whom we speak in prayer: Heb. iv. 13, 'All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' He knoweth how we hear, what thoughts and affections are stirring in our hearts: 'We are all here present before the Lord, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.' We come not hither to see and be seen of men, but to see God; we are here before God, as if God himself were speaking to us. God is everywhere with us, but we are not always everywhere with God, but when we lift up our hearts and set him before our eyes. So in prayer, when we speak to God, we should think of him who is an eternal being, to whom belongeth kingdom, power, and glory. Prayer is called a coming to God. We beg his eyes be open, Neh. i. 6, to behold us as well as hear us. Now what an awing thought is this in prayer, that our preparations, motions, affections, dispositions, aims are all naked and open to his eyes!

[3.] When God findeth us out in our secret sins by his word, Spirit, and providence, or the wrings and pinches of our own consciences. By his word: 1 Cor. xiv. 25, 'And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down upon his face, will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.' And Heb. iv. 12, 13, 'For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, for all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' So by his Spirit setting conscience a-work: Job xiii. 26, 'Thou makest me possess the sins of my youth.' Old forgotten sins come to remembrance. Own God and his omniscience in the dispensation when God sets our sins in order before us as if anew committed. So providence: Gen. xlii. 21, 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother,' &c. Affliction openeth the eyes; it is his rack to extort confessions from us.

[4.] Consider upon what good reason God's knowing all things is built; his creation and providence. If he made all things, and sustaineth all things, surely he knoweth all things in particular, for every wise man knoweth what he doth. A father cannot forget how many children he hath. He that leadeth us by the hand wherever we go, knoweth where and how we go. Christ knew when virtue passed from him in a crowd; he said, 'Somebody toucheth me, for I perceive that virtue is passed out from me,' Luke viii. 45, 46. Certainly God

knoweth there is such a creature as thou art, such a man or woman of the world, knoweth thy uprising and down-lying : Ps. cxxxix. 2, 'Thou understandest my thoughts afar off.' He knoweth whether we are laughing, mourning, or praying. He that will judge thee knoweth thee, or else he were an incompetent judge.

[5.] Humble thyself for walking so unanswerably. It would trouble us to have our thoughts, counsels, actions, all we think and speak, divulged and published. All is naked and open to God. If we did not think God's eye a fancy and fond conceit, we would at least walk more humbly. It would trouble us exceedingly if men had a window into our hearts in a time of prayer. Why not because God seeth? How watchful are we not to incur the penalty of man's law, but offences against God are lightly passed over. With what copiousness and flowings of language will men enlarge themselves in prayer when in company, and how slight and overly in closet duties, if not wholly neglective of them; which is in effect to say, Our heavenly father seeth not in secret.

SERMON CLXXXIV.

My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.—
VER. 171.

In the two former verses he had prayed—(1.) For an increase of saving knowledge, ver. 169. (2.) For deliverance out of his troubles, ver. 170. He reinforceth his request by a promise of thankfulness, if he could get a gracious answer to that, 'My lips shall utter praise,' &c.

In the words we have—

1. A resolution of praise, *my lips shall utter praise.*

2. The reason and occasion of it, *when thou hast taught me thy statutes.*

First, A resolution of praise.

The word for 'uttereth praise,' signifieth that praise should break from him as water boileth and bubbleth up out of a fountain. Indeed words cometh from the abundance of the heart, Mat. xii. 34; either from the plenty of spiritual knowledge, John iv. 38—as a fountain yieldeth water, so his knowledge breaketh out into praises—or from the plenty of spiritual affection; rather from the great esteem of the benefit, or fulness of joy at the thought of it. It is a great privilege to be delivered from blindness and ignorance: 'To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God,' Mat. xiii. 11. Now they that have a spiritual gust and taste are so affected with it that they cannot be enough thankful for it; and it is notable that this thankfulness is promised upon granting the first request.

Doct. Divine illumination is so great a gift, that all who are made partakers of it are especially obliged to praise and thanksgiving.

This will appear by these considerations:—

1. That upon the receipt of every mercy we should praise God. There is an equity in it, for this is God's pact and agreement with us: