

dependence upon God : Prov. v. 6, ‘Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding : in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.’ Oh ! when a man is brought off from this spiritual idolatry, of making his bosom to be his oracle, and his own heart to be his counsellor, when he doth in the poverty of his spirit humbly and entirely cast himself upon the help of God, and acknowledge him in all his ways, then he shall see a clear direction what God would have him to do. You have another place to this purpose, Ps. cxliii. 8, ‘Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk ; for I lift up my soul unto thee.’ Oh ! when a man goes every morning to God, and desires the direction of his Spirit, and professeth to God in the poverty of his own spirit that he knows not how to guide his way for that day, then God will teach him the way he shall walk. So Ps. xxv. 4, 5, ‘Show me thy ways, O Lord ; teach me thy paths.’ What is his argument ? ‘On thee do I wait all the day.’ When you live in a constant dependence upon God, then will the Lord undertake to direct and guide you.

4. Obedience or Christian practice, that is one of the qualifications that make you capable for direction from the word of God : John vii. 17, ‘If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.’ A man does not know whether this opinion or that be according to God’s mind, when there are plausible pretences on every side. He that maketh conscience of known truth, and walketh up to his light, he that doth not search to satisfy curiosity, but out of a thorough resolution to obey and submit his neck to the yoke of Christ, whatever he shall find to be the way of Christ, that man shall know what is the way in times of controversy and doubtful uncertainty. He that will say, as a famous German divine, If we had six hundred necks, let us submit them all to the yoke of Christ ; he that is resolved to submit to the mind of Christ, how contrary soever to his interest, to the prejudices and prepossessions of his own heart, he shall know the doctrine that is of God.

SERMON XXVI.

My soul cleaveth unto the dust : quicken thou me according to thy word.—VER. 25.

THE man of God in this psalm had spoken before of the common and universal benefits of the word, as it agreeth to all times and conditions of believers ; for it belongeth to all, in what state soever they are, to look upon it as a direction in the way to get true happiness, and to stir up suitable affections in their hearts. Now he sheweth what use the word hath in each special condition, especially in the time of great afflictions. David did often change states, but his affection to the word never changeth.

Here is—(1.) A representation of David’s case ; (2.) His supplication or petition thereupon ; wherein—(1st.) The request itself ; (2d.) The argument to enforce it.

First, The representation of David's case, 'My soul cleaveth unto the dust.' The speech is metaphorical, expressing the depth of his misery, or the greatness of his sorrow and humiliation. (1.) The depth of his misery, with allusion to the case of a man overcome in battle, or mortally wounded, and tumbling in the dust, or to a man dead and laid in the earth; as Ps. xxii. 15, 'Thou hast brought me to the dust of death.' Sure we are the expression importeth the extremity of distress and danger, either as a man dead, or near death. (2.) The greatness of his sorrow and humiliation; and so the allusion is taken from a man prostrate and grovelling on the ground, which was their posture of humbling themselves before the Lord, or when any great calamity befell them. As when Herod Agrippa died, they put on sackcloth, and lay upon the earth weeping (Joseph., lib. xix. cap. 7). The same allusion is Ps. xlv. 25, 'Our soul is bowed down unto the dust, our belly cleaveth to the earth.' Suitably to which allusion, the Septuagint renders it ἐκολλήθη τῷ ἐδάφει ἡ ψυχὴ μου—to the pavement.

And we read in Theodoret, that Theodosius the Emperor, when reproved by Ambrose for the slaughter at Thessalonica, he lay upon the ground, and humbly begged pardon, using these words, *Adhasit pavimento anima mea*. The meaning is, that in his dejected condition he would lie prostrate at God's feet as a poor supplicant, and die there. The first point is—

That God's children may have such great afflictions brought upon them that their souls may even cleave to the dust.

These afflictions may respect their inward or outward condition.

1. Their inward condition; and so through grief and terrors of conscience they are ready to drop into the grave. That trouble of mind is a usual exercise of God's people, see Heman's complaint, Ps. lxxxviii., from ver. 3 to the end of ver. 7: 'My soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength. Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deep. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah.' It was in his soul, and it was in his soul by reason of the wrath of God, and that in such a degree of vehemency that, in his own judgment and the judgment of others, he could not expect to be long a man of this world, little differing from the dead, yea, the damned. So David, Ps. lxxvii. 1, &c., 'I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my sore ran in the night and ceased not; my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled. I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak: I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient time,' &c. By the sense of God's wrath he was even wounded to death, and the sore running upon him would admit of no plaister; yea, the remembrance of God was a trouble to him: 'I remembered God, and was troubled.' What a heavy word was that! Soul troubles are the most pressing troubles; a child of God is as a lost man in such a condition.

2. In respect of the heavy weight of outward pressures. Thus David fasted, and lay all night upon the earth in his child's sickness: 2 Sam. xii. 16, 17, 'David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him to raise him up from the earth; but he would not: neither did he eat bread with them.' And when he was driven from his palace by Absalom, and was in danger of his life every moment (which some interpreters think to be the case intended in the text), when he went up the Mount of Olives barefoot, going and weeping: 2 Sam. xv. 30, 'And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered; and he went barefoot, and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went.'

Now the reasons of this are these—

1. To correct them for past sins. This was the cause of David's trouble, and this puts a sting into all miseries. God's children smart under their sins here in the world as well as others: Prov. xi. 31, 'Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner.' Recompensed in the earth, that is, punished for his sins. Compare with it 1 Peter iv. 18, 'And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?' God punisheth here that he may spare for ever. He giveth some remembrance of the evil, and corrects his people, not to complete their justification, or to make more satisfaction for God's justice than Christ hath made, yet to promote their sanctification; that is, to make sin bitter to them, and to vindicate the glory of God, that he is not partial. For these reasons they are even brought to the dust by their own folly.

2. To humble them, and bring them low in the midst of their great enjoyments; therefore he casts them down even to the dust. Because we cannot keep our hearts low, therefore God maketh our condition low. This was Paul's case: 2 Cor. i. 7-9, 'And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation; for we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life; but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead'—that is, not to build too securely on their own sufficiencies.

3. To try their graces, which are never tried to the life till we be near the point of death. The sincerity of our estate and the strength of faith is not discovered upon the throne so much as in the dust, if we can depend upon God in the hardest condition.

4. To awaken the spirit of prayer: 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord,' Ps. cxxx. 1. Affliction puts an edge upon our desires. They that are flat and careless at other times are oftenest then with God.

5. To show the more of his glory, and the riches of his goodness in their recovery: Ps. lxxi. 20, 21, 'Thou which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again

from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.' By the greater humiliation, God prepareth us for the greater blessings. As there are multitudes of troubles to humble and try the saints, so his mercies do not come alone, but with great plenty.

Use 1. Let us bless God that we are not put to such great trials. How gentle is our exercise compared with David's case! We are weak, and God will not overburden us. There is a great deal of the wisdom and love of God seen in the measure of the cross, and in the nature and kind of it. We have no cause to say our belly cleaveth to the dust, or that we are pressed above measure. God giveth us only a gentle remembrance. If brought upon our knees, we are not brought upon our faces.

2. If this should be our case, do not count it strange. It is a usual exercise of God's people; let us therefore not be offended, but approve God's holy and wise dispensation. If there be great troubles, there have been great sins, or there will be great comforts, or for the present there are great graces. As such a dispensation is a correction, there is reason to approve it. If you be laid in the dust, have you not laid God's honour in the dust, and trampled his laws under foot? As it is a trial, you have cause to approve it; for it is but meet that when God hath planted grace in the heart, he should prove the strength of it. Therefore, if you be kept so long in your heavy condition that you seem dead, yet if you have faith to keep you alive, and patience be exercised, it is for your greater good: Rom. v. 3, 'And not only so, but we glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience;' and as affliction is an exercise for your benefit and spiritual improvement. The husbandman, when he teareth and rendeth the ground up with the plough, it is to make it more fruitful. The longer the metal is in the fire the more pure it cometh forth. Nay, sometimes you have your outward comforts with advantage after trouble: as Job xlii. 10-12, 'And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before; and the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.' Oh! when we are fitted to enjoy comforts we shall have them plenty enough.

Second point, That in such great and heavy troubles we should deal with God for help.

In the dust David calleth to God for quickening. The reasons of this, why in great troubles we should go to God for help, are—

1. From the inconvenience of any other course.

[1.] If the godly should smother their grief, and not go to God with it, their sorrow were able to choke them. It is no small ease that we have a God to go to, to whom we may freely open our minds. Prayer hath a pacative virtue; as Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 18, 'prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore;' and mark the event, 'The woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad,' &c. An oven stopped up is the hotter within, but vent and utterance giveth ease to the heart, if it be merely by way of complaint to a friend, without expectation of relief; much more to go to God, and lay open our case before him.

[2.] To seek our comfort elsewhere, from earthly things, it is a vain

and evil course. (1.) It is vain ; for God is the party with whom we have to do. In many troubles the creatures may be instruments of our woe ; but the principal party is God. Strike in with him, and you stop the mischief at the head : Prov. xvi. 7, ‘When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.’ In other troubles God hath a more immediate hand, as sickness and terrors of conscience ; our business then lieth not with the creatures ; in sickness, not with physicians first, but with God. In troubles of spirit we are not to quench our thirst at the next ditch, but to run to the fountain of living water ; not to take up with ordinary comforts ; that is an attempt to break prison, and to get out of the troubles before God letteth us out. He is our party then, whoever be the instrument. (2.) It is evil that we refuse to come to God when he whip-peth us into his presence, and beateth us to the throne of grace : Dan. ix. 13, ‘All this evil is come upon us, yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.’ When men are ready to die, and will not so much as confer with the physician, they are either stupid or desperate. Afflictions summon us into his presence. God sendeth a tempest after us, as after Jonah. Now that trouble which chaseth us to God is so far a sanctified trouble.

2. The hope of relief from God, who alone can and will help us. ‘He put his mouth in the dust ; peradventure there is hope,’ Lam. iii. 29. Now this hope is from God’s power and will.

[1.] His power. God can quicken us when we are as good as dead, because he is the well-spring of life and comfort. Other things give us life, but as water scaldeth when it is the instrument of heat ; but God alone can help us. God is the great quickener : ‘That I might trust in him that raiseth the dead ;’ and ‘I am the resurrection and the life.’

[2.] His will. When we are humble and tractable in our afflictions—

(1.) It is some hope if we have nothing to bring before God but our grief and misery, for he is pitiful. A beggar will uncover his sore to move your bowels. So many times all the reason that a poor pitiful afflicted person can bring for himself is lamenting his case to God, how discouraged he is, and apt to faint, as David represents his case, ‘My soul cleaveth to the dust ;’ and elsewhere, Ps. lxix. 29, ‘But I am poor and sorrowful ; let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.’ Justice seeketh a fit object, but mercy a fit occasion.

(2.) It is a greater ground of hope when we are humbled under God’s hand, and have a due sense of our condition ; that is, are convinced of our emptiness, weakness, nothingness, or emptied of self-conceit and carnal confidence : Deut. xxxii. 36, ‘For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.’ God’s judgments are to break our carnal dependencies.

(3.) Still the hope increaseth when we acknowledge his justice and wisdom in all our troubles : Lev. xxvi. 41, ‘If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity,’ kiss the rod wherewith they are corrected, be glad it is no worse, and see that all this cometh from a just and wise God.

(4.) There is further hope when we can cast ourselves upon his faithfulness and omnipotency, in the face of all discouragements. Christ's question to the man long possessed was, Mark ix. 23, 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' God's power is exercised when glorified by faith and dependence.

(5.) When we submit to what may be most for his glory. Carnal prayers, though never so earnest, fail when we are too earnest upon our private end, and the means which we fancy: Ps. cxv. 1, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake.'

Use. In deep calamities run to God, lay forth your case feelingly and with submission to the justice of his providence, trusting to his power, and submitting to his wisdom, without obtruding your model upon God, but leaving him to his own course; and this is the way to speed. Take heed—

1. Of a stupid carelessness under the rod. It is a time of seeking after God, a summons to the creature to come before him. Now, if we think to sport away our trouble without looking after God's comforts, it is a desperate security: Jer. v. 12, 'They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine.'

2. Take heed of despondency. The throne of grace is set up on purpose for such a time: Heb. iv. 16, 'Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;' Ps. l. 15, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' Open your case before the Lord.

3. Take heed of pitching too much upon outward things, either as to the time or way of deliverance. Lust is vehement; but the more you seek, the more comfortable will be the issue: Ps. li. 18, 'Do good in thy good pleasure unto Sion; build thou the walls of thy Jerusalem.'

Secondly, We come now to David's supplication or petition thereupon; where observe—

1. The request itself, *quicken thou me.*

2. The argument, *according to thy word.*

First, The request itself, 'Quicken thou me;' which noteth either the renewing of comfort or the actuation of graces, the restoring or putting life into his affairs.

1. The renewing of comfort; quicken me, revive me, or restore life to me again; and this either by outward deliverance—so quickening is used Ps. lxxi. 20, 'Thou which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth,' where deep trouble is compared to the grave, and deliverance a kind of resurrection or recovery from the dead—or by the letting in of inward comfort and spiritual reviving from the sense of God's love; so Ps. lxxx. 18, 19, 'Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.' The shining of God's face, or the sense of God's love, is the reviving of afflicted spirits.

2. The actuation of grace; there may be life where there is no

vigour. Now when we are stirred up to be lively in God's service, we are said to be quickened, as in the 19th verse of the psalm before quoted; and often it is thus used in this psalm, as ver. 37, 'Quicken thou me in thy way.' The point is this—

That God's children need often to go to God for quickening, because they often lie under deadness of heart, and therefore should desire God, who is the fountain of grace, to emit and send forth his influence.

They need this quickening—(1.) By reason of their constant weakness; (2.) Their frequent indispositions and distempers of soul.

1. Their constant weakness in this world.

[1.] By reason of their inclination to sin.

[2.] The imperfection of their motions towards that which is good.

[1.] By reason of their inclination to sin. Carnal concupiscence draweth us aside from God to sensual objects: James i. 14, 'A man is drawn away by his own lust.' There is a strong bias of corruption drawing us from Christ to present things: Heb. xii. 1, 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.' There is a carnal affection or corrupt inclination which carrieth us out inordinately to things lawful, or too often to things unlawful; this hangeth as a weight, retarding us in all our heavenly flights and motions. The love and care of the world, which is apt to press down the soul, and doth twine about us, and insinuate with us; the apostle calleth it 'a law in his members,' Rom. vii. 23, a warning to us how, when the flesh draweth us off so strongly one way, to implore the divine grace to draw us more strongly to the other.

[2.] Because of the imperfection of their motions to that which is good, though there be a purpose, bent of heart, and inclination that way. Our gyves are still about us; we feel the old maim. Grace is like a spark in wet wood, that needs continual blowing.

2. Their frequent indispositions and distempers of soul. Sometimes they feel a loathness in their souls and a shyness of God's presence; their hearts hang off; the spirit indeed is willing, but some fleshly thought or carnal excuse checketh the motion. It is God alone that can make the soul willing; he giveth both will and deed. God bendeth the unwilling will, as well as helpeth the fainting affections. Again, sometimes they find a great deadness; there is no vigour or liveliness in their affections, and they cannot follow after God with such zeal and earnestness: though there be not a formal deadness, such as usually is in the duties of hypocrites, yet there is not always the same strength and agility of grace in the children of God; their souls do not so earnestly reach after Christ. Now, what can help but divine quickening? Therefore go to God for it. We should rouse and stir up ourselves. God giveth out influences according to his will or pleasure, but we must still stir up ourselves.

But to answer a case of conscience, whether we are to do duty in case of deadness and indisposition, &c.?

1. The influence of grace is not the warrant of duty, but the help; it is the efficient assisting cause, not the ground or rule. We are to do all acts of obedience on account of God's command: Luke v. 5, 'Simon answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.' God is sovereign,

and we are bound to obey, whether disposed or indisposed. Should the husbandman never plough but when disposed to plough?

2. Our sinful indisposition cannot excuse us. In sins of commission, our weakness to resist temptation is no excuse. So also in sins of omission, we cannot be allowed to say, It was the Lord suffered me to sin. No more will this plea be allowed, The Lord did not quicken me to duty. Grace is as necessary to prevent sin as to perform duty. God's suspension was no excuse to Hezekiah: 2 Chron. xxxii. 31; 'Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.' This complaint of weakness hath an ill aspect; complaining without labouring is rather a taxing of God. But—

3. Natural men are bound to pray and perform duties, therefore renewed men. That natural men are bound, see Acts viii. 22, 'Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee;' and Ps. xiv. 2, 'The Lord looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand and seek God.' It is charged as a crime that they did not, but much more the renewed; for to whom more is given, of them more is required. It is another talent wherewith they are intrusted. Grace is not only *donum*, but *talentum*; grace is not given as a piece of money to a child to play withal, but as we give money to factors to trade withal for us. Now a renewed man should do more, being capable of more.

4. The outward act of a duty is commanded as well as the inward; though they come not up to the nature of a perfect duty, there is somewhat of the ordinance of Christ in them: Hosea xiv. 2, 'Take with you words, and turn unto the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips.' Though I cannot do all, I must do as much as I can.

5. We are to wait humbly in the use of means for the power of his grace. When the door is shut, knocking is the only way to get it open. I will go and offer myself to God, and see what he will do for me; which is God's usual way, and to be used with the more caution and diligence, because God doth all: Phil. ii. 12, 13, 'Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' Seamen by tacking about get wind: so far as you use the means, you comply with God's end. A sad threatening there is to those that neglect the use of means, that shut the door upon themselves, or if God withdraws, are willing he should keep away.

6. Acting in spiritual duties fits us for them. *Iter ad pietatem est intra pietatem*—praying fits for praying, meditating for meditating. Frequent turning the key maketh the lock go more easy. Good dispositions make way for good dispositions, Ps. xxvii. 14; Ps. xxxi. 24, 'Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart.' Pluck up your spirits, strive to take courage, and then God will give you courage. To shake us out of laziness, God maketh the

precept go before the promise. God biddeth us pray, though prayer be his own gift. Act as you would expect.

7. There is a supply cometh in ere we are aware: Cant. vi. 12, 'Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib,' in the very work, A strange difference of temper is to be observed in David before the psalm be over: 1 Chron. xxii. 16, 'Arise, therefore, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee.' God will not help that man that hath legs to go, and will not.

8. We are to rouse up ourselves: Isa. lxiv. 7, 'And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' When we are willing to get the work over, and wrestle not for life and power in praying, we do not all we are able. The cock by clapping the wings addeth strength to the crowing. We should rouse up ourselves. We use not the bellows to a dead coal, &c.

Secondly, The next circumstance is the argument, 'According to thy word.' What word doth David mean? Either the general promises in the books of Moses or Job, which intimate deliverance to the faithful observers of God's law, or help to the miserable and distressed, or some particular promise given to him by Nathan or others. Chrysostom saith, Quicken me to live according to thy word: but it is not a word of command, but a word of promise. Mark here—

1. He doth not say, *Secundum meritum meum*, but *secundum verbum tuum*; the hope, or that help which we expect from God, is founded upon his word; there is our security, in his promises, not in our deservings—*Promittendo se fecit debitorem*, &c.

2. When there was so little scripture written, yet David could find out a word for his support. Alas! in our troubles and afflictions no promise occurreth to mind. As in outward things, many that have less live better than those that have abundance; so here. Now scripture is so large, we are less diligent, and therefore, though we have so many promises, we are apt to faint, we have not a word to bear us up.

3. This word did not help him till he had lain long under this heavy condition, so that he seemed dead. Many when they have a promise, think presently to enjoy the comfort of it. No; there is waiting and striving first necessary. We never relish the comfort of the promises till the creatures have spent their allowance, and we have been exercised. God will keep his word, and yet we must expect to be tried.

4. In this his dead condition, faith in God's word kept him alive. When we have lost feeling, and there is nothing left us, the word will support us: Rom. iv. 19, 20, 'And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.'

5. One good way to get comfort is to plead the promise to God in prayer. *Chirographa tua injiciebat tibi, Domine*. Show him his handwriting; God is tender of his word. These arguings in prayer are not to work upon God, but ourselves.

Use. Well, then, let us thus deal with God, looking to him in the sense of our own weakness, praying often to God for quickening, as David doth in the text. God keepeth grace in his own hands, and dispenseth

it at his pleasure, that he may often hear from us, and that we may renew our dependence upon him. It is pleasing to him when we desire him to renew his work, and bring forth the actings of grace in their vigour and lustre. And let us acknowledge divine grace if there be strong actings of faith and love towards God. He is to be owned in his work.

SERMON XXVII.

I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me : teach me thy statutes.—VER. 26.

IN this verse you have three things :—

1. David's open and free dealing with God, *I have declared my ways.*
2. God's gracious dealing with David, *and thou heardest me.*
3. A petition for continuance of the like favour, *teach me thy statutes.*

First, For the first, 'I have declared my ways;' that is, distinctly and without hypocrisy laid open the state of my heart and course of my affairs to thee, note—

Doct. They that would speed with God should learn this point of Christian ingenuity, unfeignedly to lay open their whole case to him; that is, to declare what they are about, the nature of their affairs, the state of their hearts, what of good or evil they find in themselves, their conflicts, supplies, distresses, hopes; that is declaring our ways; the good and evil we are conscious to. As a sick patient will tell the physician how it is with him, so should we deal with God if we would find mercy. This declaring his ways may be looked upon—

1. As an act of faith and dependence.
2. As an act of holy friendship.
3. As an act of spiritual contrition and brokenness of heart; for this declaring must be explained according to the sense of the object of what David means by this expression, 'My ways.'

First, His businesses or undertakings; I have still made them known to thee, committing them to the direction of thy providence; and so it is an act of faith and dependence, consulting with God, and acquainting him with all our desires. This is necessary—

1. That we may acknowledge the sovereignty of his providence and dominion over all events: Prov. xvi. 9, 'A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.' Man proposeth, but God disposeth, and carrieth on the event either further than we intended, or else contrary to what we intended.

2. We must declare our ways to God that we may take God along with us in all our actions, that we may ask his leave, counsel, blessing: Prov. iii. 6, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' There is a twofold direction, one of God's providence, the other of his counsel. The direction of his providence, that is understood: Prov. xvi. 9, 'A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.' But then there is the direc-

tion of his counsel, and the latter is promised here ; if we acknowledge God and declare our ways to him, God will counsel us. And David did thus declare his way upon all occasions : 2 Sam. ii. 1, 'David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah ?' It is a piece of religious manners to begin every business with God ; to go to God, Lord, shall I do so, or shall I not ? to desire him that is Lord of all to give us leave ; who is the fountain of wisdom, to give us counsel ; and the disposer of all events, to give us a blessing.

3. The declaring of our ways is necessary, that we may be sensible of God's eye that is upon us, and so act the more sincerely. Certainly it is a great advantage to make God conscious to every business we have in hand, when we dare undertake nothing but what we would acquaint him withal. There are some to whom the prophet pronounceth a woe : Isa. xxix. 15, 'Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us ? and who knoweth us ?' For the opening of this place, surely none can seriously be so vain, and grow up to such sottish atheism, as to think to hide a thing from God ; but they are loath solemnly to draw it forth in the view of conscience, to revive a sense of God's omniscieny upon themselves. We are said to deny that which many times we forget and will not think of. So that those which hide their counsels from God are those that will not take God along with them. In short, this declaration is not necessary for God, who 'knows our thoughts afar off,' Ps. cxxxix. 2 ; not only our words and works, but purposes, before we begin to lift up a thought that way. But this declaration is necessary for us, to increase the awe of God upon our heart, and that we may undertake nothing but what we will solemnly acquaint the Lord with. Well, then, this declaring our ways is an act of dependence.

Secondly, By his *ways* may be meant all his straits, sorrows, and dangers ; and so this declaring it is an act of holy friendship, when a man comes as one friend to another, and acquaints God with his whole state, lays his condition before the Lord, in hope of pity and relief. We have liberty to do so, to tell God all our mind : Heb. x. 19, 'Let us come with boldness, by the blood of Jesus ;' and Heb. iv. 16. The word signifies, with liberty of speech, speaking all to God, your whole state and condition ; if you have any sins to be pardoned, any miseries to be redressed ; that where you are doubtful, you may be helped by God's counsel, where you are weak, you may be confirmed by his strength, where you are sinful, you may be pitied by his mercy, where you are miserable, you may be delivered by his power. This is holy friendship, to acquaint God with our doubts, wants, griefs, and fears ; and we may do it with more confidence, because we go to him in Christ's name : John xvi. 23, 'Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, it shall be granted unto you.' It is no fiction or strain, but a real truth. Will Christ deceive us when he saith, *Verily* ? And then *whatsoever* you ask ? You have liberty to go to God for the removal of any fear, the granting any regular desire, or for satisfying any doubt : 'Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name.' Our prayers by this means are Christ's request as well as ours. For instance, if you send a child or servant to

a friend for anything in your name, the request is yours, and he that denies a child or servant denies you; so saith Christ, Go to the Father in my name. God cannot deny a request in Christ's name, no more than he can deny Christ himself; therefore you may use a holy boldness.

Thirdly, By *ways* is meant temptations and sins; and so this declaring is an act of spiritual contrition or brokenness of heart. Sins, they are properly our ways; as Ezek. xviii. 25, the Lord makes a distinction between *my ways* and *your ways*. God hath his ways, and we ours. Our ways are properly our sins. Now these, saith David, I will declare, that is, distinctly lay them open before God. This is a part of our duty, with brokenness of heart to declare our ways, to acquaint God fully how it is with us, without dissembling anything. It is a duty very displeasing to flesh and blood; natural pride and self-love will not let us take shame upon ourselves; and out of carnal ease and laziness we are loath to submit to such a troublesome course, and thus openly to declare our ways. Guilt is shy of God's presence, and sin works a strangeness. Adam hid himself when God came into the garden; and when he could shift no longer, he will not declare it, but transfers the fault upon Eve, and obliquely upon God himself; and ever since there are many tergiversations in man's heart; and therefore it is said, Job xxxi. 33, 'If I have covered my sin as did Adam.' Junius renders it *more hominum*—after the manner of men; but Adam's name is used because we show ourselves to be right Adam's race, apt to cover our sins. The same expression we have Hosea vi. 7, 'But they like men have transgressed the covenant.' In the Hebrew it is, like Adam; so, if I covered my sin as did Adam, this is the fashion of men. Now, David brought his heart to this resolution with much struggling: Ps. xxxii. 5, 'I said, I will confess my sins;' he forced himself, and thrust his backward heart forward by a strong resolution; for we are loath to deal thus openly, plainly, and truly with God, being shy of his presence, and would fain keep the devil's counsel, and come with our iniquity in our bosom. But though this is a troublesome displeasing exercise to flesh and blood, yet it is profitable and necessary for us thus to declare our ways.

1. Because it is made to be one of the conditions of pardon, and the act of repentance that is necessary to the pardon of sin: Prov. xxviii. 13, 'He that hideth his sins shall not prosper; but he that confesseth and forsakes them, shall find mercy;' so it runs. And 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' God's justice is satisfied by Christ, but it must be glorified and owned by us. So Jer. iii. 13, 'I am merciful, saith the Lord: only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God.' God hath mercy enough to pardon all, only he will have it sued out his own way, he will have his mercy asked upon our knees; and have the creature stoop and submit. And David, Ps. li. 3, 'I acknowledge my transgression.'

2. It is the only means to have our peace settled. If you would not have your trouble and anxious thoughts continued upon you, go open yourselves to God, declare your ways: Ps. xxxii. 5, 'I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' As soon as David did but take up a resolution,

presently he felt the comfort of it. If David had confessed sooner, he had come to his ease sooner. Distress of conscience is continued upon us until this be done; and especially is this found by experience, when great trouble comes upon us by reason of sin. There is some sin at the bottom God will bring out; and until they come to clearness and openness with God, the Lord still continues the trouble; they are kept roaring, and do not come to their peace, Job xxxiii. 26, 27. When a man is under trouble, and the sense of sin doth not fasten on the heart, he is not prepared for deliverance; but when it comes to this, 'I have sinned, and it profits me not,' then God sends 'an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness.'

3. It prevents Satan's accusations and God's judgments. It is no profit to cover our sins, for either Satan will declare them, or God find us out, and enter into judgment with us. It prevents Satan as an accuser and God as a judge.

[1.] It prevents Satan as an accuser. Let us not tarry till our adversary accuse. There is one that will accuse you if you do not accuse yourselves. He that is a tempter is also an accuser of the brethren. Now confession puts Satan out of office. When we have sued out our pardon, Satan is not an accuser so much as a slanderer: Rom. viii. 33, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?' The informer comes too late when the guilty person hath accused himself, and sued out his pardon. And—

[2.] It prevents God as a judge. It is all known to God: Ps. lxi. 5, 'O God! thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee.' It is a folly to conceal that which cannot be hid. God knows them. How? God may be said to know things two ways—either simply with respect to the perfection of his nature, and so he knows all things; or by virtue of his office, and so God knows things judicially as judge of the world; he takes knowledge of it so as to punish it, unless you confess it. But in this kind of knowledge he loves to be prevented; he will not know it as a judge if we confess it, when there is process against sin in our own consciences: 1 Cor. xi. 31, 'If we judge ourselves we shall not be judged.' When we accuse and judge ourselves, then God's work is prevented. God is contented if we will accuse, arraign, judge, and condemn ourselves; then he will not take knowledge of our sins as a judge. The end of God's judging is execution and punishment, but the end of our judging is that we may obtain pardon. Now, consider whether you will stand at the bar of Christ, not as a Saviour, but as a judge; or will judge yourselves in your own heart? Better sit as judge upon your own heart than God should sit as judge upon you; therefore deal plainly and openly with him.

Thus I have explained what it is to declare our ways; it is an act of dependence to take God's leave, blessing, counsel along with us; an act of friendship, as to lay open our case to God; and an act of brokenness of heart, as declaring our sins and temptations.

For the reasons why, if we would speed with God, we should unfeignedly lay open our case before him.

1. It argueth sincerity. A hypocrite will pray, but will not thus sincerely open his heart to God: Ps. xxxii. 1, 'Blessed is he in whose

spirit there is no guile.' No guile; it hath a limited sense with respect to the matter of confession, that doth not deal deceitfully with God, but plainly and openly declares his case. Many ways men may be guilty of guile of spirit in confession of sin; either when they content themselves with general or slight acknowledgments; as thus, We are all sinners; but they do not declare their ways. Generals are but notions; and as particular persons are lost in a crowd, so sins lie hid in common acknowledgments. Or else men take up the empty forms of others. You shall see in Numbers xix. the waters of purification wherewith a man had been cleansed, if another touched them, he became unclean. Confessions are like those waters whereby one hath cleansed himself. Now to take up others' confessions, and the forms of others, without the same affection, feeling, and brokenness of heart, doth but defile us the more, when the heart doth not prescribe to the tongue but the tongue to the heart. Or else men make some acknowledgments to God, but do not uncover their privy sore; they are loath to draw forth the state of their hearts into the notice and view of conscience. This guile of spirit may be sometimes in God's children. Moses had a privy sore which he was loath to disclose; and therefore when God would have sent him into Egypt, he pleads other things, insufficiency, want of elocution, that he was a stammerer, that he had not utterance. Ay! but his carnal fear was the main; therefore see how God touches his privy sore: Exod. iv. 19, 'Arise, Moses; go into Egypt: the men that sought thy life are dead.' Why, Moses never pleaded that; he mentions other things that were true, that he was a man of slow speech, and his brother Aaron was fitter; but he never pleads carnal fear: but the Lord knew what was at the bottom. So it is with Christians; many times we will confess this and that which is a truth, and we may humble ourselves for it. Ay! but there is a privy sore yet kept secret. Therefore this open dealing with God is very necessary to lay open before God whatever we know of our state and way, for then God will be nigh to us. Out of self-love men spare themselves, and will not judge and condemn themselves; therefore they deny, excuse, extenuate, or hypocritically confess, Oh, I am a sinner! and the like, but do not come openly.

2. It argueth somewhat of the spirit of adoption to put in the bill of our complaint to our heavenly father, to draw up an indictment against ourselves. To judge, that is irksome; but to put in a bill of complaint to a friend, or father, that savours of more ingenuity. To tell God all our mind notes freedom and familiarity; not such as is bold, rude, nor a dress of words; but such as is grave, serious, proceeding from an inward sense of God, and hope of his mercy: 1 John iii. 21, 'If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God;' then we can deal with him as one friend with another, and acquaint him with all our griefs and wants. A man had need walk exactly that would maintain his freedom with God. There is a freedom, as men may call it, such as is bold, rude, and reckless, in words only; but that which proceeds from confidence in God and his mercy, that is a fruit of close walking; we cannot have it in our hearts without it.

3. It is the way to make us serious and affected with our condition.

When we open our whole heart to God, then we shall be more earnest for a remedy; we content ourselves with some transient glances, and imperfect knowledge of our estate, and so are not affected as we should; a particular view of things most works with us. Look, as Christ, the more particularly he is set forth, the more taking is the object; when the lump of sweetness is dissolved, then it is tasted. The more particularly we pry into our estate, the more we are affected, and the more we shall see of the deceitfulness of our own hearts: 'When every one shall know his own sore and grief,' 2 Chron. vi. 29.

4. It will be of great advantage in the spiritual life to declare often our whole estate to God; for the more men know themselves the more they mind God and their heavenly calling. Those men that make conscience of declaring themselves to God will ever find lusts to be mortified, doubts to be resolved, graces to be strengthened. A man that doth not look after his estate, it runs into decay insensibly before he is aware; so when men grow negligent of their hearts, and never think of giving an account to God, all runs to waste in the soul. Searching and self-examining Christians will be the most serious Christians; for as they have a more distinct affective sense of their condition, so they always find more work to do in the spiritual life. They come to know what are their sins, and assaults, and conflicts, and what further strength they may have in the way of holiness; and by this account they are engaged to walk more exactly, that they may not provide matter against themselves: 1 Peter iii. 7, 'That their prayers be not hindered;' that they may look God in the face with more confidence.

Use 1. Let us clearly and openly declare our condition to the Lord, our griefs and sorrows, and so our sins.

1. Our griefs and sorrows. Two things will quicken you to this:—The inconvenience of any other way. What will you do? If you swallow your griefs, that will oppress the heart. The more we unbosom ourselves to a friend, the more we find ease; vent and utterance doth lessen our passion. An oven stopped up is hotter within. So the more close we are, the more we keep our own counsel, the greater is our burden. Look, as wind when it is imprisoned in the caverns of the earth causeth violent convulsions and earthquakes, but if it find vent all is quiet, so it is with the heart; when troubles are kept close, then they become the greater burden, they make the heart stormy, full of discontent; but when we open ourselves, as Hannah did her case to God, 1 Sam. i. 8, we are no more sad; or if we go to anything on this side God, our troubles increase. When a man hath sorrow upon his heart, it is not the next ditch will yield him refreshing and comfort, but he must go to the fountain of living water. If we be afraid of an enemy without, our business is to strike in with God: Prov. xvi. 7, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.' God hath the command of all things; he is first to be treated with, then there is hope and relief in God. When we are humble and tractable in our affliction, when we come and represent our case to him, the very thing gives us some hope; for the Lord doth all out of mercy. Therefore the very representing our misery, as David: Ps. lxxix. 29, 'But I am poor and

sorrowful;’ that we are in a miserable forlorn condition; if you have nothing else to plead, this is that which moves God, and works upon his bowels. Look, as beggars to move pity will uncover their sores, that as it were by a silent oratory they may extort and draw forth relief from you; so go to the Lord and acquaint him with your condition; some hope will arise hence. Lord, I am weak and poor, deliver me; that is all the argument.

2. As to sins, let me tell you, go to God with clearness and openness; reveal your whole state, tell him what are your temptations and conflicts, and how your heart works. Though he knows it already by his own omniscency, yet let him know it by your own acknowledgments. Let him not know it as a judge, take notice of it so as to punish you; but go deal plainly, and confess your sins. To this end—

[1.] There will be need of light, that you may be able to judge of things: Heb. v. 14, ‘They have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.’ When a man hath not only a speculative knowledge, but hath his senses exercised, able to judge of the workings of his own heart, he can discern what is of flesh and what is of spirit, and so can give an account to God. When we have not only some naked theory, we shall be able to see what is a temptation, where our help, and where our weakness lies.

[2.] There needs observation of the workings of our own hearts. A man that would give an account to God need to observe himself narrowly, and keep his heart above all keepings. David, that saith here, I declared my ways, saith elsewhere, I considered my ways. It is but a formal account we can give without serious consideration; we must therefore ‘keep our hearts with all diligence,’ Prov. iv. 23.

[3.] There needs in many cases a serious search. For instance, in deep desertion, when God withdraws the light of his countenance, and men have not those wonted influences of grace, those glimpses of favour, and quickenings of spirit, and enlargings of heart: Ps. lxxvii. 6, ‘I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.’ When under any despair of soul, trace it to its original cause: Wherein have I grieved the Spirit of God? So Lam. iii. 40, ‘Let us search and try our ways.’ There needs a very distinct and serious inquiry into the state of our souls, that we may deal ingenuously with God, and lay open ourselves before him.

Secondly, The second clause, and the Lord heard me.

Doct. After an ingenuous and open declaration of ourselves to God, we find audience with him.

So did David, and so do all the saints. He was never yet wanting to his people that deals sincerely with him in prayer. How doth God manifest his audience? Either inwardly by the Spirit, or outwardly by providence.

First, Inwardly by his Spirit, when he begets a persuasion of their acceptance with God, leaves an impression of confidence upon their hearts, and a quietness in looking for the thing they had asked. Before they have an answer of providence, they have a persuasion of heart that their prayer hath been accepted. There is a great deal of difference between accepting a prayer and granting a prayer. God’s

acceptance is as soon as we pray, but the thing we beg for is another thing and distinct: 1 John v. 14, 15, 'This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.' God's hearing of us, his audience, is a distinct thing from the answer of his providence; and therefore when he begets a confidence that we are heard, and the soul begins to be quieted in God and look up for mercy, it is a sign of his accepting our prayer, though the benefit be not actually bestowed. David found a change in his heart many times, as if one had come and told him the posture of his affairs was altered. It is otherwise with you than it was when you began to pray; therefore you have him in the beginning of a psalm come in with bitter complaints and groaning; his eyes were ready to drop out with grief, and presently he breaks out with thanksgiving, as Ps. vi. 8, 9, 'Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.' Presently, 'Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.' So Hannah, she had commended her request to God, and was no more sad, 1 Sam. i. 16. That is one way of answer; when we have declared ourselves to the Lord, the heart looks out to see what will come of its prayers; it begins to rest, and is quiet in God, and looks for some answer of the mercy.

The second consideration, that the outward mercy in his providence is either in kind or in value. God doth not always answer us in kind, by giving us the thing asked; but doth give us something that is as good or better, which contents the heart, by denying the thing desired, and giving something equivalent. Many times we ask temporal mercies, defence, victory, deliverance, and God gives spiritual; we ask deliverance and God gives patience, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. Paul asked thrice that the thorn in the flesh might depart from him; but God gives him sufficient grace. God doth not answer us always according to our will, but certainly according to our weal and profit. Many times he will give the blessing in kind, but at other times he gives the value of it, which is better. God may give temporal comfort in kind, in anger; but the value, the blessing, he never gives in anger, but always in love. When they asked meat for their lusts, God gave it in kind, in anger, Ps. lxxviii.: 'And I gave them a king in my wrath,' Hosea xiii. 11. When we are passionate and eager upon a temporal request, God doth answer in wrath; the mercy is more when he gives us that which is better.

Thirdly, God delays many times when he doth not deny, for our exercise.

1. To exercise our faith, to see if we can believe in him when we see nothing, have no sensible proof of his good-will to us. The woman of Canaan she comes to Christ, and first gets not a word from him—Christ 'answered her nothing;' afterwards Christ breaks off his silence, and begins to speak, and his speech was more discouraging than his silence. She meets with a rough answer: 'It is not meet to give the children's bread unto dogs.' Then the woman turns this rebuke into an encouragement, 'Lord, the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table.' Then Christ could hold no longer:

'O woman! great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt,' Mat. xv. So many times we come to God and meet with a silent oracle, cannot get an answer; but if we get an answer, it may be we begin to think God puts us off, as none of the sheep he is to look after. Oh! but when we wrestle through all these discouragements and temptations, then 'great is thy faith.' In short, we pray for a blessing; and sometimes, though God love the suppliant, yet he doth not seem to take notice of his desires, that he may humble him to the dust, and may have a sense of his unworthiness, and pick an answer out of God's silence, and grant out of his denial, and faith out of these discouragements.

2. To exercise our patience: Heb. vi. 12, 'Be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' Our times are always present with us, but God's time is not yet come. A hungry stomach would have meat before it is roasted or sod. Impatient longings must have green fruit, and will not stay till it be matured and ripened. Now God will work us out of this impatience. The troubles of the world are necessary for patience as well as faith.

3. To try our love. Though we be not feasted with felt comforts and present benefits, yet God will try the deportment of his children, if indeed he be the delight of their hearts: Isa. xxvi. 8, 'Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee.' When we love God, not only when our affections are bribed by some sensible experience or comfort, but when we can love God in the way of his judgments. A child of God is a strange creature: he can love God for his judgments, and fear him for his mercies. When our heart is like lime, the more water you sprinkle upon it, the more it burns; our desires glow the more, the more disappointments we seem to meet with. We love his benefits more than we love God, when we delight in him only when he doth us good. But when we can delight in him even when our desires are delayed, and nothing appears but tokens of God's displeasure, this is delight indeed.

4. To enlarge our desires, that we may have a greater income of his mercy, as a sack that is stretched out holds the more. God will have the soul more stretched out when he means to fill it up with grace. Delays increase importunities: 'Ask, seek, knock,' Mat. vii. If God will not come at the first *asking*, we must *seek*; if seeking will not bring him, we must *knock*, be importunate, have no Nay: Luke xi. 8, 'For his importunity sake he will arise.' The man is impudent; he stands knocking, and will not be gone.

Fourthly, God may seem sometimes to deny a request, yet the end of the request is accomplished. For instance, God's children they have an end in their requests; we pray for the means with respect to an end. Now many times God gives the end when he will deny the means. Paul had grace sufficient, though the thorn in his flesh were not removed, 2 Cor. xii. 9. A Christian prays for the light of God's countenance, for sensible feeling of God's love. Why? To strengthen him in his way. Now God denies him comfort, because he will do it by the word of promise, it shall not be by sensible comfort. We pray for victory over such a lust, the mortification of such a sin. Why? That we may serve God more cheerfully. God denies such

a degree of grace, because he will mortify a greater sin, which is pride in the heart. And thus we miss the particular that we desire, yet still we have the end of the request. We pray for giving success to such an enterprise. Why? That we may serve God safely. God will bring it about another way.

Fifthly, If God do not give us the blessings themselves we ask, yet he gives us many experiences by the by in the manner of asking; one way or other something comes into the soul by praying to God; as those in Ps. lxxxiv., their end was to go to Jerusalem, but in passing through the valley of Baca, they met with a well by the way. So we meet with something by the way, some light, or some sweet refreshing, some new consideration to set us a-work in the spiritual life. By praying to God, unawares, unthought of by you, there are many principles of faith drawn forth in the view of conscience not noted before, some truth or other presented to the heart, or some spiritual benefit that comes in with fresh light and power, that was never aimed at by us.

Use 1. If God be so ready to hear his people, let us not throw away our prayers as children shoot away their arrows; but let us observe God's answer, what comes in upon every prayer. In every address you make to God, put the soul in a posture of expectation: Ps. v. 3, 'I will pray and look up;' and Ps. lxxxv. 8, 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people.' See what God speaks when you have been praying and calling upon him. It argues a slight formal spirit when you do not observe what comes in upon your addresses. To quicken you to this, know—

1. If you observe not his answer, God loseth a great deal of honour and praise; for it is said, Ps. l. 15, 'Call upon me in time of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' Every answer of prayer makes for the glory of God; and Col. iv. 2, 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.' You are not only to see how your hearts are carried out in prayer, but watch for God's answer, that you may gather matter of praise. We should not be so barren in gratulation as usually we are, if we were as ready to observe our experiences as to lay forth our necessities.

2. You lose many an argument of trust and confidence. Answers of prayer are an argument against atheism, which is so natural to us, and inbred in our hearts; it persuades us that there is a gracious being: Ps. lxxv. 2, 'O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.' We have called upon him, and found that there is a God, and against the natural unbelief which doubts of his truth in his promises: Ps. xviii. 30, 'The word of the Lord is a tried word; he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.' Well, saith the soul, I will build upon it another time; there is more than letters and syllables in it; there is something that speaks God's heart. So Ps. cxvi. 2, 'The Lord hath heard my voice and my supplications: because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.' Promises shall not lie by as a dead stock; I will be pleading them.

3. It increaseth our love to God. When we see how mindful he is of us, and kind to us in our necessities, it is a very taking thing.

Visits maintain friendship; so when God is mindful of us, it maintains an intercourse between God and us: Ps. cxvi. 1, 'I love the Lord, because he hath heard my supplications.' Therefore observe what comes in upon your prayers, especially when your hearts are earnestly carried out by the impulses of his grace.

Use 2. To admire the goodness of God to poor creatures, that he should be at leisure to attend our requests: 'I declared my ways, and he heard me.' When a poor soul, that is of no regard among men, shall come with conflicts and temptations, and the Lord presently hear him, it renders his grace truly admirable: Ps. xxxiv. 6, 'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.' He doth not say, this eminent prophet or this great king, but this poor man. Oh, that such contemptible persons as we should have such audience! For great ones here in the world to let a poor man tell his tale at large, that would be counted great patience, much more if he finds relief in the case. But beyond all this, observe the goodness of God. The more we declare our ways, the sooner doth he hear us; he doth not turn away from us when we tell him plainly we cannot believe in him, or trust in him. Come to a man and tell him, You have made me great promises, but I cannot believe you speak truth—this will provoke him; but when you come to the Lord and say, Lord, thou hast made a great many promises; though we cannot trust as we should, yet we have declared our sins, conflicts, temptations, yet, Lord, pity our weakness.

Thirdly, Here is his petition, 'Teach me thy statutes.'

First, I observe, David having been once heard of God expects to be heard in the like manner again. Here, 'Thou hast heard me;' and then comes with a new request, 'Teach me thy statutes.'

Doct. 1. Those that have sped with God in one address, they will be dealing with God for more mercy; for so doth David. The reason is—

1. Because God is where he was at first; he is not weary by giving, nor doth waste by giving; but what he hath done that he can do, and will do still. I AM is God's name; not *I was*, or *will be*; for ever remaining in the same constant tenor of goodness and power. His providence is still new and fresh every morning. God is but one, always like himself. He hath not so spent himself but he can work again. Creatures have soon spent their allowance, but God cannot be exhausted. There is no decay of love or power in him, no wrinkle in the brow of eternity. There was, is, and will be a God.

2. Experience breeds confidence. The apostle teacheth us so, Rom. v. 4. When we have had former experience of God's readiness to hear us, it is an argument that breeds confidence of the like audience for the future. 'He that delivered me out of the mouth of the lion,' &c. God, that hath been gracious, surely will be gracious still, for then promises are sensibly confirmed, and then former mercies are pledges of future. By giving, God becomes a debtor: Mat. vi. 25, 'Is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment?' Our Saviour's argument was this, If God give life, he will give food; if a body, he will give raiment. If he hath given grace, the earnest of the Spirit, he will give glory. If he hath given us Christ, he will give us other

things together with him. If he hath begun with us, he will end with us, Phil. i. 6. One mercy is the pledge of another.

3. We are endeared to God not only by acts of duty, but by every act of mercy. What is the argument he urgeth for Sion : Zech. iii. 2, 'Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire ? The Lord rebuke thee, Satan.' Have not I delivered Sion, and shall I suffer that to be destroyed which I have delivered ? The Lord urgeth his own mercy and his former kindness.

Use. To quicken us not to grow weary of dealing with God. Let us go often to God. Men think it an uncivil importunity to be required to do more when they have done already ; Solomon gives us that advice, Prov. xxv. 17, 'Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house, lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.' Men waste by giving, but God doth not ; when you have been with him, and he hath done liberally for you, yet he upbraids you not. God, that hath vouchsafed grace, you may desire the continuance of his grace, and to crown his own grace.

Secondly, Observe, the mercy which he asks is God's help in a course of holiness, namely, to walk worthy of the mercy.

Doct. 2. They that upon declaring their ways have found mercy with God, their care should be to walk worthy of the mercy.

The Lord hath heard me. What then ? 'Teach me thy statutes.' So Ps. lxxxv. 8, 'The Lord will speak peace to his people, but let them no more return unto folly.' Mark, when God hath spoken peace, when they have an answer of peace, after you have prayed to God, take heed of turning to folly ; do not lose the favour you have got ; walk more holily and more worthy of such a mercy : Mat. vi. 12, 'Forgive us our sins.' What then ? 'Lead us not into temptation.' Upon supposition the Lord hath forgiven us our sins, oh ! let us not sin again. Many would invite God to favour their ways when they have no respect to his ways, which is in effect to make God a servant to our lust ; but if you would have mercy from the Lord, beg that you might walk worthy of the mercy. The children of God should do so upon a double ground—in point of prudence and thankfulness. In point of prudence, as they have smarted under their former folly ; and in point of thankfulness, as they have tasted the Lord's grace in his answer.

1. When you have declared your way with brokenness and bitterness of heart, you have experience of the evil of sin ; and when you know how bitter it is by sound remorse, it is folly to return to it again : Josh. xxii. 17, mark the reason, 'Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed unto this day ?' Our former sense of the evil of sin when declaring it should be a restraint to us, else your cure is in vain. A man that is recovered out of a deep disease is willing to escape the like again ; or, as Christ said to the man that had an infirmity thirty-eight years, 'Go thy way, sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee.' When a man hath had the bitter sense of the fruit of sin, this will make him more cautious for the future. They are foolish children that remember beating no longer than it smarts, when they are scarce yet whole of the old wound. Though God hath taken out the sting of the sin, and granted us com-

fort, yet remember your former smart, that you may not fall into it again.

2. Out of thankfulness for God's gracious answer. Every answer of grace leaves an obligation upon the sinner that he may not offend God again. See what a holy argument is used, Ezra ix. 13, 'Should we after such a deliverance as this break thy commandment?' Will you again relapse? So Luke vii. 47, 'For her sins are forgiven her, therefore she loved much.' Grace melts the heart. When a man hath received much mercy from God, his heart is wrought out into thankfulness; and the more they have been in sin, the more will they be in godliness when once they have tasted the sweetness of pardon, and had an answer of grace from God.

Thirdly, Note, they that would steer their course according to God's holy will had need of the conduct and assistance of his Holy Spirit; for he goes to God, 'Lord, teach me thy statutes,' Ps. xxv. 4; 'Show me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths;' and Ps. xxvii. 11, 'Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies;' and Ps. lxxxvi. 11, 'Teach me thy way, O Lord, I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.' These places show that he addressed himself to God that he might not follow any sinful course in the time of trouble and temptation, that he might not dishonour God.

SERMON XXVIII.

Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.—VER. 27.

IN the former verses the man of God layeth forth his calamitous condition, and beggeth comfort and audience, not merely to prosper his affairs, but to better his heart. Many will invite God to favour their ways when they have no respect to his ways, which in effect is to make him a servant to their lusts. But David's chiefest care was about duty rather than success; therefore he desireth God to direct him how to walk in the way of his precepts; his heart was much upon that.

In the close of the former verse he had said, 'Teach me thy statutes;' and here again, 'Make me to understand the way of thy precepts,' &c.

In the words there is—(1.) A request; (2.) An argument. Wherein is intimated—(1st.) The fruit of divine illumination; he should thereby see his wondrous works. (2d.) His duty thereupon; then will I talk of them. The word signifieth also to meditate. Sept.—I will exercise myself. It should be his delight to think and speak of the admirable goodness of God, and the divine excellencies of his word, and the pleasures that result from the practice of it. (3d.) He intimateth the sincerity of his desire, propounding this as his end, That I may talk; that I may be useful and edifying in my converse with others.

The first thing that I shall observe is, that David doth so often beg again and again for understanding.

Doct. That a sound and saving knowledge of the truths of the gospel is such a blessing as the children and people of God think they can never enough ask of him.

We have abundant proof of it in so much of this psalm as we have already gone over.

First, What is a sound saving knowledge ?

1. Such as doth establish the heart against all delusions, and keepeth us on truth's side. Many have some scraps of knowledge, loose and uncertain motions,¹ but they are not settled and grounded in the truth, and therefore the *unlearned* and *unstable* are joined together : 2 Peter iii. 16, 'Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction.' Unskilful and unsettled Christians lie open to every fancy ; they have not such a stock of truth as may keep them savoury and sound in the faith. To be able to prattle a little in religion is not sound knowledge, but we must be 'grounded and settled in the faith,' Col. i. 23 ; that is, have not only some floating opinion, but well-grounded persuasion of the truth, so as we know we are upon firm ground, and dare venture our souls upon it, and may build surely and safely upon such principles. He calleth it elsewhere, Col. ii. 2, 'The riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.' When men rest contented with obvious truths, or a slight knowledge of the common and easy principles of Christianity, there is not such an awe upon their practice, nor any establishment of their judgments, but, like light chaff, they are soon carried with the blasts of temptation, and the winds of error. And therefore we need to ask again and again, 'Give me an understanding of the way of thy precepts.'

2. A sound saving knowledge is such as causeth the soul to lie under the dominion, life, and power of the truth, and aweth and commandeth the heart into obedience : John viii. 32, 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free ;' when our knowledge freeth us from the slavery of sin. In others, that content themselves with a naked knowledge, truth is held captive, and cannot break out with any sovereignty in their conversations : Rom. i. 18, 'Holding the truth in unrighteousness.' Lust beareth sway, but truth lieth under fetters and restraint ; it may talk its fill, like a man in bonds, but it can do nothing.

3. When it giveth us prudence how to practise. This is that which David beggeth of God, to understand the way of his precepts ; that is, to be taught how to walk in each duty and point of conversation, after what sort he may live and direct his life. It is not sufficient to know the meaning of the word in general, to have a notional understanding of it ; but to reduce it to practice, where, and when, and how we ought to perform each action. Some have a naked model of truth, are wise in generals, but fail in the application of the rule, and are to seek in the ordering of their steps, and all particular cases : 1 Peter iii. 7, 'Husbands, dwell with your wives as men of knowledge.' Then is a man a man of knowledge when he knoweth how to order the

¹ Qu. 'notions' ?—ED.

passages of his life in every relation according to the will of God. The narrow way of obedience is hardly found, hardly kept, and easily mistaken, especially where prejudices, lusts, and interests, are apt to pervert us. Therefore prudence to apply the rule is necessary: Ps. cxix. 33, 'Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, that I may keep it to the end;' not only in the general points of faith and godliness, but that it may season all our actions, that we may be made partakers of the sweet refreshments that flow from it; such a knowledge as endeth in a taste: 1 Peter iii. 2, 3, 'As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted,' &c. So Ps. xix. 8, 'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;' when we do so approve and follow the Lord's directions that we experience the sweetness, and are acquainted with the peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; such an understanding as begets judgment and feeling, or maketh us to find power and comfort in the word.

Secondly, The children of God think this can never be enough asked of God. Why?

1. Because of the excellency of knowledge: 'Light is comfortable, and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun,' much more the light of the gospel shining in upon our minds. Oh, what a pleasant thing is that, when all clouds vanish, and the truths of God are fully cleared up to the soul! None knoweth the sweetness of it but he that hath experienced it: Prov. xxiv. 13, 14, 'My son, eat thou honey because it is good, and the honeycomb which is sweet to thy taste; so shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul, when thou hast found it.' The more perfect the operation of any faculty of the soul is, the greater the contentment. The conscience in the feeling of God's love, the heart when it findeth liberty in the ways of God, and the understanding upon the sight of the truth, cause all doubts and scruples to vanish. Therefore certainly they that know anything of God will be pressing to know more of his nature and will; one degree draweth on another. Moses desireth God, 'Tell me thy name,' Exod. iii. 13, 14. Then 'Show me thy glory,' Exod. xxxiii. 18. 'And he said, I beseech thee show me thy glory.' And Hosea vi. 3, 'Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.' They are not cloyed, but desire more. The more men know the things of God, the more they admire them; the more they admire them, the more they love them; and the more they love them, the more they desire to know of them. And therefore do they insist so much upon this request, 'Make me to understand the way of thy precepts.'

2. Because of the vastness and latitude of it. Knowledge is a growing thing; religion cannot be taken up all at once. We receive a little now, and a little anon; as narrow-mouthed vessels take in things drop by drop. We read of Jesus Christ, that he grew in knowledge: we do not read that he grew in grace: Luke ii. 52, 'He increased in wisdom and stature;' as his body increased in stature, so his soul in wisdom. And still Christians are growing in knowledge, and understand more of the mysteries of the gospel. Though speculative knowledge may be at a stand, and a man may see round about the compass of revealed truths, yet practical knowledge is never at a stand. Directive, affective, operative knowledge is never at a stand, but increaseth

daily. And therefore the apostle saith, 'He that thinketh he knoweth anything, knoweth nothing as he ought to know,' 1 Cor. viii. 2. Many think they know as much as can be taught them; surely they have no experience.

3. Natural blindness is an obstinate disease, and hardly cured; therefore again and again we had need to pray, Open mine eyes, teach me thy statutes, make me to understand the way of thy precepts. Our ignorance is great when it is cured in part. The clouds of temptation and carnal affection cause it to return upon us, so that we know not what we know. Therefore 'open my eyes, cause me to understand.' Yea, the more we know, the more is our ignorance discovered to us: Prov. xxx. 2, 3, 'Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man: I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy;' Job xlii. 5, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.' Alas! a poor little hearsay knowledge availeth not. They abhor themselves when they have more intimate acquaintance; none so confident as a young professor that knoweth a few truths, but in a weak and imperfect manner. The more we know indeed, the more sensible we are of our ignorance, how liable to this mistake and that, that we dare not trust ourselves for an hour.

4. Because of the profit that cometh by knowledge. All grace from first to last cometh in by the understanding. God in the work of grace followeth the order which he hath established in nature. Reason and judgment are to go before the will; and therefore, when the work of grace is first begun in us, it beginneth in the understanding: 'Renewed in knowledge,' Col. iii. 10. So the increase of grace: 2 Peter i. 12, 'Grace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord.' As the beginning is by light, so is all the gradual progress of the spiritual life; strength to bear afflictions, strength in conflicts, is by powerful reasons; yea, the perfect change that is made in us in glory is by the vision of God: 'We shall see him as he is, and shall be like him.' If we had more knowledge of God and his ways, we should trust him more, fear him more, love him more. Trust him, Ps. ix. 10, 'And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.' If God were more known he would be better trusted: 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed;' I dare trust him with my soul. More feared: 3 John 11, 'Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doth good is of God, he that doth evil hath not seen God.' Right thoughts of God would not let us sin so freely; one truth or other would fall upon us, and give check to the temptation: as feared, so loved more. The more explicit thoughts we have of his excellency, the more are our hearts drawn out to him: John iv. 10, 'If thou knewest the gift,' &c. Christ would not lie by as a neglected thing if he were more known in all his worth and excellency.

Use. The first use is to press you to get knowledge, and look upon it as a singular grace if the Lord will give you to understand and apply the comfort and direction of his holy word: John xv. 15, 'Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard

of my Father I have made known unto you.' To be taught the mind of God is a greater act of friendship than if God should give a man all the treasures of the world; to make himself known so as you may love him, fear him, trust him. When we can apply this for our comfort, oh! then, 'cry for knowledge, lift up thy voice for understanding; seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures,' Prov. ii. 3, 4. Go to God, and be earnest with him, 'Lord, make me to understand the way of thy precepts.' We can walk in the ways of sin without a teacher, but we cannot walk in the ways of God. And cry, lift up thy voice. We are earnest for quickening and enlargement; but be earnest also for understanding. Now a large prayer without endeavours is nothing worth. Dig in the mines of knowledge, search into the scripture, do not gather up a few scattered notions, but look into the bowels. Silver doth not lie on the surface of the earth, but deep in the bottom of it, and will cost much labour and digging to come at. If we would have any good stock of knowledge, which will prevent vain thoughts, carnal discourse, abundance of heart-perplexing scruples and doubts, and much darkness and uncomfortableness of spirit, it will cost us some labour and pains. The more knowledge we have, the more are we established against error: 2 Peter iii. 17, 'Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.' The more you have of this divine saving knowledge, the greater check upon sin: Ps. cxix. 11, 'I have hid thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.' One truth or another will rise up in defiance of the temptation. The greater the impulsion to duty, the more of the law of God, the more it urgeth the conscience, Prov. vi. 22. It maketh us more useful in all our relations:—Husbands, 1 Peter iii. 7, 'Dwell with them according to knowledge,' &c. Parents, Eph. vi. 4, 'Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' Friends, Rom. xv. 14, 'And I myself also am persuaded of you my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.' Magistrates, that they may discern Christ's interest, Ps. ii. 10, 'Be wise now, therefore, O kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth.' When Solomon asked wisdom, the thing pleased the Lord. And lastly, more comfortable in ourselves; that they may comfort and build up one another whenever they meet together.

Use 2. To press you to grow in knowledge. None have such confidence and rejoicing in God as those that have a clear sight and understanding of his will revealed in his word. Let your knowledge—(1.) Be more comprehensive. At first our thoughts run in a narrow channel. There are certain general truths absolutely necessary to salvation, as concerning our misery by sin, and the sufficiency of Christ to help us; but if we might rest in these, why hath God given us so copious a rule? The general sort of Christians content themselves to see with others' eyes, get the knowledge of a few truths, and look no further. Why, then, hath God given so large a rule? Fundamentals are few; believe them, live well, and you shall be saved. This is the religion of most. This is as if a man in building should only be careful to lay a good foundation, no matter for roof, windows, walls. If a

man should untile your house, and tell you the foundation standeth, the main buttresses are safe, you would not like of it. A man is bound, according to his capacity and opportunity, to know all scripture, the consequences of every truth. God may and doth accept of our imperfect knowledge, but not when men are negligent and do not use the means. To be willingly ignorant of the lesser ways of God is a sin. We should labour to know all that God hath revealed. (2.) More distinct. Why? Truths are best known in their frame and dependence; as God's works of creation, when viewed singly and apart, every day's work was good, but when viewed altogether in their correspondence and mutual proportion to each other, were very good, Gen. i. 31. So all truths of God, take them singly, are good; but when you have them in their frame, and see how one suits with the other, and what a sweet harmony there is between all the parts of religion, then they are very good. (3.) More experimental, that you may taste the sweetness and power of the truths that you know: Phil. iii. 10, 'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.' When we feel what we know, that is a mighty confirmation. The senses give the best demonstration. It is a disparagement to know Christ and be never the better for him; to have a knowledge of all the excellency of Christ, and how suitable he is to the soul; yet to feel nothing of comfort and quickening in our consciences. (4.) More practical: 1 John ii. 3, 4, 'And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments: he that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' Otherwise it is but a talking by rote, a man savingly knoweth no more than he practiseth. He that doth but speak after others, it is a rehearsal rather than a knowledge. What is practical light? It is directive and persuasive. (1st.) It is directive. A man grows more prudent, and more able to guide his course according to the rules of religion; faith is opposed not only to ignorance but to folly: 'O ye fools, and slow of heart to believe.' A man may be a knowing man, yet a very fool in spirituals, if he hath not a knowledge how to guide him to trust in God, fear God, love God, and serve God, Hosea xiv. 7. (2d.) That is practical knowledge when it is persuasive, when it hath a lively force and efficacy upon the heart.

Second point, Those whom God maketh to understand the way of his precepts see wondrous things therein.

Ps. cxix. 18. 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' Wonders are such things as do transcend our capacity; so all things about God are above the sphere of men, as the things of men are above the capacity of beasts. Now, the more understanding and insight we have in these things the more we wonder. Wonder usually is the fruit of ignorance; how then can knowledge breed wonder? The word discovers the *ὄντι*, that it is so; but the manner how it is, and the wisdom of the contrivance, is that which begets reverence and admiration in a gracious soul; as Nazianzen saith of the eternal generation of Christ, Let the eternal generation of God be adored in silence. It is a marvellous thing to know that there are three in one, the Son from eternity, begotten before all the world,

&c. So when we look into these things, our knowledge doth only show that they are ; but what they are, and how great they are, that exceeds our capacity, and therefore we wonder.

1. The doctrines of the scripture are wonderful concerning God and his works. The nature of God is a depth which we cannot fathom, no more than a nutshell can empty the ocean : Ps. cxxxix. 6, 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me : it is high, I cannot attain unto it.' It is above our capacity ; for a finite thing cannot comprehend an infinite.

The creation of all things out of nothing, we believe it upon the testimony of the word, but it is too wonderful for us to search it to the bottom ; yea, the framing of the body in the womb, so many different things out of the same seed, as flesh, and bones, and muscles, and in such an order and proportion : Ps. cxxxix. 14, 'I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made : marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.' If the commonness did not abate our observation, we would wonder at it. So his providence in governing every creature to their proper ends, especially his care over us, and conduct of us. 'Many, O Lord, are thy wondrous works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward. They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee : if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered,' Ps. xl. 5. But especially the redemption of mankind is wonderful : 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness : God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.' The mysteries of the gospel, every time we think of them, should strike admiration into our hearts. It could not sink into the head of any creature how to satisfy justice, and to make up the breach between God and us. That a virgin should conceive ; the word be made flesh ; that justice and mercy should so sweetly be brought together, and conspire in the salvation of a lost sinner, all these are wonders ; and when we come to believe them indeed, to draw forth comfort from them, these are wonderful to us !

The law of God is wonderful. Look to the precept or the sanction. Look to the precept. A wonderful purity there : 'I have seen an end of all perfection ; but thy law is exceeding broad,' ver. 96 of this psalm. When a child of God sees how the law reacheth every thought, every motion, every operation of his soul, what wonderful purity is here ! So a marvellous equity : 'The law is holy, just, and good ;' and 'the commandment is good,' Rom. vii. 4. God hath given us such a law, if a man were free, yet, to ennoble his nature and live happily, he would choose such a rule. Then to see such wise precepts so ordered that in ten words God should comprise the whole duty of man : Deut. iv. 6, 'Keep, therefore, and do them ; for this is your wisdom, and your understanding in the sight of the nations.' First, God hath provided in his law respects to himself. First the law provides for God, then for the creature. In the first commandment, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me ;' there is the object of worship. In the second, 'Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven image,' &c., the means of worship. Then the manner of worship in the third, 'Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain.' Then the

time of worship in the fourth, 'Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.' See how the Lord hath built up his law. Then as to men, see first God provides for those viceroys that do represent the great God, as our parents natural and civil, 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' &c.; then our ordinary neighbour; and there first for his life, and then for his relations, 'Thou shalt not kill, shalt not commit adultery;' then for his goods, 'Thou shalt not steal;' then for his good name. When a man sees the law of God in all its explications, when he considers the harmony and correspondence that is between all the parts of the law, then he will cry out, O wonderful! Come to the sanction by which the law is established and confirmed, by promises and rewards, such a 'far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;' that a clod of earth should shine above the stars, and God provide such a happiness for us that we should be like the angels! Then threatenings, that God hath appointed such a punishment to hold the world in awe, as 'a worm that never dies, and the fire that never goes out;' the worm of conscience that shall vex us with the remembrance of our past folly, and the wrath of God that shall punish us for disobedience, and torment us for evermore. Still, O wonderful! So for the gospel, every article of faith is a mystery to be wondered at—*Quot articuli, tot miracula*. The disciples wondered when they saw the structure of the temple. Oh, how may we wonder when we see the spiritual temple, that is Jesus Christ in the fulness of his godhead! God dwelt symbolically by outward representations in the temple, but here he dwells bodily. When David had provided such a mass of money, 1 Chron. xxix. 7–9, they fell a wondering. Oh, but when the soul comes to view the unsearchable riches of grace in Christ Jesus, then it may cry out, O wonderful! When we see some rare plot, all things suit harmoniously, we cry out, O wonderful! This great mystery of godliness, the more we look into it, the more will we wonder at the wisdom of God discovered in and through Christ Jesus. For external providences, to see how God answers prayers, how he brings about our mercies according to our wants in a way we know not: Ps. xvii. 7, 'Show thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee.' In the very common favours that God vouchsafeth to us, there is something may be observed that may make us wonder, either for the time, manner, or measure. Also, in the internal effects of his grace upon the heart, when a man is convinced, and his own heart is ripped up to him by the power of the word, 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. iv. 12; and John iv. 29. As when Christ had convinced the woman of Samaria, and ripped up her life, she says, 'Come, see a man that hath told me all that ever I did.' When God comes in with such convictive evidence, and rips up our privy thoughts, O wonderful. But especially in changing and renewing the heart; when a lion shall be turned into a lamb, a dunghill become a bed of spices, a swine become a saint, a persecutor an apostle, we, that had such bolts and restraints of sin upon us, when we get out; when we that were so wedded to sensual delights and worldly vanities are brought to delight in God, this is truly admirable! 2 Peter i. 9, 'He hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.' And then the comfort we have by the word of God, and the marvellous

sweetness the practice of it diffuseth through the soul, it is unspeakable and glorious, 1 Peter i. 8. So Phil. iv. 7, 'The peace of God that passes understanding shall guard your hearts,' &c. When a man hath settling and composure of spirit in the midst of tempests and storms, the heart is guarded against all fears and sorrows. When we consider what God hath done for our souls, every grace is a wonder: to depend upon what we see not; to be safe in the midst of a storm; to die, yet live; to be poor, yet make many rich; to have nothing, yet possess all things; these operations of grace are all wonders.

Use 1. It informeth us that a man must be carried above his own sense, reason, and light, to understand such wonderful things. It is the apostle's argument: 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10, '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. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.' All things are seen by a suitable light, spiritual things are spiritually discerned, divine things by a divine light—*Non loquendum de Deo sine lumine*. If beasts would judge of human affairs, they must have the reason of men; if men of divine things, they must have divine illumination. There is a cognation between the faculty and the object.

2. It informeth us what reason we have to respect the word of God. Many curious wits despise it as a mean knowledge in comparison of Aristotle, Plato, &c. All the doctrines of it are a continued mystery; there is nothing vulgar and of small moment there. If there be some rudiments, something common with other writings, there are greater things than these, even the deep things of God. Never was there such a revelation made to the world as this. You despise that which angels wonder at: Eph. iii. 10, 'And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things in Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' And 1 Peter i. 12, 'Which things the angels desire to look into.' David saith, 'Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my soul keep them.' Oh, let this book of God be more dear to us! Oh, what trifles are all worldly riches to the unsearchable riches of the Lord's grace! Oh, how stupid are they that are not taken with such great things as these!

3. Examine your profiting. It is one degree of profit to see so much in the word of God as to admire at it. Admire God's transcendent goodness in the pardon of sins. God giveth us such admirable precepts, assisting us in the performance of them, accepting our imperfect obedience; this giveth wonderful comfort in all our afflictions.

Thirdly, Observe, he that is sensible of the wondrous things that are in God's word will be talking of them.

1. It will be so.

2. It should be so.

1. It will be so. When the heart is deeply affected, the tongue cannot hold, but will run out in expressions of it; for 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' When cheered and revived in their afflictions, they are transported with the thought, with the excellency of God: Ps. lxi. 15, 'Come, and I will tell you what God

hath done for my soul.' The woman, when she had found the lost groat, calleth her neighbours to rejoice with her. He that hath but a cold knowledge, will not be so full of good discourse.

2. It should be so, in a threefold respect—for the honour of God, the edification of others, and for our own profit.

[1.] For the honour of God, to whom we are so much indebted, to bring him into request with those about us. Experience deserveth praise; when you have found the Messiah, call one another to him: John i. 41–45, 'Andrew calleth Peter, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah; and Philip calleth Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph.'

[2.] For the edification of others: Luke xxii. 32, 'And thou being converted, strengthen thy brethren.' True grace is communicative as fire, &c.

[3.] For our own profit. He that useth his knowledge shall have more; whereas, on the contrary, full breasts, if not sucked, become dry. In the dividing, the loaves increased. All gifts, but much more spiritual, which are the best, are improved by exercise.

Well, then, get a sense and experience of God's truth, and then speak of it to others. That which we have seen we are best able to report of. God giveth us experiences to this end, that we may be able to speak of it to others. None can speak with such confidence as those that have felt what they speak. Christ saith those that come to him shall not only have a spring of comfort themselves, but flow forth to others: John vii. 38, 'He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'

Fourth point, In our desires of knowledge it is meet to propound a good end; as David here beggeth understanding, that he might see and discover to others what he had found in God's law. To know that we may know is foolish curiosity; to know that we may be known is vanity and ostentation; to see that we may sell our knowledge is baseness and covetousness. To edify others, this is charity; to be edified ourselves, this is wisdom. Good things must be sought to a good end: 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts,' James iv. 3. All things must be sought for to holy ends, to glorify God; much more spiritual gifts. The only good end is God's glory: 'Open thou my lips, that I may show forth thy praise,' Ps. li. 15. We are to desire knowledge, that we may the more enjoy God, and the more glorify him.

There is a natural desire of knowledge, even of divine knowledge; but we must look to our ends, that we may grow in grace, 1 Peter ii. 3; that we may be more useful for God; not merely to store the head with notions, or to vaunt it over others, as having attained more than they. No; it should be only to do good to our own souls, and to save others: Rom. xv. 14, 'I am persuaded that ye are filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another.' But now, to make a market of our knowledge, or to use it for our vile ends, that is naught. Not for boasting, ostentation, curiosity, and vain speculation, but for practice, should be our end. When we improve our stock well, we please God, and shall have eternal profit ourselves.

SERMON XXIX.

My soul melteth for heaviness : strengthen thou me according to thy word.—VER. 28.

A CHRISTIAN should neither be humbled to the degree of dejection, nor confident to the degree of security; and therefore he is to have a double eye, upon God and upon himself, upon his own necessities and upon God's all-sufficiency. You have both represented in this verse (as often in this psalm), his case and his petition.

1. His case is represented, *my soul melteth for heaviness.*

2. His petition and request to God, *strengthen thou me according to thy word.*

First, His case, 'My soul melteth for heaviness.' In the original the word signifies 'droppeth away.' The Septuagint hath it thus, 'My soul fell asleep through weariness.' Probably by a fault of the transcribers, one word for another. My soul droppeth. It may relate—(1.) To the plenty of his tears, as the word is used in scripture: Job xvi. 20, 'My friends scorn me; but mine eye poureth out tears unto God,' or droppeth to God, the same word; so it notes his deep sorrow and sense of his condition. The like allusion is in Josh. vii. 5, 'The heart of the people melted, and became as water.' Or, (2.) It relates to his languishing under the extremity of his sorrow; as an unctuous thing wasteth by dropping, so was his soul even dropping away. Such a like expression is used in Ps. cvii. 26, 'Their soul is melted because of trouble;' and of Jesus Christ, whose strength was exhausted by the greatness of his sorrows, it is said, Ps. xxii. 14, 'I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels.' Be the allusion either to the one or to the other, either to the dropping of tears or to the melting and wasting away of what is fat and unctuous, it notes a vehement sorrow and brokenness of heart, that is clear: his soul was even melting away; and unless God did help him, he could hold out no longer.

Doct. That God's children oftentimes lie under the exercise of such deep and pressing sorrow as is not incident to other men.

David expresseth himself here as in a languishing condition which is not ordinary, 'My soul droppeth or melteth away for heaviness.'

The reasons of the point are three:—

1. Their burdens are greater.

2. They have a greater sense than others.

3. Their exercise is greater, because their reward and comfort is so great.

1. Their burdens are greater than others, as temptation, desertion, trouble for sin. The good and evil of the spiritual life is greater than the good and evil of any other life whatsoever. As their joys are unspeakable and glorious, so their sorrows are sometimes above expression: 'A wounded spirit who can bear?' Prov. xviii. 14. Common natural courage will carry a man through other afflictions, oh! but when the arrows of the Almighty stick in their heart, Job. vi. 3, that is an insupportable burden. According to the excellency of any life,

so are the annoyances and the benefits of that life. Man, that hath a higher life than the beasts, is more capable of delights and sorrows than beasts are of pain and pleasure; and so a Christian that lives the life of faith is more capable of a higher burden. Consider, they that live a spiritual life have immediately to do with the infinite and eternal God; and therefore when he creates joy in the heart, oh, what a joy is that! And when God doth but lay his hand upon them, how great is their trouble! Sin is a heavier burden than affliction, and the wrath of God than the displeasure of man—*Cælestis ira quos premit miseros facit, humana nullos*. Evils of an eternal influence are more than temporal, therefore must needs be greater and more burdensome.

2. They have a greater sense than others, their hearts being tendered by religion. None have so quick a feeling as the children of God. Why? Because they have a clearer understanding, and more tender and delicate affections.

[1.] Because they have a clearer understanding, and see more into the nature of things than those that are drowned in present delights and contentments. The loss of God's favour carnal men know not how to value, but the saints prefer it above life: 'The favour of God is better than life,' Ps. lxxiii. 3. Therefore, if the Lord do but suspend the wonted manifestations of his grace and favour, how are their hearts troubled! 'Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled,' Ps. xxx. 7. A child of God, that lives by his favour, cannot brook his absence; therefore, when they lose the sweet sense of his favour and reconciliation with him, oh, what a trouble is this to their souls! Other men make no reckoning of it at all. And so for sin, common spirits value it only by the damage it doth to their worldly interests; when it costs them dear, they may hang the head: Jer. ii. 9, 'Now know what an evil and bitter thing it is to forsake the Lord.' A worldly man may know something of the evil of sin in the effects of it, but a child of God seeth into the nature of it; they value it by the wrong, by the offence that is done to God, and so are humbled more for the evil in sin, than for the evil after sin. So for the wrath of God; carnal men have gross thoughts of it, and may howl upon their beds when their pleasant things are taken from them; but God's children are humbled because their father is angry; they observe more the displeasure of God in afflicting providences than others do; and one spark of God's wrath lighting into their consciences, oh, what sad effects doth it work! more than all other straits whatsoever. Thus they have a clearer understanding, they see more into the dreadfulfulness of God's wrath, into the evil of sin, and they know how to prize and value his favour more than others.

[2.] They have delicate and tender affections. Grace, that gives us a new heart, doth also give us a soft heart: Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 'I will put a new heart into them.' What kind of heart? 'A heart of flesh,' as the old heart that is taken out is a heart of stone. A new soft heart doth sooner receive the impression of divine terror than another heart doth. A stamp is more easily left upon wax, or a soft thing, than upon a stone. Or thus, a slave hath a thicker skin than one nobly born, tenderly brought up; therefore he is not so sensible of

stripes. A wicked man hath more cause to be troubled than a godly man; but he is not a man of sense; he hath a heart of stone, and therefore is not so affected either with God's dealings with him, or his dealings with God. Look, as the weight of the blows must not only be considered, but the delicateness of the constitution, so, because their hearts are of a softer and more tender constitution, being hearts of flesh, and receptive of a deeper impression, therefore their sorrows exceed the sorrows of other men.

3. The good that they expect is exceeding great, and their exercise is accordingly; for after the rate of our comforts so are our afflictions. Wicked men, that have nothing to expect in the world to come but horrors and pains, they wallow now in ease and plenty: Luke xvi. 25, 'Son, in thy lifetime thou receivedst thy good things.' God will be behindhand with none of his creatures; those that do him common service have common blessings in a larger measure than his own people have; they have *their* good things, that is, such as their hearts choose and affect. But now good men, that expect another happiness, they must be content to be harassed and exercised, that they may be fitted and prepared for the enjoyment of this happiness. As the stones that were to be set in the temple were to be hewn and squared, so are they to be hewn, squared, and exercised with bitter and sharp things, that they may be prepared for the more glory.

Use 1. Then carnal men are not fit to judge of the saints when they report their experiences, if it be with them above the rate of other men. When afflicted consciences speak of their wounds, or revived hearts of their comforts, their joys are supernatural, and so are their sorrows; and therefore a natural man thinks all to be but fancy, all those joys of the Spirit, that they are but fanatic delusions; and he doth not understand the weight of their sorrows. When a man is well to see to, and hath health, strength, and wealth, they marvel what should make such a man heavy; all their care is to eat, drink, and be merry; and therefore because they are not acquainted with the exercises of a feeling conscience, they think all this trouble is but a little mopishness and melancholy. Poor contrite sinners, who are ready to weep out their hearts at their eyes, can only understand such expressions as these, 'My soul melteth away for heaviness.' There is another manner of thing in trouble of conscience than the carnal world doth imagine; and many that have all well about them, great estates, much befriended and esteemed in the world, yea, for the best things, yet when God hides his face, poor souls, how are they troubled! If he do but let a spark of his wrath into their conscience, and hide his face from them, it is a greater burden to them than all the miseries of the world.

David was a man valiant, that had 'a heart as the heart of a lion,' 2 Sam. xvii. 10. He was a man cheerful, called 'the sweet singer of Israel,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 1; of a ruddy sanguine complexion, and a great master of music. He was no fool, but a man wise as the angel of God; and yet you see what a bitter sense he had of his spiritual condition. And when a man so stout and valiant, so cheerful, so wise, complains so heavily, will you count this mopishness and foolish melancholy? But alas! men that never knew the weight of sin can-

not otherwise conceive of it; they were never acquainted with the infiniteness of God, nor power of his anger, and have not a due sense of eternity; therefore they think so slightly of these matters of the spiritual life.

Use 2. Be not too secure of spiritual joys. We warn you often of security, or falling asleep in temporal comforts, and we must warn you of this kind of security also in spiritual. All things change. You may find David in this psalm in a different posture of spirit; sometimes rejoicing in the word of God above all riches, and at other times his soul melteth away for very heaviness. God's own people are liable to great trouble of spirit; therefore you should not be secure as to these spiritual enjoyments, which come and go according to God's pleasure. Men that build too much upon spiritual suavities or sensible consolations occasion a snare to their own souls; partly as they are less watchful for the present (like mariners which have been at sea, when they get into the haven, take down their tacklings, and make merry, and think never to see storm more), and so lose that which they are so confident of keeping; by their negligence and carelessness their spiritual comfort is gone. And there is another mischief—the loss is more heavy, because it was never thought of. And therefore in preparation of heart we should be ready to lose our inward comforts, as well as estates and outward conveniences. In heaven alone we have continual day without cloudings or night; but here there will be changes.

Use 3. Let us not judge of our condition if this should be our case, that is, if we should lie under pressing troubles, such as do even break our spirits. This was the case of the Son of God; his soul was troubled, and he knew not what to say: John xii. 27, 'My soul is troubled; what shall I say?' And many of his choicest servants have been sorely exercised—Heman, an heir of heaven, and yet compassed about with the pains of hell; Job not only spoiled of all his goods, but for a time shut out from the comforts of God's Spirit. Our business in such a case is not to examine and judge, but to trust. Neither to determine of our condition one side or other, but to stay our hearts upon God, and so to make use of offers and inviting promises, when we cannot make use of conditional and assuring promises. So Isa. l. 10, 'He that walketh in darkness, and seeth no light,' is directed, 'let him trust in the name of the Lord.' That is our business in such a case of deep distress, to make a new title rather than dispute the old one; and stay our hearts on God's mercy.

Thus much concerning David's case; which because it often comes under consideration in this Psalm, I would pass over more briefly.

Secondly, I come from David's case to his petition or request to God, 'Strengthen thou me according to thy word.' Where you have—

1. The request itself.

2. An argument to enforce it.

First, The request itself, 'Strengthen me;' that is the benefit asked.

Doct. 1. Observe this in the general, he doth but now and then drop out a request for temporal safety, but all along his main desire is for grace and for support rather than deliverance.

The children of God, the main thing that their hearts run upon is

sustentation and spiritual support rather than outward deliverance: Ps. cxxxviii. 3, 'I called upon the Lord, and he heard me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.' Mark, David judgeth that to be an audience, to be a hearing of prayer; though he had not deliverance, yet he had experience of inward comfort, that was it which supported him. The children of God value themselves by the inward man, rather than the outward. What David here prays for himself, Paul prays for others: Eph. iii. 16, 'That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.' Yea, they are contented with the decays of the outward man, so that the inward man may increase in strength: 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' The outward man in Paul's dialect is the body, with the conveniences and all the appurtenances thereof, as health, beauty, strength, wealth; all this is the outward man. Now this is not a Christian's desire, to increase in the world, or to make a fair show in the flesh; no, but his heart is set upon this, to grow stronger in the spirit, that the soul, as furnished with the graces of the Spirit, may thrive; this is the inner man. To insist upon this a little.

1. It is the inward man that is esteemed with God, and therefore that is it the saints mainly look after. God doth not look upon men according to their outward condition, pomp, and appearances in the world, but according to the inward endowments of the heart: 1 Sam. xvi. 7, 'Man's eye is upon the outward appearance, but God regards the heart;' and 'the hidden man of the heart,' that is said to be 'an ornament of great price with God,' 1 Peter iii. 4. Intellectual beauty is that which is esteemed in heaven, and spiritual wealth is only current in the other world. Poor creatures, that are led by sense, they esteem one another by these outward things; but God esteems men by grace, by the soul, how that is cherished and strengthened; and though we are otherwise never so well accomplished, we are hated if we have not his image stamped upon us.

2. The everlasting welfare of the whole person depends upon the flourishing of the inward man. When we come to put off the upper garment of the flesh, the poor soul will be destitute, naked, and harbourless, if we have made no provision for it, 2 Cor. v. 3, and then both body and soul are undone for ever. When the soul is to be thrown out of doors, whither will it go, if it hath not an eternal building in heaven to receive it? The soul is the man; the body follows the state of the soul, but the soul doth not follow the state of the body. The life of God, which he doth begin in the soul, does in time renew and perfect the body too. The apostle saith, Rom. vi. 11, 'The Spirit that now dwelleth in us will raise up our mortal bodies.' But now those that seek to preserve the outward man with the neglect of the inner, in time ruin both body and soul. Well, then, here is their care.

3. The loss of the outward man may be recompensed and made up by the strength of grace that is put into the inner man, but the loss of the inner man cannot be made up by the perfections of the outward man. A man that is afflicted in his outward estate, God makes it up in grace; if he makes him rich in faith, in the experiences of his favour, the loss is made up and supplied more abundantly; and the

children of God can comfort themselves in this, that their inward man is strengthened and renewed day by day, 2 Cor. iv. 16 ; so that a man may be happy notwithstanding breaches made upon the outward man. But when there is a wounded spirit, and God breaks into the inward man, then what good will riches, estate, and all these things do? They are as unsavoury things as the white of an egg.

4. The outward man may fit us for converse with men, but the inward man with God. We need bodies, and organs of speech, and reason, and present supplies, which fit us to converse with men ; but we converse with God by thoughts and by grace, and by the perfections of the inward man ; this fits us for communion with him.

5. The life and strength of the inward man is a more noble thing than the strength of the outward man or the bodily life, for it draws nearer to the life of God, as the life and strength of the body draws nearer to the life, pleasure, and happiness of a beast. By the bodily life we eat, drink, labour, sleep, and so do the beasts ; yea, many of the beasts excel us in the perfection of that kind of life. Lions excel in strength, roes in swiftness, eagles in long age ; none of their pleasures are soured with remorse of conscience. But the inward spiritual life is called the life of God, Eph. iv. 18.

6. The inward life is the beginning of our life in heaven. A glorified saint and a saint militant upon earth both live the life of God ; and the life of grace is the same life for kind, though not for degree ; and one that is glorified and one here upon earth differ but as a child and a man. But now the life of sense and the life of grace differ as a toad and a man, not only in degree, but also in kind.

7. Yet further, this is that great thing which God hath been at such great expense about, to raise the being of the new creature : John vi. 51, 'This is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world.' The supports, the strength of the inward man cost dearer than all other comforts whatsoever : it must have nobler supports, it must have the blood of Christ, daily supplies from heaven. But the other life is called the life of our hands, Isa. lvii. 10. We patch up to ourselves some conveniences for the sensible life by labour and service here in the world. Well, then, this is that which the children of God do mostly look after, that the inward life may be kept free from annoyance, and fit for the purposes of grace.

Use. The use of this is to check our carnal and preposterous care for the outward man, to the neglect of the inward. How much are we for the outward man, that it may be well fed and well clothed, well at ease for the present life ! There is all our care ; but not so careful to get the soul furnished with grace, and strengthened and renewed by continued influences from Christ. Certainly if men did look after soul-strength, they would be more careful to wait upon God for his blessing. You may know the disproportion of your care for outward things and for the inward man by these questions.

1. How much do you prize God's day, the means of grace, opportunities of worship, that are for the inward man ? The Sabbath-day is a feast-day for souls. Now, when men are weary of it, it is the most burdensome day of all the week round : Amos viii. 5, 'When will the Sabbath be gone, that we may set forth wheat ?' It is a sign

they are carnal, when men count that day the only lost day: as Seneca saith of the Jews, they lost the full seventh of their lives, speaking of the Sabbath-day. So carnal men think it is a lost day to them, they look upon the Sabbath as a melancholy interruption of their affairs and business. The apostle James saith of those that are begotten by God, chap. i. 9, that they are 'swift to hear.' Certainly they that have an inward man to maintain, another life than an outward and animal life, must have the supply and will look after the comforts of it.

2. Consider how differently we are concerned with bodily and soul concernments. If the body be but a little diseased, if we want an appetite to a meal, or a little sleep in the night, we complain of it presently; we inquire what is the cause, and look for a remedy. But what a wonderful disproportion is there as to the soul! It is a strange expression that, 3 John 2, 'I wish that thy body prosper as thy soul prospers.' Alas! we may say of the most, Oh, that their souls did prosper as their bodies, as they flourish in the conveniencies of the outward man!

3. What care have you for the inward man, to adorn the soul, to beautify it with grace, that it may be of price and esteem with God, or to fortify it with grace? Now, when all our strength and travail is laid out for that which doth not conduce to the inward life, Isaiah lv. 2, and we lay out our money for that which is not bread, it is a sign we are wholly carnal. We read in ecclesiastical story of one that wept when he saw a wanton woman decking herself with a great deal of care to please her lovers; saith he, Have I been so careful to deck my soul for Christ Jesus?

4. Do you take in spiritual refreshments, even when afflictions abound? 2 Cor. i. 5, 'As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ;' then you are affected as the children of God, whose heart and care runs out mainly for the inward man. This in general.

Doct. 2. Secondly, more especially observe he goes to God for strength. Let me show—

1. What is this spiritual strength.

2. How it is given out.

3. How God is concerned in it. David goes to God, 'Lord, strengthen me.'

First, What spiritual strength is. It is God's perfecting of his work. Strength supposeth life, therefore in general it is God's renewed influence; when he hath planted habits of grace, he comes and strengthens. There is *gratia præveniens, operans, et co-operans*—there is preventing grace, working grace, and co-working grace. Preventing grace is when God converts us, when the Lord turns us to himself, and doth plant grace in the soul at first. Working grace is when God strengthens the habit. Co-working grace, when God stirs up the act, and helps us in the exercise of the grace we have. First he plants grace into the heart, then there is a constant influence, as the two olive-trees in Zechariah were always dropping into the lamps; and then by excitation and co-operation he stirs it up. Saith Austin, Unless God gives us the faculties, and unless he gives us the will, we can do nothing; and unless he concurs with the exercise of these

faculties, still we cannot work in the spiritual life as we ought to do; and therefore first God infuseth grace, and then strengthens grace; first he worketh in us, then by us. First we are objects of his work, then instruments, to show wherein the strength of the soul lies.

1. There are planted in the soul habits of grace. There are not only high operations of grace, but permanent and fixed habits, the seed of God that remaineth within us, 1 John iii. 9, which cannot be the indwelling of the Spirit; for this seed of God is some created thing: Ps. li. 10, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God;' and it is something that grows: 2 Peter iii. 6, 'Grow in grace.' And therefore it is evident there are habits of grace planted in the soul, a good stock that we have from God at first, called 'the good treasure of the heart,' Mat. xii. These habits of grace are called 'armour of God,' 'the shield of faith,' 'the helmet of salvation.' This is the strength of the soul.

2. But besides this, there is a continuance and an increase of these graces, when the Lord confirms his work, and perfects what he hath begun, Phil. i. 16. The apostle most notably sets it forth: 1 Peter v. 10, 'The God of all grace make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.' All these words concern the habit, or the seed of grace in the soul; and to show God's concurrence towards our preservation in the spiritual state, he useth these words, 'Make you perfect;' that notes the addition of degrees that are yet wanting; 'stablish you,' that notes defending that grace which is already planted in the heart from temptation and dangers; and 'strengthen you,' that is, give you power for action or ability for working; and 'settle you,' that is to fasten the root more and more. All may be represented in a tree. Look, as a tree grown downward in the root is defended from the nipping of the weather, and stablished and strengthened against injuries from beasts, and being filled with sap, springs forth, and becomes fruitful; so the Lord settle you, &c.

3. There is a concurrence of God to the act. Grace in habit is not enough, but it must be actuated and directed. About the act there are two things: The Holy Spirit actuates the grace that is implanted, draws it forth into exercise; so it is said, Phil. ii. 13, 'It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do,' that is, he does apply that grace in our heart, set it a-work; and then there is a directing or regulation of the soul to action: 2 Thes. iii. 5, 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God,' &c. Thus God plants grace in the heart by preventing us with his mercy and loving-kindness, taking us into favour; then he doth stablish us, and perfect it, root it in the soul more and more. Then as to the act, he doth excite and strengthen us.

Secondly, The uses for which we have this strength from God. It serves for three uses—for doing, for suffering, and for conflicting, to bear us out in conflict; as our necessities are many, so must our strength be.

1. Strength to perform duties. Weariness and uncomfortableness will soon fall upon our hearts, and we shall hang off from God, if the Lord doth not put forth a new force, and a new quickening upon our hearts; therefore the spouse saith, Cant. i. 4, 'Draw me, and we will run after thee. And here in this psalm, 'When the Lord shall enlarge

my heart, I will run the ways of his commandments.' If we would be carried on with any fervour and motion towards God, we must go forth in the strength of God. The soul is a tender thing, and soon discomposed. When we think to go forth and shake ourselves as at other times, as Samson, we shall find fetters and restraints upon our soul. Therefore God's work must ever be done in God's strength.

2. Strength for bearing of burdens with patience, that we may not faint under them: Col. i. 11, 'Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.' That we may not faint under our affliction: Prov. xxiv. 10, 'If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.' God's children, before they go to heaven, will have their trials, they will have many burdens upon them: Heb. vi. 12, 'Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' There needs not only faith, but patience. There will be trouble. Now a heavy burden need have good shoulders. We pray for strength, that we may break through difficulties and afflictions that we meet in our passage to heaven.

3. Strength for conflicts, that we may break through temptations. A Christian is not only to use the trowel but the sword. We cannot think to discharge duties or bear afflictions without a battle and conflict; therefore we need the strength of the Lord's grace to carry us through. Satan is the great enemy with whom we conflict, he is the manager of the temptation. This is the course of it; the world is the bait; the flesh is the traitor that works within men, which gives advantage to Satan; the devil lieth hidden, and by worldly things seeks to draw off our hearts from God. Now we are assaulted on every side, sometimes by the pleasures of the world, sometimes by the frowns and crosses of it; so that a Christian needs to be fit for all conditions: Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me;' for every way will the devil be enticing us to sin. Now these conflicts are either solicitations to sin, or tend to weaken our comfort; and in both respects we must have strength from God. Satan's first temptation is to draw us to sin; if he cannot weaken grace, then to disturb our comfort; if not to deny God, yet that we may suspect our own estate; and therefore he follows us with blasphemies and other temptations, until he hath made our lives wearisome, till we call our condition into question; and therefore, as grace is strengthened, so is comfort: Neh. viii. 10, 'The joy of the Lord is your strength.'

Thus I have showed what is this spiritual strength, and what we beg of God when we say, 'Strengthen me;' and how this is given out, in what manner God conveyeth this strength to the soul, how suitable to our nature, to our temper, to our employment.

Thirdly. How God is concerned in it. David goes to God for this benefit, 'Lord, strengthen me.' From first to last he doth all. We do not stand by the stability of our own resolutions, nor stand by the stability of gracious habits in ourselves, unless the Lord supply new strength. Not by the stability of our own resolutions, for these will soon fail; for David was under a resolution to keep close to God; yet he saith, 'My feet had well-nigh slipped.' What upheld him? 'Thy right hand upheld me.' I was mightily shaken, all purposes of holding on of godliness were even gone; but I am continually with thee.

Neither is it the stability of gracious habits in themselves, for of themselves they are poor vanishing things; faith, love, and fear of God of themselves will soon vanish: Rev. iii. 2, 'Be watchful, strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die. These are ready to die, therefore are only maintained by a renewed strength from God. It is the power of God that is engaged in our preservation. I might show in what order we have this from God; we are not only kept in general 'by the power of God through faith unto salvation,' 1 Peter i. 5, but all the persons work. The Father, his act is judicial: Eph. iii. 14, 'I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you to be strengthened with might in the inner man.' He issueth the grant, that such souls coming in Christ's name, and petitioning relief, should obtain it. And God the Son hath bought this strength for us, and he intercedes for constant supply; and therefore it is said, Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ.' Christ puts in strength, that is, he observes all our temptations, our conflicts, how weak we are; and he intercedes with God night and day; he stands at God's right hand, to get out this strength; and the Holy Ghost applies it to our heart in the ordinances; for so it is said, Eph. iii. 16, 'To be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.'

Use. To press us to be dealing with God for this strength. What shall we do?

1. Be weak in your own sense and feeling. The way to be strong is to be weak: 2 Cor. xii. 10, 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' The bucket, if we would have it filled with the ocean, must first be empty. Saith Austin, *Nemo erit a Deo firmus, nisi qui seipsum sentit infirmum*—God strengtheneth those that are weak in their own feeling and sense of their own nothingness: Heb. xi. 34, 'Out of weakness they were made strong;' out of weakness felt and apprehended.

2. There must be a full reliance upon God's strength alone: Ps. lxxi. 16, 'I will go forth in the strength of the Lord God;' and Eph. vi. 10, 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;' and 2 Tim. ii. 1, 'Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.' Whatever is in God and in Christ is for our use; it is forthcoming for our encouragement and help. We have firm grounds for this reliance—the infinite power of God, and the merit of Christ, which is of infinite value. What cannot the power of God do? The strength of God is engaged for our relief and succour.

3. Use the power that you have, and then it will be increased upon you. The right arm is bigger than the left. Why? Because of exercise, it is fuller of spirits and strength: 'To him that hath shall be given,' Mat. xiii. 12, 'and he shall have abundance.' The more we exercise grace the more we shall have of it: Prov. x. 29, 'The way of the Lord is strength to the upright.' The more we walk with God the more strength.

4. Use the means, for 'they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength,' Isa. xl. 31. Because God doth all, oh! it is the greatest engagement that can be to wait upon God in the use of means, that we may draw out treasures of grace in God's way: Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your salvation, for it is God that worketh in you,' &c. See that you keep not off from God. Why? For he doth all.

5. Avoid sin; that lets out your strength, as bleeding lets out the spirits of the body. When you grieve the Spirit of Christ which is to strengthen you, you cast away your strength from you. Let us then wait upon God for help, for when all things fail, God faileth not.

Secondly, I now come to the argument, 'Strengthen me according to thy word.' God's word binds him to relieve his people in distress. There are two promises; one is, 1 Cor. x. 13, 'God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.' A good man would not overburden his beast; certainly the gracious God will not suffer temptations to lie upon us above measure. Another promise is in Isa. lvii. 15-17, 'To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' He hath promised comfort and relief to poor broken-hearted sinners; you are called by name in the promise, it is spoken to people in your case. Again, upon such a word and promise of God is David's prayer grounded. A prayer grounded upon a promise is like to prevail; you may put a humble challenge upon God, plead his word to him. It is strange fire else you put in the censer, when you beg that which God never undertook to grant. David often saith 'according to thy word.' Again, the word of God is the only cure and relief for a fainting soul. When David was languishing away under deep sorrow, then, Lord, thy word did bring strength. (1.) This is the proper cure. Natural means cannot be a remedy to a spiritual distemper, no more than a fine suit of apparel to a sick man, or a posy of flowers to a condemned man. Natural comforts carry no proportion with a spiritual disease; nothing but grace, pardon, strength, and acceptance from God can remove it. They that seek to quench their sorrows in excess and merry company take a brutish remedy for soul diseases. O foolish creatures! that think to sport away or drink down their troubles! it is as foolish a course as to think that to sew up a rent in the garment will cure a wound in their body. And (2.) it is a universal cure; we have from the word life, comfort, strength. It is the word that must guide us and keep us from fainting, quicken us and keep us from dying. This is a full remedy in conjunction with the power of God, and makes the sore¹ joyful in the midst of outward troubles: Ps. lvi. 10, 'I will rejoice in God because of his word.'

Lastly, This word must be applied to the conscience by God himself, 'Strengthen thou me according to thy word.' He goes to God that he would apply his word, that it might be for his strength; for we can neither apprehend nor apply it further than we receive grace from God. The word is God's instrument, and worketh not without the principal agent.

SERMON XXX.

Remove from me the way of lying; and grant me thy law graciously.—VER. 29.

THERE are two parts of Christianity—destructive and adstructive. The destructive part consists in a removing of sin; the adstructive part

¹ Qu. 'soul'?—ED.

makes way for the plantation of grace; there is eschewing evil, and doing good. We are carried on in a forward earnestness in the way of sin, but there is a great backwardness and restraint upon our hearts as to that which is good. The one is necessary to the other; we must come out of the ways of sin before we can walk in the ways of God. In this prayer David respects both. (1.) In the first he instanceth in one sin, 'the way of lying;' not only lying, but 'the way of lying,' as being conscious to himself of his too often sinning in this kind. Now, he would not have this settled into a course or way; therefore he beggeth, Remove it, the guilt, the fault of it. (2.) As to the adstructive part, for the regulation of his conversation, he begs the favour and grant of the law, and that upon terms of grace. David had ever the book of the law, for every king of Israel was to have it always by him, and, the rabbis say, written with his own hand. But 'grant me thy law graciously;' that is, he desires he might have it not only written by him, but upon him, to have it imprinted upon his heart, that he might have a heart to observe and keep it. That is the blessing he begs for, the law; and this is begged graciously, or upon terms of grace, merely according to thine own favour and good pleasure. Here is—

1. The sin deprecated, *remove from me the way of lying.*

2. The good supplicated and asked, *grant me thy law graciously.*

In the first clause you have his malady: David had been enticed to a course of lying. In the second we have his remedy, and that is the law of God.

First, Let me speak of the evil deprecated; here observe—

1. The object, *the way of lying.*

2. God's act about it, *remove from me, &c.*

First for the object, 'The way of lying.' It is by some taken generally, by others more particularly.

1. For those that expound it more generally, they are not all of a mind. Some think by the way of lying is meant corruption of doctrine; others of worship; others apply it to disorders of conversation; some take it for error of doctrine, false opinions concerning God and his worship, which are called lying, and so opposed to the way of truth spoken of in the next verse, 'I have chosen the way of truth.' Heresy and false doctrine is called a lie, Ezek. xiii. 22, 'Their diviners speak lies;' so 1 John ii. 21, 'A lie is not of the truth;' and the word used, 'The way of lying' is elsewhere rendered a 'false way,' ver. 104, and ver. 128 there is the same expression. Now, this he desires to be removed from him, because it sticks as close to us as our skin. Error is very natural to us, and man doth exceedingly please himself with the figments of his own brain. All practical errors in the world are but man's natural thoughts cried up into a voluble opinion, because backed with defences of wit, and parts, and secular interests, and other advantages; they are but our secret and privy thoughts which have gotten the reputation of an opinion in the world; for we 'speak lies from the womb;' even in this sense we suck in erroneous principles with our milk. Nature carrieth us to wrong thoughts of God, and the ways of God, and out of levity and inconstancy of spirit we are apt to be 'carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men.' Now, to this sense the latter clause will well agree, 'Keep me from a

way of lying; that is, keep me from falling into error and mistakes about religion; for he begs that the law may be granted to him, or a certain stated rule, without which all things are liable to deceit and imposture. And according to this sense Austin beggeth that he may neither be deceived in the scriptures, nor deceive out of them; *Nec fallar in iis, nec fallam ex iis*—let me never be mistaken myself, nor cause others to mistake. Again, by a way of lying some understand false worship, for an idol is a lie: Isa. xlv. 20, 'Is there not a lie in his right hand?' meaning an idol. By others, a course of sinning, for a way of sinning is a way of lying, for it deceives us with a conceit of happiness which we shall never enjoy; therefore, Eph. iv. 22, 'Put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.' Lusts are called deceitful, because they promise what they never perform; they flatter us not only with hopes of impunity, but much imaginary comfort and satisfaction; oh, but it is a lie! Satan deceived our first parents, pretending to show them a way of immortality, whereas that brought death to the world. Most go this way, Remove from me the way of lying, that is, the way of sin; and the rather because the Septuagint translation reads it thus, Remove from me the way of iniquity; and Chrysostom in his gloss. He means, every evil deed should be removed from him, or it proves a lie in regard of all those flatterings and blandishments by which it enticeth the soul. Nay, there is a parallel place seems to make good this sense, Prov. xxx. 8, when Agur prays against sin, 'Remove from me vanity and lies,' meaning a course of sin. Thus it is taken more generally.

2. Those that take it more particularly for the sin of lying, or speaking falsely in commerce, they again differ. Some take it passively, keep me from frauds or deceits of other men; because it seems to be a hard thing to ascribe a way of lying to a child of God, therefore they rather take it passively. But this is to fear where no fear is. But David begs that he might be kept from a way of lying, that it might not settle into a way, that is his meaning. Therefore I rather take it actively, that he might not run into a false and fallacious course of dealing with others.

Now why would David have this way of lying removed from him? Three reasons:—

1. Because of the inclination of his corrupt nature. We had most need pray to be kept from gross sins: as Ps. xix. 13, 'Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.' We need not only pray against lesser sins or spiritual wickedness, but from gross sins carried on presumptuously against the light of conscience. So Col. iii. 5, 'Mortify your earthly members,' &c. What members doth he speak of? Not worldliness and unbelief only; but he speaks of adultery, uncleanness, inordinate affections, and the like; and the children of God, if they do not deal with God for grace against their gross sins, they will soon know to their costs. Jesus Christ warned his own disciples, those that were trained up in his school, those that were to go abroad and deliver his gospel to the world: Luke xxi. 34, 'Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness,' &c. A candle newly blown out easily sucks light and flame again; and we that are newly taken out of the dominion of sin into a state of grace, may

suck light and flame again ; therefore we had need pray against gross sins.

2. Because he had been tripping and guilty in this kind. In the story of David you may trace too much of this way and vein of lying ; as his feigning to Ahimelech the priest, 1 Sam. xxi. 8 ; and to Achish, 1 Sam. xxvii. 8, compared with ver. 10 ; his persuading Jonathan to tell his father he was gone about such a business. Now, this we may learn, when we are foiled by any sin, we should take heed lest we settle into a way and course of sin ; for in every sin, as there is *culpa*, the fault, or the transgression of the law, and *reatus*, the guilt, or obligation of punishment, so there is *macula*, the blot, an inclination to sin again, in like manner as a brand once on fire is more apt to take fire again. By every act of sin the law of God is lessened, our carnal inclination is increased ; therefore we had need be earnest with God, Lord, keep me from a way of lying.

3. Man is strongly inclined to lying ; it sticks close to our nature, so that God must remove it from us ; as more fully afterwards. Thus for the object, a way of lying.

Secondly, God's act about it, 'Remove from me.' Sin is removed either in a way of justification, when the guilt of it is done away ; this David might intend. But rather in a way of sanctification, when the fault or blot is done away. This is mainly intended, as appears by the antithesis or opposite request, 'and grant me thy law graciously ;' that is, let it be impressed upon my heart, that such a temptation may be prevented for the future. Let me observe—

Doct. That lying, especially a way or course of lying, should be far from God's people.

David begs the removal of it, as most inconsistent with the temper and sincerity of a child of God. Examine—

1. What is lying ?

2. Upon what grounds this should be far from a child of God ?

First, What is lying ? *Ans.* Lying is when men wittingly and willingly, and with purpose to deceive, signify that which is false by gestures or actions, but especially by words. The matter of a lie is a falsehood ; but the formality of it is with an intention to deceive ; therefore a falsehood is one thing, a lie another. Then we lie when we not only do or speak falsely, but knowingly, and with purpose to deceive. Now this may be done by gestures, as when a scorner counterfeiteth the posture of one that is praying, or as when David feigned himself to be distracted, scrabbling upon the doors of the gate, spitting upon his beard, 1 Kings xxi. 1 ; and in the pagan story Junius Brutus was taxed for feigning himself a fool to save himself from Tarquin. Aquinas saith gestures are a sign by which we discover our minds. But because these are but imperfect signs, and speech is the usual instrument of commerce, therefore in words do we usually vent this sin. Now in our words we are said to lie two ways—assertorily or promissorily.

1. Assertorily, in a matter past or present, when one speaketh that as false which he knoweth to be true, and that as true which he knoweth to be false, which is called speaking with a double heart in scripture : Ps. xii. 2. 'With a heart and a heart ;' that is, when we have one

heart to furnish the tongue with what is false, and another heart to conceive of the matter as it is. An instance of this falsehood in our assertions, or untrue relating of things done, is Ananias and Sapphira, who brought part of the money for which he sold his possession, instead of the whole; therefore, Acts v. 3, 'Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost, in keeping back part of the price?' It was a lie, because there was a false assertion in saying that it was the whole; and it was a lie to the Holy Ghost, partly as being pretended to be done by his motion when they were acted by Satan, counterfeiting spiritual actions; or a lie against the Holy Ghost, because the Holy Ghost, being last in order of the persons, is fitly represented as conscious to our ways and the workings of our hearts: it is in condescension to us, because it is most conceivable to us to reflect upon him as knowing our hearts, and all the workings of our souls: Rom. ix. 1, 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost;' and when the psalmist speaks of hiding himself from God, he saith, 'Whither shall I flee from thy Spirit?' Ps. cxxxix. 7. Or else a lie to the Holy Ghost, because of his presidency and superintendency over church affairs: Acts xiii. 2, 'The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them;' and Acts xx. 28, 'Take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.' Now, because this was an ecclesiastical or church case, therefore they are said to lie to the Holy Ghost, as one that is to supply Christ's place. It was not the sin against the Holy Ghost, but a lie against the Holy Ghost.

2. Promissorily we lie when we promise things we mean not to perform. This is a great sin. Paul spent the great part of a chapter to excuse himself, because he was necessitated by providence to break promise of coming to Corinth, 2 Cor. i. 16-18. It was grievous to him that he should seem to use lightness, and not make good his word, though he were hindered by the providence of God. Vain and empty promises, wherein we make a great show of kindness to others, without any intent to perform, is a great sin: Prov. xix. 22, 'The desire of a man is his kindness; and a poor man is better than a liar.' What is the meaning? Some read it, that which is desired of a man is kindness: you come to a man in power and great place, and beg his favour in such a business and request, and they are too apt to promise you. Ay! but a poor man is better than a liar; you shall find among these great men very little faith. The desire of a man is his kindness, or that which a man should do in a great and high condition is to show you kindness. But now many that covet the praise and reputation of it, are very forward in promises, but fail in performance; therefore a poor man that loves you, and is an honest neighbour, and will do his best, is a surer friend and a thousand times better than such lying great men, that only give you good words, and sprinkle you with court holy water. Now there is a lying to men, and a lying to God.

[1.] A lying to God, which is the worst sort, because it argues unbelief and atheism, low thoughts of God, as if he were not omniscient, did not know the heart, and try the reins. How do we lie to God? Partly when we put him off with a false appearance, and make a show

of what is not in the heart, as if he would be deceived with outsides and vain pretences. So Hosea xi. 12, it is said, 'Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Judah with deceit.' God can see through and through all fair shows, and will not be mocked. We are said to lie to God when we perform not those professions and promises which we made in a time of trouble. Oh, when chastenings are upon us, then the vows of God are upon us! Men think they mean as they speak, but they are not conscious of the secrecy of their hearts: Ps. lxxviii. 36, 'They flattered me with their mouth, and they lied unto me with their tongue.' Their hearts were not sincerely set against sin, whatever professions of repentance they made. When there is a restraint upon our corruptions, then we think ourselves hearty and serious, because moved a little towards God. Moral integrity is when we intend not to deceive, but there was no supernatural sincerity to perform, as the event showed. They were only the fruit of the present pang, therefore it was said they lied unto him with their tongue. So Ezek. xxiv. 12, 'She hath wearied herself with lies, and her scum went not forth out of her,' speaking of her promises; when the pot was over the fire there seemed to be offers to throw off the scum, but she hath wearied herself with lies. And in this sense it is said, Hosea vii. 16, 'They return, but not to the Most High; they are like a deceitful bow;' that is, they did not seriously intend when they did promise. As a man that shoots, if he do not level right, and take care to direct the arrow to the mark, it will never hit; so they shoot, that is, they cast out promises to flatter God till they get out of trouble, but they do not seriously set their hearts to accomplish it.

[2.] As to men, there are three sorts of lies—*Mendacium jocosum, officiosum, et perniciosum*: there is the sporting lie, tending to our recreation and delight; there is the officious lie, tending to our own and others' profit; and there is the pernicious and hurtful lie, tending to our neighbour's prejudice.

(1.) The sporting lie, when an untruth is devised for merriment. We have no instance of this in scripture; but it is a sin to speak untruth, and we must not make a jest of sin: Prov. xxvi. 19, 'As a madman that casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?' Have we nothing wherewith to refresh our neighbour but with the breach of God's law? If a Christian 'will be merry, let him sing psalms,' James v. 13; let him give thanks, Eph. v. 4, 'Not filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks;' that is, let him remember the sweet loves of God in Jesus Christ, and that is spiritual refreshment to a gracious heart. Let him not speak things against the sense of his own mind; let him use honest recreation. Certainly we that are to give an account for every idle word should not allow the sporting lie. Now to this sporting lie a fable or parable is not to be reduced, for that is only an artificial way of representing the truth with the more advantage, and putting of it into sensible terms which most are apt to apprehend; as Jotham brings in the trees that went forth to anoint a king over them, Judges ix. 8. Neither such sharp and piercing ironies as we find used by holy men in scripture, 1 Kings xviii. 27; as Elijah

'mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a God: either he is talking,' &c.; for this is a notable way to make truth strike upon the heart with some force; and therefore this must not be reduced to this sporting lie.

(2.) The officious lie, for the help and relief of others. Many instances of this we have in scripture. Thus Rebekah teacheth Jacob to lie that he might gain the blessing, Gen. xxvii.; and the Egyptian midwives saved the male children of the Israelites by feigning they were delivered before they came to them, Exod. i. 21; yet it is said they feared God, and it is rewarded by God. *Non remunerata est fallacia sed benevolentia*—not their lie, but their mercy is rewarded: their mercy is commended as proceeding from the fear of God, and their infirmities are pardoned. So Rahab spared the lives of the spies, by telling the men of her city that they were gone, when she had hid them under the stalks of flax, Josh. ii. 4-6. Thus Michal, to save David from the fury of her father, feigned him sick, 1 Sam. xix. 14; and David advised Jonathan to an officious lie, 1 Sam. xx. 6, 7; so vers. 26, 28, 29. Thus Hushai, by temporising with Absalom, preserved David, 2 Sam. xvi. 17-19, to divide his counsels pretendeth hearty affection to him.

(3.) There is a pernicious lie, that is to the hurt and prejudice of another. Of this nature was the first lie, by which all mankind was ruined—the devil's lie to our first parents, 'Ye shall be as gods,' Gen. iii. 4, 5. And of this nature was the patriarchs' lie concerning Joseph, when they spake to his father, Gen. xxxvii. 31, 32, 'This have we found, and know not whether it be thy son's coat or no,' yet they knew well enough; and that of the Jewish elders that said, Mat. xxviii. 12, 13, 'Say ye, his disciples came and stole him away while we slept.' All these are severely forbidden, but especially in point of witnessing in courts of judicature: Exod. xxiii. 1, 'Put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness;' and ver. 7, 'Keep thee far from a false matter,' &c. Now some question whether all these lies be sin or no, sporting or officious lies. All these sorts of lies are sins; for—

1. The scripture condemns all without restriction: Eph. iv. 25, 'Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour;' Rev. xxi. 8, *all* liars are shut out of the New Jerusalem, 'And all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone;' and Rev. xxii. 15, 'Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.'

2. They all violate the natural order and conformity which God hath appointed between the heart and the tongue; and though officious lies are not for the hurt, but the good of others, yet it is to the hurt and prejudice of truth. A man is not to lie for the glory of God, therefore certainly not for the good of another man; you hurt your own soul more by sin than you can do him good. Augustine, treating of officious lies, he tells of one Firmus, who was *Firmus nomine, et firmior voluntate*—Firm by name, but more firm and fixed by will and resolved purpose; therefore, when one was pursued for casual homicide, he concealed him; and being asked for him, answered, *Nec mentiri se posse nec hominem prodere*—he could neither lie nor betray him. So much for the first thing, namely, what is a lie and lying.

Secondly, For the reasons why the children of God should be far from it.

1. In regard of outward commerce. That which is contrary to human society should be odious to the children of God, who, as they are in a peculiar sense members one of another, so are also of the same political body, and therefore should 'speak truth one to another,' Eph. iv. 25. Human society is mostly upheld by truth. Where there is no truth, there can be no trust; where there is no trust, there can be no commerce; it makes men unfit to be trusted. When a man hath much counterfeit money offered to him in payment, though there may be some true gold and silver, yet he casts it away, and suspecteth it all. Men that are given to lying can have no credit nor faith with man, so they are unfit for human commerce; therefore it should be far from men; nay, it is the right of our neighbour that we should speak truth, for speech is a kind of traffic and commerce, and therefore it is a kind of theft to defraud your neighbour of his right, if you give him false words for true. Now, because it is the band and foundation of human society, therefore it should be far from the children of God.

2. It is a perversion of the order of nature. The tongue is the interpreter of the mind, and therefore if the interpreter of another man speak contrary to what he pronounceth, there were a manifest wrong and disorder; so when the tongue speaks otherwise than the man thinks, there is a great disturbance and deordination.

3. We resemble Satan in nothing so much as in lying, and we resemble God in nothing so much as in truth. Falsehood is the devil's character: John viii. 44, 'He was a liar from the beginning;' that is, the first inventor of lies, as Jubal was the father of them that played upon the harp, the first inventor; and herein we most resemble Satan. On the contrary, there is nothing wherein a man resembleth God so much as in truth. Truth is no small part of the image of God, for he is called 'the God of truth;' and it is said of him, Titus. i. 2, that he 'cannot lie;' it is contrary to the perfection of his nature; nor command us to lie. God hath commanded many other things which otherwise were sinful; as to kill another man, as Abraham to slay his son; to take away the goods of others, as lord of all, as when the Israelites spoiled the Egyptians of their jewels; but God cannot lie, it is against his nature: Eph. iv. 24, 25, 'Put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' Then presently, 'Wherefore put away lying; speak every man truth with his neighbour.' *Wherefore*—that is, from your regeneration, when the image of God is planted in you. So the same: Col. iii. 9, 'Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.' There may be sin in the children of God, but there should be no guile in them. Habituated guile is the old man that is deceitful; the new man is framed to truth, and according to the will of God.

4. This is a consideration, that God never dispensed with this precept. He hath upon special occasion dispensed with other commands, but never with the ninth. With the seventh commandment in the polygamy of the patriarchs, and with the second in Hezekiah's

passover; but a man must not lie for God, Job xiii. 7-9, because this commandment hath more in it of the justice and immutable perfection of God than others.

5. By the light of nature nothing is more odious. We love a just and true man, one that is without guile; we acknowledge it as a moral perfection. But a lie is counted the greatest disgrace; we revenge the charge of it. It is counted a base thing to lie. Why? Because it comes from fear, and it tends to deceit, both which argue baseness of spirit, and are contrary to the gallantry of a man; therefore it is shameful in the eyes of nature, and those that are most guilty of it cannot endure to be charged with it. When the prophet Micaiah told Zedekiah of his lying spirit, he 'smote him on the cheek,' 1 Kings xx. 23. So men take it ill to be charged with a lie. We count it a shameful sin among men. The old Persians had such a great respect to truth, that he that was three times taken with a lie was never more to speak in public, upon penalty of death.

6. It is a sin that is most hateful to God; therefore it should be far from the children of God. We hate that most which is contrary to our nature, so it is contrary to God's nature. There are six things God hates, and a lying tongue is one of them; twice it is mentioned, Prov. vi. 17, 19, and Prov. xii. 22, 'Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord; but they that deal truly are his delight.' Now certainly because God hates it, therefore we should hate it. To will and nill the same thing, that is true friendship. God hates it, therefore a righteous man hates it: Prov. xiii. 5, 'A righteous man hateth lying; but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.'

7. It is a sin which God hath expressly threatened to punish in this life and in the life to come. In this life: Ps. v. 6, 'Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing;' and Prov. xix. 5, 'He that speaketh lies shall not escape.' God will cut them off as not being fit for human society. The first remarkable instance we have in the New Testament of God's vengeance was for a lie, Acts v. 5; yea, it is one of the sins that draws down public and national judgments; and therefore it is said, Hosea iv. 2, 'By swearing and lying, therefore, doth the land mourn.' And when God gives advice to his people how they should prevent his judgments, Zech. viii. 16, 17, 'These are the things that ye shall do, speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour: execute the judgment of truth; love no false oath: for all these are the things that I hate, saith the Lord.' When men have no care of their speeches, when a people bind themselves by oaths to do that which they mind not to perform, or wilfully do not perform, they are ripe for a judgment. And so in the life to come: Rev. xxi. 27, 'And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie;' and Rev. xxi. 8, 'All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone;' and Rev. xxii. 15, 'For without are dogs and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.'

Use. Oh, then, let us beware of all lying and dissimulation with respect to God and men! Let our words consent with our minds, and our minds agree with the thing itself. A lie is most odious to

God, 'a proud look, and a lying tongue;' and therefore a Christian that loves God, shall he do that which God so expressly hates? Will you rush upon the pikes, kick against the pricks, and run against the judgments of God? A lying tongue shall not escape. Nay, God reckons upon his children: Isa. lxiii. 8, 'Surely they are my people, children that will not lie.' Disappointment, that is the worst vexation. God reckons upon it, surely you will make conscience of truth, not only in your oaths (certainly that is a barbarous thing to break the most sacred engagements that are among mankind, therefore you will be careful to perform what you have sworn to the Lord with your hands lift up to the Most High God), but also in your promises and ordinary speeches. Good men have been foiled by it (David begs, 'Keep me from a way of lying'), and it is a sin more common than we imagine; it is very natural to us, Isa. lix. 3. As soon as we are born we speak lies; before we could go we went astray, and before we were able to speak we spake lies; the seed of it was in our nature. It is a sin most natural, for it was the occasion of the first sin, and therefore we had need be cautioned against it.

Consider, there is a lying to God in public and private worship. In public worship, how often do you compass him about with lies! We show love with our mouths when our heart is at a great distance from God. Oh, how odious should we be to ourselves if our heart were turned inside outward in the best duty, and all our thoughts were turned into words! for in our worship many times we draw near to God with our mouths, when our heart is at a great distance. As when their bodies were in the wilderness, their hearts were in Egypt; so we prattle words without sense and spiritual affection. Nay, in our private worship, we confess sin without shame; we pray as if we cared not to be heard. Conscience tells us what we should pray for, but our hearts do not go out in the matter, and we throw away our prayers as children shoot away their arrows, which is a sign we are not so hearty as we should be. We give thanks, but without meltings of heart. Custom and natural light tell us something must be done in this kind, but how hard a matter it is to draw near God with truth of heart?

Again, would we not be accounted better than we are? Who would be thought as ill as he hath cause to think of himself? We storm if others but speak of us half of what we speak of ourselves to God; therefore all had need look to it to be kept from a way of lying. And for gross lying, how far are we from being willing that should be accomplished which the Lord speaks of, Zeph. iii. 13, 'The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth.' Rather we may take up David's complaint, Ps. xii. 1, 2, 'The godly man ceaseth; the faithful fail from among the children of men: they speak vanity every one with his neighbour; with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak.' Promises, oaths, covenants all broken; and therefore so many jealousies, because so much lying; all trust is lost among us. This lying is always ill, but especially in magistrates, men of public place: Prov. xvii. 7, 'Lying lips become not a prince.' So ministers: Rom. ix. 1, 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not;' 2 Cor. xi. 31, 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ knoweth that I lie not.' Among

private Christians, are we not too rash in our suspicions, and speak worse of others than they deserve? do we not take up and vent reports without search? it may be out of envy at the brightness of their profession. Do not unwary expressions drop from us? Much talk cannot be justified. Are there not rash promises we make no conscience to mind and look after? Many ways may we trace ourselves in this sin of lying; therefore look to the prevention of it. What remedies are there against it?

1. Hate it; do not think it to be a venial matter: Ps. cxix. 163, 'I hate and abhor lying;' not only *hate* it, nor simply I *abhor* it, but *hate and abhor*, to strengthen and increase the sense, and make it more vehement. Where the enmity is not great against the sin, the matter may be compounded and taken up. Oh, but I hate and abhor it, and hate it with a deadly hatred! Slight hatred of a sinful course is not sufficient to guard us against it.

2. Love to the law of God; if that be dear to you, you will not break it upon any light occasion. In the text, 'Grant me thy law graciously.' If a man prize the laws of God, and would fain have them printed in the heart, he will not so easily break them.

3. Remember your spiritual conflict; you never give Satan so great an advantage as by falsehood and guile of spirit. The devil assaults by wiles, but your strength lieth in downright honesty: Eph. vi. 11, 'That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' Satan's strength lies in wiles, but you must beat him down in sincerity. The first piece of the spiritual armour is the girdle of truth—that is, the grace of sincerity, whereby a man is to God and men what he gives out himself to be, or seems to be. This is that which will give you strength and courage in sore trials. Oh! when Satan shall accuse and challenge you for your base hypocrisy, then how will you hold up your heads in the day of spiritual conflict, if you have not the girdle of truth? But now uprightness gives us courage, strength, and stands by us in the very agonies of death.

4. Heedfulness, and a watch upon the tongue: Ps. xxxix. 1, 'I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.' Let us speak of what we think, and think of what we speak, that the mind may conform itself with the nature of truth.

5. Avoid the causes of lying. There are three of them—(1.) Boasting, or speaking too much of ourselves. When men are given to boasting, whatever thing of weight is done, they were privy to it; their hand was in the work, in contriving and prosecuting the business, their counsel was for it. Nothing can be acted without their knowledge and approbation. This spirit of vainglory is the mother of vain talking, therefore of a lying tongue: Ps. xii. 3, 'Flattering lips,' and 'the tongue that speaketh proud things,' are joined together. (2.) Flattery, or desiring of ingratiating themselves with those that are great and mighty in the world, when they have men's persons in admiration: Ps. xii. 2, 'With flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak.' So Hosea vii. 3, 'They make the king glad with their lies.' To please their rulers, they soothe them up with flattering applause and fawning upon them. (3.) Carnal fear and distrust. This was that which put David to his shifts in his dangers; he was apt to

fail, and deal a little deceitfully in time of temptation and danger. We had need to pray to God to be kept from all ways and counsels that are contrary to God's word. The scripture speaks, Deut. xxxiii. 29, of counterfeit submissions to higher powers: 'Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, thou shalt tread upon their high places;' the meaning is, shall be subdued by thee. So Ps. xviii. 44, 'Strangers shall submit themselves to me;' Ps. lxi. 3, lxxxi. 15, and many other places. The word implieth feigned submission.

Object. But are we openly to profess our mind in all things in time of danger? I answer—Prudent concealment may be without fault, but a professed subjection should be sincere, for open and free dealing doth best become God's children. It is true we are not bound to speak all the truth at all times to every person. In some cases we may conceal something: Luke ix. 21, our Saviour 'straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell nobody that he was the Christ,' 1 Sam. xvi. 2, when the Lord sent Samuel to anoint David, Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the Lord said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord; that was a truth, but not the whole truth.

Object. But you will say, Will not this justify mental reservation and jesuitical equivocation? I answer—There are two sorts of reservations; I may reserve part of the truth in my mind. But the mental reservations the Jesuits plead for is this—when that which is spoken is a lie, if abstracted from that which is in the mind; for instance, if a magistrate say, Art thou a priest? No; meaning not after the order of Baal. So that which is spoken is a lie. But if it be spoken with truth, we may reserve part of it. That in Samuel was not an untruth, but concealing some part of the truth not fit to be discovered. So Jer. xxxviii. 24–27, 'Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die. But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they shall come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee: then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house to die there. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him; and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded: so they left off speaking with him, for the matter was not perceived.'

Secondly, We now come to the blessing asked, 'Grant me thy law graciously.' Where first the benefit itself, *grant me thy law*; secondly, the terms upon which it is asked, implied in the word *graciously*.

The benefit asked, 'Grant me thy law.' David had the book of the law already; every king was to have a copy of it written before him; but he understandeth it not of the law written in a book. But of the law written upon his heart: which is a privilege of the covenant of grace: Heb. viii. 10, 'For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel in those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts,' &c.

Doct. 1. Then is the law granted to us when it is written upon our minds and hearts; that is, when we understand it, and our hearts are

framed to the love and obedience of it ; otherwise it is only granted to the church in general, but it is not granted to us in particular. We may have some common privilege of being trained up in the knowledge of God's will, but we have not the personal and particular benefits of the covenant of grace till we find it imprinted upon our hearts. Well, then—

1. Press God about this, not only to grant his word unto the church, but to grant it unto you, unto your persons : ' To reveal his Son in me,' Gal. i. 16. There is a general benefit, ' He hath showed his word unto Jacob, and his statutes unto Israel,' Ps. cxlvii. 19. And there is a particular benefit, ' Grant me thy law graciously.' The whole church may be under a covenant of grace, and some particular members of it may be all that while under a covenant of works, if they have only an external law without to show them what is good, but not a law within to urge and enable them to do it—*Lex jubet, gratia juvat*. Literal instruction belongeth only to the first covenant ; but when the word is made ours, that is a privilege of the second covenant, ' The ingrafted word that is able to save our souls,' James i. 21, when it is received in our hearts, and doth prosper there, and fructify unto holiness, when it is written over again by the finger of the Spirit.

2. See if this effect be accomplished, if the law be granted to you. It is so—(1.) When you have a sense and conscience of it, and you own it as your rule for the governing of your own heart and life : Ps. xxxvii. 31, ' The law of God is in his heart ; none of his steps shall slide.' It is not in his book only, but in his heart, to guide all his actions. (2.) It is so when you have some ability and strength to perform it. Their hearts carry them to it : as Ps. lx. 8, ' I delight to do thy will, O God ; yea, thy law is in my heart.' They have not only a sense and conscience of their rule, but a ready spirit to perform it, and set about this work cheerfully and heartily. A ready and cheerful obedience to God's will is the surest note that the law is given to us ; when the study and practice of it is the great employment and pleasure of our lives.

Doct. 2. (1.) The law that is odious to the flesh is acceptable to a gracious heart. What others count a restraint, they count a great benefit and favour : Rom. viii. 7, ' The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' They shun all means of searching and knowing themselves, wishing such things were not sins, or not desiring to know them to be so ; therefore hate the law, and will not come to the light, John iii. 20, ' For every one that doth evil hateth the light ; neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.' As a man that hath light ware is loath to come to the balance, or counterfeit coin to the touchstone, or as a bankrupt is loath to cast up his estate. They hate the directions and injunctions of the word as contrary to their lusts : 1 Kings xxii. 8, ' He doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil,' said wicked Ahab ; and therefore would not hear him, and yet he was the prophet of the Lord. They are loath to understand their duty, are willingly ignorant : 2 Peter iii. 5, ' For this they are willingly ignorant of,' &c. But now a gracious heart desireth nothing more than the knowledge of God's will ; how contrary soever to their lusts, they approve it : Rom. vii. 12, ' Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.' The law and commandment, that which wrought such

tragical effects in his heart. Therefore they desire the knowledge of it above all things: Ps. cxix. 72, 'The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver,' more than all earthly riches whatsoever; it is the best thing they can enjoy, to have a full direction in obedience. (2.) The practice is welcome to their souls: 1 John v. 4, 'His commandments are not grievous.' They are to others, not to them, because of the suitableness of their hearts: to a galled shoulder, the least burden is irksome, but to a sound back it is nothing; love sweetens all.

Use. Do you count the law an enemy or a friend? The law is an enemy to them that count it an enemy, and a friend to them that count it a friend. It is a rule of life to them that delight in it, and count it a great mercy to know it, and be subdued to the practice of it; but it is a covenant of works to them that withdraw the shoulder, count it a heavy burden not to be borne. Well, then, which do you complain of, the law or your corruptions? What are you troubled with, light or lusts? A gracious heart groaneth not under the strictness of the law, but under the body of death; not because God hath required so much, but because they can do no more.

Doct. 3. That the law is granted to us or written upon our hearts out of God's mere grace. Grant it graciously, saith David. I will do it, saith God; and God will do it upon his own reasons. The conditions of the covenant are conditions in the covenant, and the articles that bind us are also promises wherein God is bound to bestow so great a benefit upon poor creatures; which doth encourage us to wait for this work with the more confidence. We are sensible we have not the law so intimately, so closely applied as we should have. Lord, grant it graciously. It is his work to give us a greater sense and care of it.

SERMON XXXI.

I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.—VER. 30.

DAVID asserts his sincerity here in two things:—

1. In the rightness of his choice, *I have chosen the way of thy truth.*
2. In the accurateness of his prosecution, *thy judgments have I laid before me.*

First, For his choice, 'I have chosen the way of thy truth.' God having granted him his law, he did reject all false ways of religion, and continued in the profession of the truth of God, and the strict observance thereof. There are many controversies and doubtful thoughts among the sons of men about religion, all being varnished with specious pretences, so that a man knows not which way to choose, till by the Spirit he be enabled to take the direction of the word; that resolveth all his scruples, and makes him sit down in the way which God hath pointed for him. Thus David, as an effect of God's grace, avoucheth his own choosing the way of truth.

By the way of truth is meant true religion; as 2 Peter ii. 2, 'By whom the way of truth is evil spoken of.' It is elsewhere called 'the

good way wherein we should walk,' 1 Kings viii. 36; and 'the way of God,' Ps. xxvii. 11; and 'the way of understanding,' Prov. ix. 6; and 'the way of holiness,' Isa. xxxv. 8; and 'the way of righteousness,' 2 Peter ii. 21, 'Better they had not known the way of righteousness,' that is, never to have known the gospel, which is called the way of righteousness. It is called also 'the way of life,' Prov. vi. 23, 'And reproofs of instruction are the way of life;' and 'the way of salvation,' as Acts xvi. 17, the Pythoness gave this testimony to the apostles, 'These are the servants of God, which show unto us the way of salvation.' Now all these expressions have their use and significancy; for the way of truth, or the true way to happiness, is a good way, showed us by God, who can only discover it; and therefore called 'the way of the Lord,' or 'the way of God,' in the place before quoted; and Acts xxviii. 25, 26, it is manifested by God, and leadeth us to God. The Christian doctrine was that way of truth revealed by him who is *prima veritas*, the first truth. The ways wherein God cometh to us are his mercy and truth; and the way wherein we come to God is the way of true religion prescribed by him; it is the way of understanding, because it maketh us wise as to the great affairs of our souls, and unto the end of our lives and beings; and the way of holiness and righteousness, as directing us in all duties to God and man; and the way of life and salvation, because it brings us to everlasting happiness. This way David chose by the direction of God's word and Spirit.

Secondly, There follows the evidence of his sincerity, the accurate prosecution of his choice, 'Thy judgments have I laid before me.' The Septuagint reads it, 'I have not forgotten thy judgments.' By judgments is meant God's word, according to the sentence of which every man shall receive his doom. He that walketh in a way condemned by the word shall not prosper; for God's word is judgment, and execution shall surely follow; and by this word David got his direction how to choose this way of truth, and this he laid before him as his line. His desire was to follow what was right and true, not only as to his general course and way of profession, but in all his actions; and so it noteth his fixed purpose to live according to this blessed rule which God hath given him. To have a holy rule and an unholy life is unconsonant, inconsistent. A Christian should be a lively transcript of that religion he doth profess. If the way be a way of truth, he must always set it before him, and walk exactly.

The points are two:—

1. That there being many crooked paths in the world, it concerns us to choose the way of truth.

2. That when we have chosen the way of truth, or taken up the profession of the true religion, the rules and institutions of it should ever be before us.

There are two great faults of men—one in point of choice, the other in point of pursuit. Either they do not choose right, or they do not live up to the rules of their profession. Both are prevented by these points.

Doct. 1. That there being many crooked paths in the world, it concerns us to choose the way of truth.

I shall give you the sense of it in these eight propositions or considerations.

Prop. 1. The Lord in his holy providence hath so permitted it that there ever have been, and are, and, for aught we can see, will be, controversies about the way of truth and right worship. There was such a disease introduced into the world by the fall, that most of the remedies which men choose do but show the strength and malignity of the disease. They choose out false ways of coming to God and returning to him: Micah iv. 5, 'All people will walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.' Mark, there is *his* God, and *our* God, and then *all* people, noting their common agreement in error; *all* people will, *every* man, noting their diversity as to the particular false way of religion and worship which they take up to themselves. When they turn their back upon the true God, and the knowledge of him, then they are endless in seeking out false gods: Jonah i. 5, 'They cried every man to his god.' Among pagans, even in one ship, there were many false gods worshipped.

The controversy about religion mainly lay at first between the Jews and the pagans. The pagans had their gods, and the Jews had the Lord God of Israel, the only true God. Yea, among the pagans themselves there was a great diversity—'every man will walk'—and sometimes a hot contention; and many times there were hot contests, which was the better god, the leek or the garlic. When religion, which restrains our passions, is made the fuel of them, and instead of a judge becomes a party, men give themselves up headlong to all manner of bitter zeal and strife; and persuasion of truth and right, which doth calm men in other differences, are here inflamed by that bitter zeal every one hath for his god, his service and party; and the difference is greater especially between the two dissenting parties that come nearest to one another.

We read afterward, when this difference lay more closely between the Jews and the Samaritans, and Christ decides, that salvation was of the Jews. The Jews were certainly the better party: John iv. 20, 'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship'—Mount Sion, or Mount Gerizim, which was the temple of the true God, one or the other? Then we read afterward among the Jews themselves in their private sects, who were very keen against each other, Pharisees and Sadducees; and Paul, though an enemy to them both, and was looked upon as a common adversary, yet they had rather join with him than among themselves, Acts xxiii. 8, 9. Afterward you find the scene of contention lay between the Jews and Christians: Acts xiv. 4, 'But the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.' There it grew into an open contest and quarrel.

And then between the Christians and the pagans, which was the occasion of that uproar at Ephesus, Acts xix. Ay! and after religion had gotten ground, and the way of truth had prevailed in the world, then the difference lay betwixt Christians themselves; yea, while religion was but getting up, between the followers of the apostles and the school and sect of Simon Magnus, those impure libertines and Gnostics who went out of them because they were not of them, 1 John ii. 19. And afterward in the church story we read of the conten-

tions between the Catholics and the Arians, the Catholics and the Pelagians, the Catholics and the Donatists, and other sects.

And now, last of all in the dregs of time, between the Protestants and the Papists, that settled party with whom the church of God is now in snit. As the rod of Aaron did devour the rods of the enchanters, so the word of God, which is the rod of his strength, doth and will in time eat up and consume all untruths whatsoever; but for a great while the contests may be very hot and sharp. Yea, among those that profess a reformed Christianity, there are the Lutherans and the Calvinists.

And nearer to us, I will not so much as mention those invidious names and flags of defiance which are set up, under which different parties do encamp at home. Thus there ever have been, and will be, contests about religion and disputes about the way of truth; yea, different opinions in the church, and among Christians themselves, about divine truths revealed in the scripture.

The Lord permits this in his holy and righteous providence, that the godly may be stirred up more to embrace truth upon evidence with more affection, that they may more encourage and strengthen themselves and resolve for God; for when all people will walk every one in the name of his god, 'we will walk in the name of our God for ever,' Micah iv. 5. And the Lord doth it that he may manifest the sincere, that when Christ calls, Who is on my side? who are willing to stick to him whatever hazards and losses they may incur: 1 Cor. xi. 19, 'There must be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.' Ay! and that there may be a ready plague of strong delusion and lies for them that receive not the truth in the love of it, 2 Thes. ii. 11, 12; for damnable errors are the dungeons in which God holds carnal souls that play the wanton, and trifle with his truth, and never admit the love and power of it to come into their hearts.

Prop. 2. True religion is but one, and all other ways false, noxious, and pestilent: Eph. iv. 5, 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism.' There are many ways in the world, but there is but one good and certain way that leads to salvation. So much the apostle intimates when he saith, 'He will have all men to be saved.' How would he have them saved? 1 Tim. ii. 4, 'For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;' which text implies that salvation is by the knowledge of the truth, or knowledge of the true way; others tend to destruction. And so God promiseth, Jer. xxxii. 39, that he will give all the elect 'one heart and one way.' Though there be differences even in the church of God about lesser truths, yet there is but one true religion in the essence and substance of it; I mean, as to those truths which are absolutely necessary to salvation. To make many doors to heaven is to set wide open the gates of hell. Many men think that men of all religions shall be saved, provided they be of a good life, and walk according to their light.

In these later times divers unsober questionists are grown weary of the Christian religion, and by an excess of charity would betray their faith; and while they plead for the salvation of Turks and heathens, scarce show themselves good Christians. The Christian religion is not only the most compendious way to true happiness, but it is the

only way : John xvii. 3, 'This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' There is the sum of what is necessary to life eternal ; that there is one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be known, loved, obeyed, worshipped, and enjoyed ; and the Lord Jesus Christ to be owned as our Redeemer and Saviour, to bring us home to God, and to procure for us the gifts of pardon and life ; and this life to be begun here by the Spirit, and to be perfected in heaven. This is the sum of all that can be said that is necessary to salvation. Certainly none can be saved without Christ ; 'for there is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved but by Jesus Christ,' Acts iv. 12, and none can be saved by Christ but they that know him and believe in him.

If God hath extraordinary ways to reveal Christ to men, we know not. This is our rule ; no adults, no grown persons can be saved but they that know him and believe in him. And now Christ hath been so long owned in the world, and his knowledge so far propagated, why should we dream of any other way of salvation ? To us there is but one God and one faith. The good-fellow gods of the heathen could brook company and partnership, but the true God will be alone acknowledged. As the sun drowns the light of all the stars, so God will shine alone. No man can be saved without these two things—without a fixed intention of God as his last end, and a choice of Jesus Christ as the only way and means of attaining thereunto.

These things are set down in scripture as of infallible necessity to salvation ; and therefore, though there be several apprehensions and contentions about ways of salvation and righteousness, yet there is but one true religion, and all other ways are false.

Prop. 3. As soon as any begin to be serious, they begin to have a conscience about the finding out this one only true way wherein they may be saved. Alas ! before men take up that religion which the chance of their education offers, without examination or any serious reason of their choice, they walk, in the language of the prophet, 'according to the trade of Israel ;' they live as they are born and bred, and take up truth and error as their faction leads them ; or else pass from one religion to another, as a man changeth his room or bed, and make a slight thing of opinions, and float up and down like light chaff, in a various uncertainty, according as their company or the posture of their interest is changed. But a serious and awakened conscience will be careful to lay the groundwork of religion sure ; they build for eternity, therefore the foundation needs to be well laid. The woman of Samaria, as soon as she was touched at heart and began to have a conscience, she began also to have doubtful thoughts about her estate and religion. Christ had convinced her of living in adultery, by that means to bring her to God ; but now she would fain know the true way of worship : John iv. 20, 'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.' They that have a sense of eternity upon them will be diligent to know the right way. The same errand brought Nicodemus to Christ : John iii. 2, 'Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God.' He would fain know how he might come to God. So the young nobleman in the gospel : Mat. xix. 16, 'Good master, what

good thing shall I do that I might have eternal life?' Though he disliked the bargain afterwards, yet he cheapens it, and asks what way he must take. For a great while persons have only a memorative knowledge, some apprehension which doth furnish their talk about religion; and after their memory is planted with notions, then they are without judgment and conscience; but when they begin to have a judgment and a conscience, then it is their business to make religion sure, and to be upon stable terms with God.

Prop. 4. When we begin to have a conscience about the true way, we must inquire into the grounds and reasons of it, that we may resolve upon evidence, not take it up because it is commonly believed, but because it is certainly true; not take it up by chance, but by choice; not because we know no other, but because we know no better. It is not enough to stumble upon truth blindly, but we must receive it knowingly, and upon solid conviction of the excellency of it, comparing doctrine with doctrine, and thing with thing, and the weak grounds the adversaries of the truth have to build upon. The precepts of the word are direct and plain for this: 1 Thes. v. 21, 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good; and 1 John iv. 1, 'Try the spirits whether they are of God.' There must be trying and searching, and not taking up our religion merely by the dictates of another. The papists are against this, which argueth a distrust of their own doctrine; they will not come to the waters of jealousy, lest their belly should swell and their thigh rot. They dare not admit people to trial and choice, and give them liberty to search the scriptures; whereas truth is not afraid of contradiction: they first put out the light, then would have men shut their eyes. But what do they allege, since we are bidden to prove all things, and to try the spirits? That these places belong to the doctors of the church, and not to the people. But that exception is frivolous, because the apostolical epistles were directed to the body of the people; and they who are advised to prove all things are such as are charged to respect 'those that are over them in the Lord,' ver. 12, and not to 'despise prophecies,' ver. 20, and then 'prove all things,' ver. 21; and in another place, those that he calls *παιδιά*, 'little children,' them he adviseth to try the spirits; all that have a care of their salvation should thus do. Eusebius doth mention it as one of the errors of Apelles, that what he had taught them they should not pry into and examine, but take it and swallow it. And Mahomet forbids his followers to inquire into their religion.

Object. But is every private Christian bound to study controversy, so as to be able to answer all the adversaries of the truth?

I answer—No; it is a special gift, bestowed and required of some that have leisure and abilities, and it is a duty required of ministers and church guides to convince gainsayers and stop their mouths. Ministers must be able to hold fast the truth. The word is, Titus i. 9, *ἀντεχόμενον*, 'holding fast the faithful word;' it signifies, holding fast a thing which another would wrest from us. We should be good at holding and drawing, to preserve the truth when others would take it out of our hands; otherwise he tells us, Rom. xiv. 1, 'Him that is weak in faith receive, but not to doubtful disputations.' Yet every

true Christian is so far to be settled in the true religion, and study the grounds of it, that he may be fully persuaded in his own mind, Rom. xiv. 5, and may not be like chaff, but may be at a certainty in the way of truth. Surely the business is worthy our serious care. Eternal life and death are not trifles; therefore be not rash in this, but go upon sure evidence.

1. The providence of God doth necessitate us to such a course. Because there are different ways propounded to man, therefore he must follow all, or take up one upon evidence. Not only in point of practice, as life and death is set before us, Deut. xxx. 15, and the broad way and the narrow, Mat. vii. 13, 14; not only to counterwork the rebellions of the flesh, and the way of wisdom and folly, Prov. ix. No; but in matters of opinion and controversy about religion there will meet us several ways, Jer. vi. 16, and all pretending to God.

Therefore what should we do but search, pray, resolve to be thus with God, and take the way God will direct us? As the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, or at the head of the ways, to make divination, Ezek. xxi. 21, so you meet with partings of ways that you need deliberate to make a wise choice; therefore the providence of God doth put you upon trial. Think, there are false teachers; ay, and the most holy and upright men are but in part enlightened, and they may lead you into a crooked path and a byway; they may mislead us; therefore we ought to see with our own eyes.

2. Consider the sad consequence of erring. There are damnable errors and heresies, 2 Peter ii. 1. Vice is not only destructive and damnable to the soul, but error. Now eternal damnation and salvation are no small matters. A man cannot please God in a false belief, how laudable so ever his life be; and they cannot put the fault upon others, that they are misled by them; for 'if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch;' not only the blind guide, but the blind follower.

3. If we light upon a good way without search and choice, it is but a happy mistake when we have not sufficient evidence. You may have the advantage ground, by chance may light upon a better way, and it is God's providence you are born there where it may be so. A Turk hath the same ground for his respect to Mahomet that many have for their owning of Christ; it is that religion he was born and bred in. This will not be counted faith, but simple credulity: 'The simple believeth every word.' It is almost as dangerous to love a truth ignorantly as to broach an error knowingly. *Temere creditur*, &c., saith Tertullian—that is believed in vain which is believed without the grounds whereupon it is propounded. The faith of Christians should not be conjectural or traditional. If a man should not have reasons to sway his choice, he will never be able to check temptations even in practical things. If men have not received religion upon true grounds, and, as Cyprian saith, when they do not look into the reason of these things, and when the Christian religion is represented to them without evidence and certainty, they have but a probable faith, that is always weak against temptation, either against lusts within or errors and seductions without; therefore we had need look to the grounds of these things.

4. The profit is exceeding great, for truth will have a greater force upon the heart when we see the grounds and reasons of it. We are exposed here in this lower world to great difficulties and temptations. Now, when we do not lay up the supreme truths of religion with certainty and assurance, alas! these temptations will prevail over us and carry us away. Atheism lies at the root; therefore are there such doubtings in the heart in point of comfort, such defects in the life and conversation, because truth was never soundly laid in the soul, it was not chosen. If we were soundly settled in the belief of the unity of the divine essence, and the verity of salvation by Christ, and the divine authority of the scriptures, and the certainty of the promises therein, certainly we would be more firmly engaged to God; comfort would sooner follow us, and we would have better success in the heavenly life. If the fire were well kindled, it would of itself break out into a flame. If we did believe, indeed, that Jesus the Son of God hath done so much for us, and had this firmly settled in our hearts, this would be a real ground of comfort and constancy: 2 Peter iii. 17, 'Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.' It is put in opposition to one that stands by the steadfastness of another; he might be carried away by the error of the wicked. No; but he must have somewhat to say to engage his own heart, otherwise he is led thereby with every fond suggestion and simple credulity, and easily abused. But when men have chosen and are well fixed, they are not easily shaken. When men take up religion upon trust, without a satisfying argument, they are like light chaff, carried through the whole compass of the winds; as mariners dispose of several winds which blow in the corners of the world into a circle and compass (the apostle's word alludes to that), 'We are carried all round the points of the compass,' Eph. iv. 14. When the chain of consent is broken, they are in continual danger to be seduced; and the greatest adversaries of truth are able to use such reasons as have in them great probability to captivate the affections of a weak understanding, by their sophistical arguments and insinuating persuasions.

Prop. 5. After this inquiry into the grounds and reasons of the way of truth, then we must resolve and choose it, 'I have chosen the way of truth,' as the way wherein we are to walk: Jer. vi. 16, 'Ask where is the good way, and walk therein, and then ye shall find rest for your souls.' You must not only so understand and form your opinions aright, not only *see* what is the good way, but *walk* therein; keep that way which you find to be the way of truth, renouncing all others. We should not lie under a floating uncertainty or sceptical irresolution, as those that keep themselves in a wary reservation, that are 'ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth,' 2 Tim. iii. 7—*ἐπιγινώσκον ἀληθείας*, the word is, they do not come to 'the acknowledgment of the truth;' always examining, but never resolve. You are to 'prove all things,' but not in order to unsettlement, but settlement, 1 Thes. v. 21. Consider, inquire, where is God's presence most? where is the Son like to be glorified, and souls better to be satisfied, and built up in the faith of Jesus Christ? and resolve and stick there.

Prop. 6. That no religion will be found fit to be chosen upon sound

evidence but the Christian. How shall I be persuaded of this? Why, that religion which God hath revealed, that religion which suits with the ends of a religion, that is, with the inward necessities of mankind, and most commodiously provides for man, that is true religion. Surely the necessities of mankind are to be relieved thereby. The great ends of a religion are God's glory and our happiness. God is glorified by a return of the obedience of the creature, and man is made happy by the enjoyment of God. All these ends are advanced by this way of truth.

First, That is the only religion which is revealed by God, for certainly so must a religion be if it be true; for that which pleaseth him must be according to his will; and who can know his will but by his own revelation, by some sign whereby God hath discovered it to us? Alas! if men were to sit brooding a religion themselves, what a strange business would they hatch and bring forth! If they were to carve out the worship of God, they might please themselves, but could never please God. Vain men indeed are ready to frame God like themselves, and foolishly imagine what pleaseth them pleaseth him also; they still conceive of God according to their own fancy. And this was the reason why the wisest heathens, having no revelation, no sense of God's will but what offered itself by the light of nature, they would employ their wits to devise a religion. But what a monstrous chimera and strange fancy did they bring forth! 'Professing themselves wise, they became fools,' Rom. i. 22. Though they knew there was a great and eternal being by the light of nature, yet the apostle saith they became vain, *ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς*, in their imaginations, how this infinite being should be worshipped; therefore what they carved out was not an honour, but a disgrace; they devised gods and goddesses that were patrons of murder, theft, and all manner of filthiness, and brought out Bacchus, the god of riot and good-fellowship, or the patron of boon companions, and Venus, the patroness of love and wantonness. But now God hath showed us his will, 'He hath showed us what is good, and what he doth require of us,' Micah vi. 8. Now that the gospel is a revelation from God, appears by the matter, which is so suitable to the nature of God; it hath such an impress of God's wisdom, goodness, power upon it, that plainly it hath passed God; it is like such an infinite and eternal being as God is, in the worship and duties prescribed; it is far above the wisdom of mere man, though very agreeable to those relics of wisdom which are left in us. So that this is that true religion which surely will please God, because it came from him at first, and could come from no other. And also besides the evidence it carrieth with it, and the impress and stamp of God upon it, we have the word of those that brought this doctrine to us; and if we had nothing else, if they say, 'Thus saith the Lord,' &c., we are bound to believe them, they being persons of a valuable credit, that sought not themselves, but the glory of him that sent them. When the first messengers of it were men of such an unquestionable credit, that had no ends of their own, but ran all the extreme hazards and displeasures, surely it cannot incline us to think they did seek God's glory by a lie. Yea, they did evidence their mission from God by miracles that God sent them. Surely this doctrine is from heaven. Ay, and still God in his providence shows it from heaven, both in his

internal government of the world ;—he blesseth it to the comfort of the conscience or to the terrifying of the conscience, for it works both ways. Wicked men are afraid of the light, lest their deeds should be made manifest, John iii. 20 ;—and also to the comforting and settling the conscience, that we may have great joy by believing in Christ. This for his internal government. And then his external government, by answering of prayers, fulfilling promises, accomplishing prophecies : Ps. xviii. 30, ‘As for God, his way is perfect ; the word of the Lord is tried : he is a buckler to all that trust in him.’ Put God to the trial by a regular confidence in a humble walking, and he will make good his promises ; ay, and make good his threatenings. When people are ripe for judgment, God will fulfil the threatenings of his word, and will accomplish what is spoken by the prophets and apostles ; and God will reveal his wrath from heaven ‘against all unrighteousness of men,’ Rom. i. 18. So that here are plain signs that this is a doctrine revealed from God, and God can best tell us how he is to be worshipped and pleased.

Secondly, Besides God’s revelation, it notably performs all that which a man would expect in a religion, and so suits the necessities of man as well as the honour of God. Why ?

1. That is the true religion which doth most draw off the minds of men from things temporal and earthly to things celestial and eternal, that we may think of them and prosecute them. The sense of another world, an estate to come, is the great foundation upon which all religion is grounded. All its precepts and promises, which are like to gain upon the heart of man, they receive their force from the promise of an unseen glory, and eternal punishments which are provided for the wicked and contemners of the gospel. The whole design of this religion is to take us off from the pleasures of the flesh and the baits of this world, that we may see things to come. It is the excellency of the Christian faith that it reveals the doctrines of eternal life clearly, which all other religions in the world only could guess at. There were some guesses, but still great uncertainty, but obscure thoughts and apprehensions of such an estate. But here ‘life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel,’ 2 Tim. i. 10. Alas ! there is a mist upon it in all other representations ; they seem to see it, yet see it not. But this is brought to light in the gospel ; it makes a free offer of it, upon condition of faith in Christ, John iii. 16. It quickens us to look after it ; all its design is to breed in man this noble spirit, by ‘looking upon things that are above, and not upon things on earth,’ Col. iii. 1, 2 ; and it endeavours, with great power and persuasiveness, that we may make it our scope, that we may neglect all present advantages rather than miss this ; and make it our great design that we may ‘look not to the things which are seen, but to the things unseen,’ 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. This is the way of truth, because we believe it will make the worshippers of it everlastingly happy, which all men by nature have inquired about. Now it is but reason that a man’s work be ended before he receive his wages, and if God will reward the virtuous, that it should be in the other world ; for our work is not ended until we die ; and we have a presagency of another world : there is another world which the soul of man thinks of. Now this is that

which Christianity drives at, that we may look after our reward with God, and escape that tribulation, wrath, and anguish, which shall come upon every soul that doeth evil.

2. That doctrine which establisheth purity of heart and life, as the only means to attain this blessedness, certainly that is the way of truth: Ps. xxiv. 3, 4, 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity.' There is no true holiness, no subjection of heart to God, but by the Christian doctrine: John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.' Hereby we know the word of God is truth, because it is so powerful to sanctification: Ps. cxix. 140, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' All religions endeavour some kind of excellency; but now the holiness that is recommended in other religions is a mere outside holiness in comparison of what Christianity calls for. We have a strict rule, high patterns, blessed encouragement; it promiseth a powerful Spirit, even the Spirit of the holy God, to work our heart to this holiness that is required. The aim of that religion is to remedy the disease introduced by the fall. All other religions do but make up a part of the disease, and the gospel is the only remedy and cure; therefore this is the way of truth you should choose.

3. That doctrine which provideth for peace of conscience, and freedom from perplexing fears, which are wont to haunt us by reason of God's justice and wrath for our former misdeeds, that doctrine hath the true effect of a religion. Man easily apprehends himself as God's creature; and being God's creature, he is his subject, bound to obey him; and having exceedingly failed in his obedience (as experience shows), he is much haunted with fears and doubts. Now that is the religion that, in a kindly manner, doth dispossess us of these dreads and fears, and comes in upon the soul to deliver us from our bondage, and those guilty fears which are so natural to us by reason of sin. And therefore in a consultation about religion, if I were to choose, and had not by the grace of God been baptized into the Christian faith, and had the advantage to look abroad and consider, then I would bethink myself, Where shall I find rest for my soul, and from those fears which lie at the bottom of conscience, and are easily stirred in us, and sometimes are very raging? There is a fire smothering within, and many times it is blown up into a flame; where shall I get remedy for these fears? I rather pitch upon this, because the Holy Ghost doth, Jer. vi. 16, &c., as if he had said, If you will know what is the good way, take that way where you may find rest for your souls; not a false rest that is easily disturbed, not a carnal security, but where you may find true solid peace; that when you are most serious, and mind your great errand and business, you may comfort yourselves, and rejoice in the God that made you. In a false way of religion there is no establishment of heart and sound peace: Heb. ix. 9, 'They could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience.' That certainly is the true religion which makes the worshipper perfect as to the conscience, which gives him a well-tempered peace in his soul; not a sinful security, but a holy solid peace, that when he hath a great sense of his duty upon him, yet he can comfortably wait upon God. And you

know our Lord himself useth this very motive to invite men: Mat. xi. 29, 'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;' that is, take the Christian religion, that easy yoke upon you, and you shall find rest for your souls. The Lord Jesus is our peace, and the ground of our peace; but we never find rest until we come under his yoke. Christians, search where you will, there is no serious answer to that grand question, which is the great scruple of the fallen creature, Micah vi. 7, how to appease angry justice. And we are told of those locusts who are seducing spirits, which come out of the bottomless pit, Rev. ix.; they had stings in their tails; their doctrine is not soundly comfortable to the conscience. Among others, this is designed by those locusts, that half Christianity which is taken up by the light-skirted people, which reflect upon privileges only; therefore there are such scruples and intricate debates. But some advantage there is, and some progress they may make in the spiritual life, that cry up them without duties; but they never have found peace upon their souls unless the Lord pardon their mistakes, and doth sanctify their reflections upon those spiritual and unseen privileges, so as to check their opposite desires and inclinations. It is best to be settled in God's way, by justification and sanctification. There is a wound wherein no plaster will serve for the cure, but the way the gospel doth take. Consider altogether Christ's renewing and reconciling grace, the whole evangelical truth, this gospel which was founded in the blood of Christ, his new covenant, and sealed with God's authority, and doth so fitly state duties and privileges, and lead a man by the one to the other. This is that which will appease the Lord. There is no settling of the conscience without it; and therefore, whatever you would expect in a religion, here you find it in that blessed religion which is recommended to us in the gospel or new covenant; there is such holiness and true sense of the other world, which breeds an excellency and choiceness of spirit in men.

Prop. 7. Of all sects and sorts among Christians, the Protestant reformed religion will be found to be the way of truth. Why? Because there is the greatest suitableness to the great ends, the greatest agreement and harmony with God's revelation, which they profess to be their only rule. I say, as to God's worship, there is most simplicity, without that theatrical pomp which makes the worship of God a dead thing, and so most suitable to a spiritual being, and conducive to spiritual ends, to God who is a Spirit, and who will be worshipped in spirit and truth; for there God is our reward, and to be served by faith, love, obedience, trust, prayers, praises, and a holy administration of the word and seals; more suitable to the genius of the scripture, without the pageantry of numerous idle ceremonies, like flourishes about a great letter, which do rather hide religion than any way discover it; yea, betray it to contempt and scorn to a considering man. Besides, the great design of this religion is to draw men from earth to heaven, by calling them to a serious profession of saving truth. Popery is nothing but Christianity abused, and is a doctrine suited to policy and temporal ends; and it is supported by worldly greatness. And then as to holiness, which is the genuine product of a religion, the true genuine holiness is to be found, or should be found according to their

principles, among Protestants and reformed ; not external mortification, but in purging the heart. And here is the true peace of conscience, while men are directed to look to Christ's reconciling and renewing grace, and not to seek their acceptance in the merit of their own works, and voluntary penance and satisfactions, and many other doctrines which put the conscience upon the rack. And then all this is submitted to be tried by the scriptures, which apparently are acknowledged by them to be the word, without running to unwritten traditions and the authority of men. Again, all this is recommended with the special presence of God as to gifts and graces, blessing these churches continually more and more. Therefore, if ever a man will find rest for his soul, and be soundly quiet within himself, here he must fix and choose, and take up the way of truth. Popery is but heathenism disguised with a Christian name : their penal satisfactions are like the gashing and lancing of Baal's priests ; their mediators of intercession are like the doctrines of demons among the Gentiles, for they had their middle powers, glorified heroes ; their holy water suits with the heathen lustrations ; their costly offerings to their images answer to the sacrifices and oblations to appease their gods, which the idolaters would give for the sin of their souls ; adoring their relics is like the respects the heathens had to their departed heroes ; and as they had their tutelar gods for every city, so these their saints for every city and nation ; their St Sebastian for the pestilence, their Apollonia for the toothache, and the like. It is easy to rake in this dirt. It was not for the devil's interest, when the ensign of the gospel was lifted up, to draw men to downright heathenism ; therefore he did more secretly mingle the customs and superstitions of the Gentiles with the food of life, like poison conveyed in perfume, that the souls of men might be more infected, alienated, and drawn from God. Popery doth not only add to the true religion, but destroys it, and is contrary to it. Let any considering man, that is not prejudiced, compare the face of the Roman synagogue with the beauty of the reformed churches, and they will see where Christianity lies. There you will find another sacrifice for expiation of sin than the death of Christ ; the communion of the cup, so expressly commanded in the word of God, taken away from the people ; reading the scriptures forbidden to laics, as if the word of God were a dangerous book ; prayers in an unknown language ; images set up, and so they are guilty, if not of primitive idolatry (which all the water in the sea cannot wash them clear of), yet certainly of secondary idolatry, which is the setting up an idol in God's worship contrary to the second commandment, the image of the invisible God represented by stones and pictures ; invocation of saints and angels allowed ; the doctrine of transubstantiation, contrary to the end of the sacrament ; works of supererogation ; popes' pardons ; purgatory for faults already committed, as if Christ had not already satisfied ; papal infallibility, not only contrary to faith, but sense and reason ; their ridiculous mass and ceremonies ; and many such human inventions, besides the word and against it. But the Protestants are contented with the simplicity of the scriptures, the word of God, and the true sacraments of Christ. Therefore you see what is the way of truth we should stick to.

Prop. 8. That in the private differences among the professors of the reformed Protestant religion, a man is to choose the best way, but to hold charity towards dissenters. In the true church, in matters of lesser moment, there may be sundry differences; for until men have the same degree of light, it cannot be expected they should be all of a mind. Babies will think one thing, grown persons will have other apprehensions; sick persons will have their frenzies and doubtings, which the sound cannot like. The apostle's rule is, Phil. iii. 15, 16, 'Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you,' &c. There are two parts of that rule. The perfect must be thus minded; they that are fully instructed in the mind of God, they must practise as they believe. Strings in tune must not be brought down to those that are out of tune. But if others tainted with error do not give a thorough assent to all divine truth, yet let us walk together, saith the apostle, so far as we are agreed. God, that hath begun to enlighten them in other things, will in time discover their mistakes. Thus far the true Christian charity takes place. This should be our rule. Here we are agreed in the Christian reformed religion, and in all the points of it; let us walk together so far, and in lesser differences let us bear with and forbear one another in love. I speak now of Christian toleration; for the magistrate's toleration and forbearance, how far he is to interpose, that is another case: Eph. iv. 2, 'With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering forbearing one another in love.' What is bearing with one another? Not conniving at their sin, or neglecting ways to reclaim them; or forbear our profession when God calls us to it—they are great cases how far profession may be suspended, and how far it may be carried on—but to restore them with meekness; to own them in those things wherein they are owned by God; not to practise that antichristian humour which is now gotten into Protestantism, of unchurching, unministering, unchristianising one another, but to own one another in all those things wherein we are agreed, without imposing or censuring; not rending into factions, not endeavouring to destroy all, that we may promote the particular interest of one party to the prejudice of the whole; but walking under one common rule. And if others shall prove peevish, and if angry brethren shall call us bastards, and disclaim us as not belonging to the same father, we ought not to reject them, but still call them brethren; if they will not join with us we cannot help it, yet they are brethren notwithstanding that disclaim; and how pettishly and frowardly soever they carry themselves in their differences, a good Christian should take up this resolution (their tongue is not Christ's fan to purge his floor), though they may condemn things which Christ will own, to bear their reproofs, and love them still; for the iniquity of their carriage doth not take away our obligation to them. As in the relation of inferiors, we are bound to be obedient to the froward as well as to the gentle parents and masters; so in the duties that are to pass between equals, we are to bear with the froward and to overcome their inclinations. For though we have corruptions that are apt to alienate us, and will put us upon furious passions, uncomely heats and divisions, yet God forbid we should omit any part of our duty to them, for uncharitable brethren are brethren still.

SERMON XXXII.

I have chosen the way of truth : thy judgments have I laid before me.—VER. 30.

I come now to answer an objection which may be made.

Object. But if you be so earnest to maintain unity among your own sects, why do you separate from the Papists, who are Christians as well as you, and own many things of Christianity wherein you may agree with them?

I answer—In the general, certainly the separation of one Christian from another is a great evil, which should be carefully avoided; and if walls of separation be set up by others, yet we must do what in us lies to demolish them. They do no service to Christ that make separations needlessly, when as much as is possible there should be a union and coalition between Christians. Now, what shall we say to this separation from Rome, who were in the possession of a Christianity? I tell you, this bugbear needs not fright us out of the good way, if we can but clear three things to you.

1. That as to the rise, it was neither unjust nor unnecessary.

2. As to the manner of it, it was not made rashly and lightly, but as became them that had a serious sense of the interest of Christ and of his church in the world.

3. As to the continuance of this separation, that if it were made upon good grounds, and the same grounds still continue, certainly we have no cause to revert and return back; the Roman synagogue not being grown better, but much worse, since the first breach.

If all these can be proved, there is no reason to complain of our separation.

First, That this separation was neither unjust nor unnecessary. It is unjust if it be made without a cause: it is unnecessary if it be made without a sufficient cause, or such a cause as may warrant so great a breach in the Christian world. Certain it is that the schism lieth not in the separation, but the cause; and so is not chargeable on those that make the separation, but on those that give the cause. So that if we would examine whether the separation be good, I think we must examine the causes of it; therefore let us a little consider this very thing. Certainly the cause was not unjust; there was a cause (I shall show that by and by); and that it was not unnecessary, without a sufficient cause, and so no way culpable.

The business is, whether the controversies be of such moment as that there should be such a breach among Christians that we and they should keep such a distance (I speak only to the sufficiency of the cause, the justness we shall see by and by). Of what moment soever the controversies were, if the things that are taken to be errors be imposed as a condition of communion, a Christian cannot join himself with them. Certainly it is no sin to abstain from the communion of any church on earth, where the conditions of its communion are apparently unlawful and against conscience, though it may be the matters in debate be not of great moment. I only speak pro-

visionally, be they or be they not of moment, yet if these be propounded as conditions of its communion; for no man is necessitated to sin. In some cases it is lawful to withdraw out of a place for fear of danger and infection; as if a house or town be infected with the pestilence, it is but a necessary caution to look to ourselves betimes, and withdraw out of that house or town.

But now when no men are permitted to tarry but those that are infected with the disease, the case is out of dispute; the sound must be gone, and withdraw from them by all the means they can. Now, such are the corruptions of Popery, and the danger of seducement so manifest, that 'little children are by all means to keep themselves from idols,' 1 John v. 21. We should be very cautious and wary of that communion wherein there is so much hazard of salvation, if possible; we should keep ourselves untainted. But when we are bound to the belief, practice, profession of those errors, there needs no more debate; a Christian must be gone, else he will sin against conscience. Now this is the case clearly between them and us. Suppose the corruptions were not great, nor the errors damnable, yet when the profession of them is required, and the belief of them as certain truths is imposed, we are to endure all manner of extremity rather than yield to them. Therefore much more when it is easy to be proved that they are manifest and momentous corruptions. Therefore certainly to leave the communion of the popish faction is but to return to our union and communion with Christ; it can be no fault to leave them that left Christ, and the ancient faith and church. The innocent husband that leaves the adulterous wife is not to be blamed, for she had first broken the bonds, and violated the rights of the conjugal relation. Or, a good citizen and soldier are not to be blamed in forsaking their governor and captain, who first revolted from his allegiance to his prince, ay, and when he would engage them in the same rebellion too.

Secondly, As to the management of it, or the manner how it was carried on. It was not made rashly and lightly, without trying all good means, and offering to have their complaints debated in a free council; in the meantime continuing in their station, and managing the cause of Christ with meek but yet zealous defences, until they were driven thence by antichristian fury for blowing the trumpet, and warning the church of her danger from that corrupt party; until persecuted by censures not only ecclesiastical but civil; cast out of the church, put to death, some for witnessing against, others merely for not owning and practising, these corruptions; and hunted out from their corners, where they were willing to hide, and worship God in secret, with all rigour and tyranny; driven first out of the church, then out of the world by fire and sword, unless they would communicate with them in their sin: thus were they used. So that the Romanists cannot charge the Protestants with schism for leaving their communion, any more than a man that thrusteth another out of doors can be offended at his departure. Yea, when the reformed did set up other churches, it was after all hopes of reformation were lost and defeated; and the princes, magistrates, pastors, and people were grown into a multitude, and did in great numbers run to the banner

which God had displayed because of his truth, and so could not in conscience and spiritual safety live without the means of grace and the benefit of ordinances and church-societies, lest they should be scattered as sheep without a shepherd, and become a ready prey to Satan.

And then this separation, which was so necessary, was carried on with love and pity, and with great distinction between the corruptions from which they separated, and the persons from whom they separated; and they had the same affection to them, and carried it all along just as those that are freed from Turkish slavery, and have broke prison, and invited the other Christian captives to second them. It may be they have not the heart and courage to venture with them; though they leave them fast in their enemies' chains, and will not return to their company, they cease not to love and pity them, though it were long, of their fear they did not enjoy the like liberty themselves.

Thirdly, As to the continuance of this separation. It was made upon good grounds, and it is still to be continued upon the same grounds. The Roman Church is not grown better, but worse; and that which was before but mere practice and custom is since established by law and canon, and they have ratified and owned their errors in the Council of Trent. And now Antichrist is more discovered, and God hath multiplied and reformed the churches, and blessed them with his gifts and graces, and the conversion of many souls, surely we should not now grow weary of our profession, as if novelty only led us to make this opposition. If we shall think so slightly of all the truths of God and blood of the martyrs, and all this ado to bring things to this pass, that Christ may gain ground, and we should tamely give up our cause at last, as some have done implicitly, and others shrink, and let the Papists carry it quietly, it is such wickedness as will be the brand and eternal infamy of this generation. If Hagar the bond-woman, that hath been cast out, should return again, and vaunt it over Sarah the lawful wife, the mischiefs that would follow are unspeakable. God permitted it to be so for a while in Queen Mary's days; and what precious blood was shed during that time we all know; and shall we again return to the garlic and onions of Egypt, as being weary of the distractions of the wilderness, and expose the interest of Christ, merely for our temporal good, which we cannot be secured of either? Therefore, since this separation was not unjust, without cause, nor unnecessary, without sufficient cause, and since it was carried on with so much meekness and Christian lenity, and since Rome is not grown better, but worse rather, surely we have no reason to be stumbled at for our departure from that apostatical church.

In short, this separation was not culpable; it came not from error of mind: 'They went out from us, but they were not of us,' 1 John ii. 19. Not from corruption in manners: 'These are those that separate themselves, sensual, not having the Spirit,' Jude 19. Not from strife and contention, like those separations at Corinth, where 'one was of Paul, another of Apollos,' &c., 1 Cor. i. 12; not from pride and censoriousness, like those that said, 'Stand farther off; I am holier than thou,' Isa. lxxv. 5. Not from coldness and tergiversation, as those that 'forsook the assembling of themselves together,' because they

were in danger of this kind of Christianity, Heb. x. 25. But from conscience; and this not so much from the Christians, as from the errors of Christians; from the corruptions, rather than the corrupted. There is no reason we should be frightened with this suggestion.

But now, because that separation is good or evil according to the causes of it, let us a little consider the state of Rome when God first summoned his people to come out of this spiritual Babylon; and if it be the same still, there is no cause to retract the change.

The state of it may be considered either as to its government, doctrine, or worship; the tyranny of their discipline and government, the heresy of their doctrine, and the idolatry of their worship. And if our fathers could not, and if we cannot, have communion with them without partaking of their sin, it is certain the separation was and is still justifiable.

First, As to their government. Three things are matter of just offence to the reformed churches:—

1. The universality or vast extent and largeness of that dominion and empire which they arrogate.

2. The supremacy and absolute authority which they challenge.

3. The infallibility which they pretend unto.

And if there were nothing else but a requiring a submission to these things, so false, so contrary to the tenor and interest of Christianity, this were ground enough of separation.

1. The universality of headship over all other churches, this the people of God neither could nor ought to endure.

Suppose the Roman Church were sound in faith, in manners, in discipline; yet, being but a particular church, that it should challenge such a right to itself, in giving laws to all other churches at its own pleasure, and that every particular society which doth not depend upon her beck in all things should be excluded from hope of salvation, or not counted a fellow-church in the communion of the Christian faith, this is a thing that cannot be endured.

That the Pope, as to the extent of his government and administration, should be universal bishop, whose empire should reach far and near throughout the world, as far as the church of Christ reacheth; this, as to matter of fact is impossible; as to matter of right, is sacrilegious. As to matter of fact it is impossible, because of the variety of governments and different interests under covert of which the particular churches of Christ find shelter and protection in all the places of their dispersion; and therefore to establish such an empire, that shall be so pernicious to the churches of Christ which are harboured abroad, is very grievous; and partly by reason of the multitude and diversity of those things that belong to governments, which is a power too great for any created understanding to wield. As to matter of right, it is sacrilegious; for Christ never instituted any such universal vicar as necessary to the unity of his church. But here was one Lord Jesus, and one God, and one faith, but never in union under one pope. And therefore we see, in temporal government, God hath distributed it into many hands, because he would not subject the whole world unto one, as neither able to manage the affairs thereof, nor brook the majesty of so large an empire with that meekness and moderation as becomes

a creature. It is too much for mere man to bear. Now religious concernments are more difficult than civil, by reason of the imperfection of light about them; and it would easily degenerate into superstition and idolatry; therefore certainly none but a God is able to be head of the church.

2. The authority of making laws. Consider it either as to matter or form, the matter about which it is exercised, or the authority itself; their intolerable boldness and proud ambition is discovered in either. As to the matter about which this power is exercised, for temporal things, God hath committed them to the care of the magistrate; and it is an intrusion of his right for the Pope to take upon himself to interpose in civil things, to dispose of states and kingdoms; a power which Christ refused: 'Man, who made me a judge over you?' Luke xii. 14. As to matter of religion, some things are in their own nature good and some evil; some things of a middle nature and indifferent. As to the first, God hath established them by his laws; as to the other, they are left to arbitrament, to abstain and use for edification, according to the various postures and circumstances of times, places, and persons, but so that we should never take from any believer, or suffer to be taken from him, that liberty which Christ hath purchased for us by his blood. It is a licentious abuse of power not to be endured. We are to 'stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,' Gal. v. 1. The apostle mainly intends it of the observance of the ceremonial law, which was a bondage, because of the trouble and expense. Oh! but then the price wherewith Christ bought our freedom should make us more chary of it, and stand in the defence of it with greater courage and constancy, whatever it cost us. The captain told Paul that his liberty as a Roman was 'obtained with a great sum,' Acts xxii. 28. Now, the court of Rome doth challenge such a power, that it commandeth and forbiddeth those things which God hath left free, as distinction of days, meats, marriage, according to their own pleasure, 1 Tim. iv. 3; nay, sometimes dispenseth with that which God hath expressly commanded or forbidden; and then what doth it but make him equal with God, yea, superior to him? That physician possibly may be borne with that doth only burden his patient with some needless prescriptions, if for the main he be but faithful; but if he should mingle poison with his medicaments, and also still tire out his patient with new prescriptions, that are altogether troublesome, and costly, and nauseous, and for the number of them dangerous to life, it behoveth his patient to look to his health. And this is the very case. The Pope doth sometimes make bold with dispensing with God's laws, and doth extinguish and choke Christian religion by thousands of impositions of indifferent things, which is not to be endured.

And then as to the authority itself; according to the eminency of the lawgiver, so is his authority more or less absolute. Therefore when a mortal man shall challenge an authority so absolute as to be above control, and to give no account of his actions, and it is not lawful to say to him, What doest thou? or inquire into the reason, or complain of the injury, this is that which the churches of Christ cannot endure. Therefore they had just ground and cause of withdrawing, and making up a body by themselves, rather than yield to so great encroach-

ments upon Christian liberty; to receive the decrees of one church, and that so erroneous and imposing, without examination or leave of complaint.

3. That which grieveth, and did grieve, and cause this withdrawing, is both papal infallibility and freedom from error. That any church which is made up of fallible men should arrogate this to themselves (especially the Roman, which of all churches that ever Christ had upon earth is most corrupt), that they should fasten this infallibility to the papal chair, which is the fountain of those corruptions, this they look upon as a great contradiction, not only to faith, but to sense; and as hard a condition as if I were bound, when I saw a man sick of the plague, and the swelling and tokens of death upon him, yet to say he is immortal, nay, that that part wherein the disease is seated is immortal. This was the burden that was imposed upon the people of God, that they should yield to this.

Secondly, Come to their heresy in doctrine. To rake in this filth would take up more time than will comport with your patience. It is almost everywhere corrupt; the only sound part in the whole frame is the doctrine of the Trinity, which yet the schoolmen have entangled with many nice and unprofitable disputes, which render their glorious and blessed mystery less venerable. We must do them right also in this, that they grant the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction, and that he not only died for our good, but in our stead, and bore our punishment; they grant the truth of it, but deny the sufficiency of it: so mightily weaken, if not destroy it, while they think it must be pieced up by the sacrifice of the mass, human satisfaction, by the merit of works, purgatory, and indulgences. But in all other points of religion, how corrupt are they! That which most offends the reformed churches is their equalling traditions with the scripture; yea, their decrying and taxing the scriptures as obscure, insufficient, and as a nose of wax, pliable to several purposes; their mangling the doctrine of justification, which we own to consist in the imputation of Christ's righteousness received by faith; and they plead in the works of righteousness which we have done; and so, if the apostle may be judge, 'make void the grace of God,' Gal. ii. 21. And then the merit of works, not expecting the reward of them from God's mercy, which becometh Christian humility; but from the condignity of the work itself, which bewrayeth their pharisaical pride. We say that sins are remitted by God alone, exercising his mercy in Christ through the gospel, towards those that believe and repent. But the Papists say, pardon may be had by virtue of indulgences, if a man give such a price, do this or that, say so many *ave marias* and *paternosters*, though far enough from true faith and repentance. The one savours of the gospel, the other of the tyranny of the Pope of Rome, that hath set himself in the place of God, and substituted his laws instead of the law of Christ. So their portentous doctrine of transubstantiation, that a priest should make his maker, and a people eat their God. I could represent the difference of both churches, both in excess and defect. In excess, what they believe over and above the Christian faith. The true church believes, with the scriptures, and with the primitive churches, that there is but one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be religiously invocated and worship-

ped. They plead the creature, angels and saints, are to be both religiously invocated and worshipped. The scripture shows that there is but one surety and mediator between God and man, he that was both God and man, Jesus Christ. They say that the saints are mediators of intercession with God, by whose merits and prayers we obtain the grace and audience of our supplications. The scripture saith that Christ's propitiatory sacrifice offered on the cross is sufficient for the plenary remission of all our sins. They say the sacrifice of the mass, which the priest under the species of bread and wine substantially, that is, by consecration into the body and blood of Christ, offered to God, that this is available for the remission of sins both of quick and dead. That the remission of sins obtained by Christ, and offered in the gospel to the penitent believer, is bestowed and applied by faith, this is the opinion of the scripture. They say remission of sins is obtained and applied by their own satisfactions and papal indulgences. That true repentance consists in confession of sin with grief, and desire of the grace of Christ, with a serious purpose of newness of life, this is the doctrine of the scripture. They think that to the essence of true repentance there is required auricular confession, penal satisfactions, and the absolvance of the priest, without which true faith profiteth nothing to salvation. Again, the scripture teacheth this doctrine, that the ordinances confer grace by virtue only of God's promises, and the sacraments are signs and seals of the covenant of grace to them that believe. And they would teach us that they deserve and confer grace from the work wrought. The scripture teacheth that good works are such as are done in obedience to God and conformity to his law, and are completed in love to God and our neighbour. They teach us that there are works of supererogation, which neither the law nor the gospel requireth of us; and that the chief of these are monastical vows, several orders and rules of monks and friars. The scripture teacheth us that God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is only to be worshipped, both with natural and instituted worship, in spirit and in truth; and they teach both the making and worshipping of an image, and that the images of saints are to be worshipped. The scripture teacheth that there is but one holy apostolical catholic church, joined together in one faith and one Spirit, whose head, husband, and foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ, out of which church there is no salvation; and they teach us the Church of Rome is the centre, the right mother of all churches, under one head, the Pope, infallible and supreme judge of all truth; and out of communion of this church there is nothing but heresy, schism, and everlasting condemnation. Instead of that lively faith by which we are justified by Christ, they cry up a dead assent. Instead of sound knowledge, they cry up an implicit faith, believing as the church believes. Instead of affiance, they cry up wavering, conjectural uncertainty.

Thirdly, Come to their worship. Their adoration of the host, their invocation of saints and angels, their giving to the Virgin Mary and other saints departed the titles of mediator, redeemer, and saviour, in their public liturgies and hymns; their bowing to and before images; their communion in one kind, and that decreed by their councils, with a *non obstante Christi instituto*, notwithstanding Christ's express in-

stitution to the contrary ; their service in an unknown tongue, and the like, are just causes of our separation from them. But it is tedious to rake in these things. So that unless we would be treacherous to Christ, and not only deny the faith, but forfeit sense and reason, and give up all to the lusts and wills of those that have corrupted the truth of Christianity, we ought to withdraw, and our separation is justifiable notwithstanding this plea.

The use. Here is reproof to divers sorts.

1. To those that think they may be of any sect among Christians, as if all the differences in the Christian world were about trifles and matters of small concernment, and so change their religion as they do their clothes, and are turned about with every puff of new doctrine. If it were to turn to heathenism, Turcism, or Judaism, they would rather suffer banishment or death than yield to such a change ; but to be this day of this sect and to-morrow of another, they think it is no great matter. As the wind of interest bloweth, so are they carried, and do not think it a matter of such moment to venture anything upon that account. You do not know the deceitfulness of your hearts ; he that can digest a lesser error will digest a greater. God trieth you in the present truth. He that is not faithful in a little will not be faithful in much, as he that giveth entertainment to a small temptation will also to a greater, if put upon it. Where there is not a sincere purpose to obey God in all things, God is not obeyed in anything. Every truth is precious. The dust of gold and pearls is esteemed. Every truth is to be owned in its season with full consent. To do anything against conscience is damnable. You are to choose the way of truth impartially, to search and find out the paths thereof.

2. It reproves those that will be of no religion till all differences among the learned and godly are reconciled, and therefore willingly remain unsettled in religion, and live out of the communion of any church upon this pretence, that there is so much difference, such show of reason on each side, and such faults in all, that they doubt of all, and therefore will not trouble themselves to know which side hath the truth. You are to choose the way of truth. And this is such a fond conceit, as if a man desperately sick should resolve to take no physic till all doctors were of one opinion ; or as if a traveller, when he seeth many ways before him, should lie down and refuse to go any farther. You may know the truth if you will search after it with humble minds : John vii. 17, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' 'The meek he will teach the way.' If you be diligent, you may come to a certainty notwithstanding this difference.

3. It reproves those that take up what comes next to hand, are loath to be at the pains of study, and searching, and prayer, that they may resolve upon evidence ; that commonly set themselves to advance that faction into which they are entered. Alas ! you should mind religion seriously ; though not lightly leave the religion you are bred in, yet not hold it upon unsound grounds. As antiquity : John iv. 20, 'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.' Or custom of the times and places where you live : Eph. ii. 2, 'According to the course of the world,' the general and corrupt custom or example of those where we

live; nor be led by affection to, or admiration of some persons, Gal. ii. 12. Holy men may lead you into error. Nor by multitude, to do as the most do: 'Follow not a multitude to do evil;' but get a true and sound conscience of things; for by all these things opinions are rather imposed upon us than chosen by us.

4. It reproves those that abstain from fixing out of a fear of troubles; as the king of Navarre would so far put forth to sea as that he might soon get to shore again. You must make God a good allowance when you embark with him; though called not only to dispute, but to die for religion, you must willingly submit: 'If any man come to me, and hate not his own life, he cannot be my disciple,' Luke xiv. 26. How soon the fire may be kindled we cannot tell; times tend to Popery; though there be few left to stick by us—the favour of the times runs another way—we ought to resolve for God, whatever it costs us.

5. It reproves those that think to reserve their hearts, notwithstanding outward compliance; the way of truth, being chosen, is to be owned, 2 Cor. vii. 1; the outward profession is required as well as the inward belief: Rom. x. 10, 'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' A man that should lift himself among the enemies of his country, and fight with them, and say, I reserve my heart for my country, this is a mockery; as if a wife that prostitutes her body to another, should tell her husband she reserveth her heart for him. Satan would have outward prostration; he did not ask the heart, but, 'Fall down and worship me.'

Use 2. To press us to choose the way of truth. Take it up upon evidence, and cleave to it with all the heart.

First, Take it up upon evidence, the evidence of reason, scripture, and the Spirit. Reason will lead us to the scripture, the scripture will lead us to the Spirit; so we come to have a knowledge of the truth.

1. Reason; that is preparative light, and will lead the soul thus far. It is a thousand to one but Christianity is the way of God; it will see much of God in this representation: and if you should go on carnally, carelessly, neglecting heaven and Christ, reason will tell you you run upon a thousand hazards, that there are far more against you than for you in your sinful courses. Stand upon the way. Where may you find such likelihood of satisfaction, or probability of salvation as in the religion we have? Either this is true or there is none: that you should venture your souls rather here than elsewhere; and at least, that you should profess the Christian religion as men go to a lottery; reason will tell you thus. A man that comes to a lottery, it is uncertain whether he shall have a prize or no; but it is but venturing a shilling, possibly he may have a prize; so reason will tell you, if it be uncertain whether there be a heaven or a hell, yet it is a thousand to one there are both: I may have a prize; and it is but venturing the quitting of a few lusts that are not worth the keeping. There are some truths above reason, but none contrary to it; for grace is not contrary to nature, but perfects it; therefore there is nothing in the gospel but what is agreeable to sound reason. Reason will tell us there is no doctrine agreeth so much with the wisdom, power, goodness, justice, truth, and the honour of God, as that doctrine revealed in the scripture.

2. When reason hath thus brought you to the scripture, there is the great warrant of faith: John xvii. 20, 'They that believe in me through their word.' And Isa. viii. 20, 'To the law, and to the testimony, else there is no light in them.' That is the sacred standard by which we should measure all doctrines, and these will 'make wise the simple,' Ps. xix. The plainest, meanest, simplest man may find out the right way to heaven, if he will consult with God's book diligently, there he may become wise to salvation; the veriest fool and simple man may be taught how to walk directly and safely. This is the clue which brings us through all the labyrinths and perplexing debates in the world, to consult with the word of God, that we may not receive the truth upon man's credit, but see the grounds of it with our own eyes. He that finds the pearl of price must dig for it: Mat. xiii. 44, he must read the scriptures, be much in the study of God's book.

3. The scripture leads us to the Spirit, because there are many mysteries in the gospel difficultly known, that will not be taken up by a sure faith without illumination from above. Besides, there are so many various artifices used by men to disguise the truth, Eph. iv. 14. And besides, there is a connate blindness and hatred of truth, which is natural to men, and therefore it is the Spirit of God must help us to make a wise choice. Look, as in practical things, we shall never choose the way of truth in opposition to the falsity of worldly enjoyments without the light of the Spirit; therefore it is said, Prov. xxiii. 4, 'Labour not to be rich, cease from thine own wisdom.' If a man be guided by his own understanding, he will choose riches: so also in matter of opinion, when we lean to our own understanding, we shall choose amiss. John xvi. 13, it is the Spirit of God that must guide us into all truth, therefore you must beg his direction; for if we that are so blind of heart be left to our own mistakes or the deceits of others, left to the direction of ourselves, how easily shall we err! Say, 'Lord, send out thy light and thy truth, to lead me to thy holy hill.'

Secondly, As we should choose the way of truth, so cleave to it with all firmness and perseverance, without seeking out any other way, John vi. 67, 68. If you turn away from Christ, where will you get a better master? Change where you will, you will change for the worse; you will turn your back upon true comfort and true happiness, for he hath all this. So much for the first part, the rightness of David's choice, 'I have chosen the way of truth.'

In the latter clause, there you have his diligence and accuracy in walking according to the tenor of the true religion, 'Thy judgments have I laid before me.' By *judgments* is meant the precepts and directions of the word, as invested with threatenings and promises; for so the word contains every man's doom: not only the execution of God's providence, but the word, shows what will become of a man. Now these 'I have laid before me;' that is, propounded them as the rule of my life; as the king was to have the book of the law always before him, Deut. xvii. 19.

Doct. When we have chosen the way of truth, or taken up the profession of true religion, the rules of it should be ever before us.

Three reasons for this:—

1. To have a holy rule and not a holy life is altogether inconsis-

tent. A Christian should be a lively transcript of that religion he doth profess. A Christian should be Christ's epistle, 2 Cor. iii. ; a walking Bible: Phil. ii. 15, 16, 'shining as lights, holding forth the word of life.' How? Not in doctrine, but in practice. A suitable practice joined with profession puts a majesty and splendour upon the truth. If there are many doubts about the true religion, why they are occasioned by the scandalous lives of professors; we reason from the artist to the art itself. Look, as there is a correspondence between the stamp and the impress, the seal and the thing sealed, so should there be between a Christian's life and a Christian's belief; the stamp should be upon his own heart, upon his life and actions; his action should discover his opinion, otherwise he loseth the glory and the benefit of his religion; he is but a pagan in God's account,' Jer. ix. 25; he makes his religion to be called in question; and therefore he that walks unsuitably, he is said to 'deny the faith,' 1 Tim. v. 8. To be a Christian in doctrine and a pagan in life is a temptation to atheism to others; when the one destroys the other, practice confutes their profession, and profession confutes their practice; therefore both these must be matched together. Thus the way of truth must be the rule, and a holy life must be suited.

2. As to this holy life, a general good intention sufficeth not, but there must be accurate walking. Why? For God doth not judge of us by the lump, or by a general intention. It is not enough to plead at the day of judgment, you had a good scope and a good meaning; for every action must be brought to judgment, whether it be good or evil, Eccles. xii. 14. When we reckon with our servants, we do not expect an account by heap, but by parcels; so a general good meaning, giving our account by heap, will not suffice, but we must be strict in all our ways, and keep close to the rule in every action, in your eating, trading, worship: Eph. v. 15, 'See that you walk circumspectly,' &c. See that you do not turn aside from the line and narrow ridge that you are to walk upon.

3. Accurate walking will never be, unless our rule be diligently regarded and set before us. Why?

[1.] So accurate and exact is the rule in itself, that you may easily swerve from it; therefore it must always be heeded and kept in your eye, Ps. xix. David admired the perfections of the law for the purity of it, and for the dominion of it over conscience. What was the issue of that contemplation? See ver. 12, 'Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.' Thus the best man, when he compares himself with the law, will be forced to blush, and acknowledge more faults than ever he took notice of before. When we see the law reacheth not only to the act but the aim, not only to the words but the thoughts and secret motions of the heart, then, Lord! who knows his errors? The law of God sometimes is said to be broad and sometimes narrow; a broad law: Ps. cxix. 96, 'Thy commandment is exceeding broad.' Why broad? Because it reacheth to every motion, every human action; the words, the thoughts, the desires, are under a law. Nay, yet more, the imperfect and indeliberate motions of the soul are under a law; therefore the commandment is exceeding broad. On the other side it is said to be narrow, 'A strait gate, and a narrow way,'

Mat. vii. 14. Why? Because it gives no allowance to corrupt nature; we have but a strait line to go by. So that we need regard our rule.

[2.] We are so ignorant in many particulars relating to faith and manners, that we need often consult with our rule. The children of light have too much darkness in them, therefore they are bidden to look to their rule: Eph. v. 17, 'Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.' Blind consciences will easily carry us wrong; and we have some new things still to learn from the word of God, for knowledge is but in part; therefore our rule should be ever before us.

[3.] So many and subtle are those temptations which Satan sets on foot to make us transgress this rule. The devil assaults us two ways—by 'fiery darts,' and by 'cunning wiles,' Eph. vi. 11. He hath not only violent temptations, burning lusts, or raging despair, but he hath ensnaring temptations by his wiles, such as most take with a person tempted; and he 'transforms himself into an angel of light,' 2 Cor. xi. 14; covers his foul designs with plausible pretences; therefore we need have our rule and the word of God ever before us.

[4.] We are weak, and easily overborne, and therefore should bear our rule always in mind. God's people, their greatest sins have been out of incogitancy; they sin oftenest because they are heedless, and forgetful, and inattentive. Therefore, as a carpenter tries his work by his rule and square, so should a Christian measure his conversation by the rod of the sanctuary. God, whose act is his rule, cannot miscarry. So the schoolmen, when they set out God's holiness, say God's hand is his rule. But we, that are creatures, are apt to swerve aside, therefore need a rule. We should always have our rule before us. We are to walk according to rule, Gal. vi., and Josh. i. 7, 8, 'The book of the law shall not depart from thee,' &c. If we would have our rule before our eyes, we should not so often swerve. Christians, though you be right in opinion, that will not bring you to heaven, but you must have the rules of this holy profession before you.

Use. Oh, then, let the word of God be ever in sight as your comforter and counsellor! The more we do so the more shall we walk in the fear of God. You are not to walk according to the course of this world, but according to rule; and therefore you are not to walk rashly and indeliberately, and as you are led and carried on by force of present affections, but to walk circumspectly, considering what principle you are acted by, and what ends; and the nature and quality of our actions are always to be considered. Remember you are under the eye of the holy and jealous God, Josh. xxiv. 9, and eyed by wicked men who watch for your halting, Jer. xx., and eyed by weak Christians, who may suffer for your careless and slight walking, who look to the lives of men rather than their principles. You are the 'lights of the world,' Mat. v. 14, and light draws eyes after it; you are 'as a city upon a hill.' You that pretend to be in the right way, the way of truth, will you walk carelessly and inordinately? You are compassed about with snares; there is a snare in your refreshments, Ps. lxxix.; your estates may become a snare, 1 Tim. vi. 9; your duties may become a snare: be 'not a novice, lest you come into the condemnation of the devil,' 1 Tim. iii. Therefore take heed to your rule, be exact and watchful over your hearts and ways.

SERMON XXXIII.

I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame.—VER. 31.

IN the former verse David speaks of his choice, 'I have chosen the way of truth;' then of the accurateness of his prosecution, 'Thy judgments have I laid before me.' Now he comes to his constant perseverance therein, 'I have stuck unto thy testimonies.' These two verses follow one another in a very perfect order and coherence. We must begin with a right choice, there we must lay the foundation, 'I have chosen the way of truth,' and then persevere. There is a constancy in good and an obstinacy in evil. The devils sin from the beginning, as the good angels continued in their first estate. Men that are engaged in an evil course often continue in it without retraction; they are no changelings, always the same; that is no honour to them. Luther, when he was charged with apostasy for appearing against the Pope: *Confitetur se apostatam esse, sed beatum et sanctum, qui fidem diabolo datam non servavit*—he confesseth he was an apostate, but a holy and blessed one, that he did not keep touch with the devil. Constancy must ever be understood with respect to a right choice; for to break faith with Satan is not matter of dishonour, but of praise. We must go on with an accurate prosecution, for that giveth us experience, and causeth us to find joy and sweetness, and power in the truth, and is a great means of constancy.

If men would be constant, the next thing they must do is to practise that religion they choose, and live under the power of it. Holiness is a great means of constancy: 1 Tim. iii. 9, 'Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.' As precious liquors are best kept in clean vessels, so is the mystery of faith in a pure conscience. Men may be stubborn in their opinions out of natural courage, and the engagement of credit and interests; but this is of little worth without practical godliness: their orthodoxy and rightness in opinion will not bring them to heaven, nor shall they be saved because they are of such a sect or party. But then all must be closed up by persevering in our resolutions; otherwise all our former zeal will be lost. 'I have chosen the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me;' and then now, 'I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame:' 2 John 8, 'Look to yourselves, that ye lose not those things which ye have wrought.' All that a man hath done and suffered, watching, striving, praying, they come to nothing unless we stick to it and persevere. Under the law a Nazarite was to begin his days of separation again, if he had defiled himself; if he had separated himself for a year, and kept his vow within two days of the year, he was to begin all anew, Num. vi. 12; and the interpretation of that type I cannot give you better than in the prophet's words: Ezek. xviii. 24, 'When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be remembered.' When they turn head against their former pro-

fession, it comes to nothing. Thus you see what a perfect dependence there is between this verse and the former.

In the words there is—

1. A profession, *I have stuck unto thy testimonies.*

2. A prayer, *O Lord, put me not to shame.*

First, For the profession, ‘I have stuck to thy testimonies.’ Saith Chrysostom, he doth not say, I have *followed* thy testimonies, but *stuck* or cleaved; stuck so fast that nothing could remove him, no difficulties, trials, shakings; he was still firm.

Doct. Those that have chosen the way of God, and begun to conform their practice thereunto, ought with all constancy to persevere therein.

First, We have the same reasons to continue that we had to begin at first. There is the same loveliness in God’s ways; Christ is as sweet as ever; heaven is as good as ever. If there be any difference, there is more reason to continue than there was to begin. Why? Because we have more experience of the sweetness of Christ. You knew him heretofore only by report and hearsay; but now, when you have walked in the way of holiness, then you know him by experience; and if you have tasted, 1 Peter ii. 2, then certainly you should not fall off afterwards. Upon trial Christ is sweeter; and the longer you have kept to conscience, heaven is nearer; and would a man miscarry and be discouraged when he is ready to put into the haven? Rom. xiii. 11, ‘Your salvation is nearer than when you first believed.’ The nearer we are to the enjoyment of any good, the more impatient in the want of it; as natural motion we find swifter in the end, because it is nearer to the centre; but violent motion is swiftest at first; as when a stone is thrown upward, it is swifter at first, but when the impression of the external force is more spent, then the motion is weaker. It argues that you are not seriously thorough with God, if you should break with him after some profession of his name; now your motion should be more earnest, more strong towards him. I speak this, because we are so apt to ‘cast off our first faith,’ 1 Tim. v. 12; and to ‘lose our first love,’ Rev. ii. 4; and to grow remiss and lazy, and neglect our first works, 2 Chron. xvii. 3. Jehoshaphat is said to ‘walk in the first ways of his father David.’ We see many at the first are carried on with a great deal of affection and zeal; and there are many promising beginnings of a very flourishing spring; but yet they are no sure prognostications of a joyful harvest. Why, consider with yourselves, We have the same reasons to continue as to begin, yea, much more, as heaven is nearer. In a marriage relation true affection increaseth, but adulterous love is only hot while it is new. If our hearts be upright with God, we will increase with zeal for his glory and love to his testimonies.

Secondly, The danger and mischievous effects of apostasy, and falling off, that is another reason why we should stick to his testimonies.

1. It is more dishonourable to God than a simple refusal; for you bring an ill report upon him, as if he were not a good master. A wicked man that refuseth grace doth not so much dishonour God, because his refusal is supposed to be the fruit of his prejudice; but now

you that cast him off after trial, your apostasy is supposed to be the fruit of your experience, as if the devil were a better master; when you have tried both, you return to him again. Tertullian, in his book *De Pœnitentia*, hath this saying, After you have tried God, you do as it were deliberately judge Satan's service to be better, or at least you do not find that in God you did expect. Therefore the honour of God is mightily concerned, and lies at stake when you fall off after you have seemed to begin with him with a great deal of accurateness. And God pleads for himself, and stands for his credit, which seems to be wronged by this apostasy, Jer. ii. 5, casting off his service for the idols of the nation: 'What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?' and Micah vi. 3, 'O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.' What! can you complain of God? Is God hard to be pleased, backward to reward? What cause of distaste have you found in him?—for implicitly you do as it were accuse him.

2. When you fall off after a taste of the sweetness and practice of godliness, your condition is worse than if you had never begun. There are two dreadful scriptures which speak of the condition of total apostates after some taste, and after they have had some savour of holy things, and some delight in the ways of God. One is Heb. vi. 4-6, 'For it is impossible,' &c. Christians, after they have had some taste, and some enlightening, and made a savoury profession of godliness, afterwards they split themselves; some fall forward to errors and preposterous zeal; others fall backward by an unfaithful heart; one breaks his face, the other breaks his neck, as old Eli. But a little to clear that place. Certainly all of us should stand in fear of this heavy judgment of being given up to perish by our apostasy, to an obstinate heart, never to reconcile ourselves by repentance, even the children of God; for he proposeth it to them, supposeth they are made partakers of the heavenly calling. The apostle doth not speak there of every sin against knowledge, but of apostasy from the faith of Christ, and not of apostasy of general professors, that lightly come and lightly go, as the loose sort of Christians here among us; but specially of those that had a taste, savoury experience of the sweetness of God's ways. Again, he doth not speak of apostasy for a fit, in some great temptation of fear, but of deliberate apostasy of those that were enlightened, feeling, tasting, so as to make some strict profession; afterward turn off, lose all, turn atheists, antiscriturists, formalists, renouncing Christ and the world to come, in the hope of which they seemed before to be carried out with a great deal of delight, and strength and affection. The apostle saith, It is impossible they should be saved, because it is impossible they should repent. This is a fearful state; and yet, as fearful as it is, it is not unusual: it is a thing we see often in some that have made a savoury profession of the name of God, and afterwards have been blasted, either given up to an injudicious mind, or to vile affections, and are fallen off, and it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Oh, then, you that have begun, and have had a taste of the ways of God, and begun to walk closely with him, you should lay this to heart! Therefore this is proponed to believers, that they should keep at a very great distance from such a

judgment, lest we grow to such an impenitent state as to be given up to a reprobate mind and vile affections.

The other place is 2 Peter ii. 21, 22, 'It had been better for them not to have known,' &c. Mark, there are some that through the knowledge of Christ may upon some general assent to gospel truths take up a strict profession of the name of Christ, may escape the pollution of the world, that is, outward and gross sins, being enrolled among God's children, and have the privileges of the members of his church, and yet after this may fall off dreadfully. It were far better for such never to have been acquainted with God and Christ than to return to their old bondage. A sin after knowledge and profession of the right way is greater than a sin of bare ignorance; therefore their condition is far more deplorable than the condition of other sinners, for no men sin with such malice as they do; they have had greater conviction than others, not only external representations of the doctrine of Christ, but some taste, and have made some closure with it in their own souls; they are more given over by God than others; and so there are none persecute and hate profession and strictness so much as they that are fallen from it; and they are more oppressed and entangled by Satan, as the jailor that hath recovered the prisoner which ran from him, loads him with irons. Therefore we had need betimes look to it, and continue and persevere in the practice of the ways of God, which we have owned and taken up upon experience.

Use 1. Get grace, then look after perseverance. Evil men must get grace; and God's children their business is to persevere in that state to which they have attained.

But what should we do to persevere?

First, Be fortified against what may shake you from without; beware of being led away by offences and scandals. Three things are wont to give offence, and exceedingly shake the faith of some, viz., errors, persecutions, scandals.

1. Errors. Be not troubled when differences fall out about the truths of God, nor shaken in mind; the winds of error are let loose upon the floor of the church to sever the chaff from the solid grain: 1 Cor. xi. 19, 'There must be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest.' Take heed of taking offence at errors. I do not speak now of being led captive by error. Many question the ways of God, and give over all religion because there are so many differences and sects; therefore they think nothing certain. Certainly God saw this discipline to be fittest for his people; he hath told us there must be errors; he would not have us take up religion upon trust, without the pains of study and prayer. Lazy men would fain give laws to heaven, and teach God how to govern the affairs of the world; they would have all things clear and plain, that there should be no doubt about it. But the Lord in his wise providence saw it fit to permit these things, 'that they which are approved may be made manifest.' Men to excuse the trouble of search, study, and prayer, would have all agreed, else they take offence at religion, and think it to be but a fancy; that is one means to draw them off, even after some profession. What the canonists say grossly, this was their blasphemy, that God were not discreet and wise, unless he had

appointed one universal test and one infallible interpreter; this is men's natural thoughts, they would have such a thing. The Jews say, Certainly Christ was not the true Messiah. Why? Because if he had, he would not come in such a way as to leave any of his countrymen in doubt. So many think religion is but a fancy; they fall off to atheism and scepticism at last, and irresolution in religion, because there are so many sects and divisions, and all upholding it with plausible pretences. To excuse laziness, we pretend want of certainty. But God's word is plain to one that will do his will, John vii. 17, if we will use all the means God hath appointed, and unfeignedly and with an unbiassed heart come to search out the mind of God.

2. Persecutions, they are an offence: Mat. xi. 6, 'Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.' When the people of God are exposed to great troubles when they are in the world, they have but a mean outside. What! are these the favourites of heaven? It makes men take offence. Christians, what religion is it you are of? Is it not the Christian religion, whose great interest and work it is to draw you off from the concernments of the present world unto things to come? The whole drift and frame of the Christian religion is to draw men's hearts off from earthly things, and to comfort and support them under the troubles, inconveniences, and molestations of the flesh; therefore for a Christian to hope an exemption from them, is to make the doctrine of the gospel as incongruous and useless as to talk of bladders and the art of swimming to a man that never goes to sea, nor intends to go off from the firm land.

3. A great occasion to shake the faith of many is scandals, the evil practices of those that profess the name of God. Oh! when they run into disorder, especially into all manner of unrighteousness, and iniquity, and cruel things, and make no conscience of the duties of their relations as subjects, as children, and the like, it is a mighty offence; and we that have to do with persons and sinners of all sorts find it a very hard matter to keep them from atheism, such stumbling-blocks having been laid in their way. Scandal is far more dangerous than persecution. There are many that have been gained by the patience, courage, and constancy of the martyrs, but never any were gained by the scandalous falls of professors. Persecutions do only work upon our fear, which may be allayed by proposal of the crown of life; but by scandalous action, how many settle into a resolved hardness of heart! In crosses and persecutions a man may have secret likings of truth, and a purpose to own it; but by scandal he dislikes the way of God, of religion itself; it begets a base and vile esteem thereof in the hearts of men, so they are loose and fall off. And this mischief doth not only prevail with the lighter sort of Christians, but many times those which have had some taste, it makes them fly off exceedingly: Mat. xviii. 7, 'There will be offences, but woe be unto them by whom they come.' Christ hath told us all will not walk up to the religion they own; therefore we must stand out against this temptation.

Secondly, Be fortified within, by taking heed to the causes of apostasy, and falling off from the truth either in judgment or practice. What is there will make men apostates?

1. Ungrounded assents. A choice lightly made is lightly altered. When we do not resolve upon evidence, and have not taken up the ways of God upon clear light, we shall turn and wind to and fro as the posture of our interest is changed. First we must 'try all things,' then 'hold fast,' 1 Thes. v. 21. Men waver hither and thither for want of solid rooting in truth. They take up things hand over head, and then like light chaff they are 'driven about with every wind of doctrine,' Eph. iv. 14. Half conviction leaveth us open to changes: James i. 8, 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways;' a man that seems to have a faith concerning such a thing, then seems to have a doubt concerning such a thing; sometimes led by his faith, at other times carried away by his doubts. If we have not a clear and full persuasion of the ways of God in our own minds, we shall never be constant.

2. Want of solid rooting in grace, that is, 'rooted in faith,' Col. ii. 7, or 'rooted and grounded in love,' Eph. iii. 17; as to both it is said, Heb. xiii. 9, 'It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace,' that is, by a sound sense of the love of God in Christ. A sweet superficial taste may be lost, but a sound sense of the love of God in Christ will engage us to him. Oh! we have felt so much sweetness, and have had such real proof of the goodness of Christ, that all the world cannot take us off. The more experience you have, and the deeper it is, the more you will be confirmed. The most of us content ourselves but in a superficial taste. When we hear of the doctrine of salvation by Christ, we are somewhat pleased and tickled with it; but this is not that which doth establish us, but a deep sense of God's grace, or feeling the blood of Christ pacifying our consciences; this is that which establisheth our hearts, and setteth us against apostasy.

3. Unmortified lusts, which must have some error to countenance them. By an inordinate respect to worldly interests, we are sure to miscarry. A man governed by lusts will be at uncertainty, according as he is swayed by the fear or favour of men or his carnal hopes: 2 Tim. iv. 10, 'Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world.' If a man hath love to present things, if that be not subdued and purged out of his heart, he will never be stable, never upright with God. It may be he may stand when put upon some little self-denial for Christ; he may endure some petty loss, or some tender assault. Ay, but at length the man will be carried away as Joab, that turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom, 1 Kings ii. 28; there will some temptation come that will carry them away, though at first they seem to stand their ground, as long as lust remains unmortified in the heart.

4. Sometimes a faulty easiness. As there is an ingenuous facility—'The wisdom that is from above is gentle, and easy to be entreated,' James iii. 17—so there is a faulty easiness, when men cannot say nay; when they change their religion with their company, out of a desire to please all, andameleon-like they change colour with every object. Some are of such a facile easy nature, soon persuaded into great inconvenience. This faulty easiness always makes bold with God and conscience to please men, when we are of this temper: Jer. xxxviii. 5, 'The king is not he that can do anything against you.' It is not a

good disposition, but baseness and pusillanimity. It is observed of Chrysostom, though a good man in the main, yet he ran into many inconveniences. Why? Because he was, through simplicity and plainness of his nature, easily to be wrought upon. Therefore though a good man (in regard of the sweetness of his temper and converse) should be as a loadstone, yet he should be also resolute and severe in the things of God. Paul, though they did even break his heart, they could not break his purpose.

5. Self-confidence, when we think to bear it out with natural courage and resolution, as Peter did, 'Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I.' We are soon overborne, and a light temptation will do it. God gives men over that trust in themselves, for the Lord takes it to be his honour to be the saint's guardian, to 'keep the feet of his saints,' 1 Sam. ii. 9. He will be owned and depended upon.

6. There is an itch of novelty, when men are weary of old truths, and only rejoice in things for a season, John v. 35. There are many that look for all their virtue and their experience from their notions in religion. Thus they run from doctrine to doctrine, from way to way, so remain unmortified.

Thirdly, Take heed of the first decays, and look often into the state of your hearts. A man that never casts up his estate is undone insensibly; therefore look often into the state of your hearts, whether you increase in your affections to God, in the power of holiness, or whether you go backward. It is the devil's policy, when once we are declining, to humble us further and further still, as a stone that runs down the hill; therefore take heed, look to the first declinings. A gap once made in the conscience, grows wider and wider every day; and the first declinings are the cause of all the rest. Evil is best stopped in the beginning. And, therefore, when you begin to be cold, careless in the profession of godliness, and not to have the like savour as you were wont to have, take heed. A heavy body, moving downward, still gets more strength, it goes down and moves iaster still. Oh, therefore, stay at first! The first remitting of your watch and spiritual fervour is that which is the cause of all the mischief that comes upon many, so that they are given up to vile affections and lying errors. It is easier to crush the egg than kill the serpent. He that keeps his house in constant repair prevents the fall of it, therefore look to your hearts still. Our first declinings, though never so small, are very dangerous. Pliny speaks of the lioness, lib. viii. cap. 16; first she brings forth five lions, then four, then three, then two, then one, and for ever afterward is barren. Thus we first begin to remit of our diligence in holy things, and are not so frequent in acts of communion; then this and that goes off, till we have but little left us; and then all is gone, and men grow worse and worse. I may resemble it to Nebuchadnezzar's image, the head of gold, the breasts of silver, the thighs of brass, the feet of iron and clay, still worse and worse. So men are embasing by degrees, and fall off from God, and their savour of the ways of God.

Fourthly, Often review your first grounds, and compare them with your after experiences, and what fresh tastes you had then of the love of God to your souls: Heb. iii. 14, 'We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.'

The first rejoicing of faith, the sweet sense that you had, oh, how precious was Christ to you then, when first you came out of your fears! Revive this upon your heart; this will stir you up to be faithful to God. When the love of Christ was fresh upon your hearts, your motions were earnest. Many begin like a tree full of blossoms, give great hope of fruit. We should labour to keep up this affection, and that a cursed satiety may not creep upon us.

Use 2. If those that have chosen the way of God and begin to conform their practice ought with all constancy to persevere, then it reproveth—

1. Those that take up religion only by way of essay, to try how it will suit with them; they do not entirely, and by a resolute fixed purpose, give up themselves to the Lord. You should resolve upon all hazards; not take up religion for a walk, but for a journey. Not like going to sea for pleasure; if they see a storm coming, presently to shore again; but for a voyage to ride out all weathers. Thus you should do, stick to the ways of God, and at first make God a good allowance, that ‘neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, nor anything, may separate you from Christ,’ Rom. viii. 35. We should count all charges, and resolve upon the worst.

2. It reproves aguish Christians, whose purity and devotion come upon them by fits: Hosea vi. 4, ‘Their righteousness is as the morning dew.’ The morning dew, that cannot endure the rising sun, is soon wasted and spent when the sun ariseth with his heat and strength; whereas our righteousness should not be like the morning dew, but like the morning light.

3. It reproves them that are only swayed by temporal advantages, that are off and on; as the Samaritans, when the Jews were favoured by Alexander and other princes, then they would deny the temple that was upon Mount Gerizim, and say that they were brethren to the Jews; but when the Jews were in danger, then they would disclaim them. Thus many are swayed by temporal advantages, either intending or omitting the conscience of their duty, as they are favoured by men. But we are to stick to God’s testimonies.

Secondly, Let us come to David’s prayer, ‘O Lord, put me not to shame.’ It is in the nature of a deprecation, or a prayer for the prevention of evil. The evil deprecated is *shame*. By shame some understand the reproaches of wicked men: Lord, let me not suffer their reproach, for I have stuck unto thy testimonies. A man that doth not stick to God’s testimonies, that is not zealous and constant, will be put to shame before God and man, and made a scorn by them, and lie under great reproach; therefore, Lord, prevent this reproach. These reproaches are grievous to be borne. It is against the spirit of man to be contemned, especially when he doth well. But certainly this cannot be meant; he would not so earnestly deprecate this, I should think, at least, not in such an expression, ‘O Lord, put me not to shame.’ He speaks of such a shame wherein God had a great hand. It is true, God may suffer this in his providence. Well, then, this shame may be supposed to result either from his sin or from his sufferings.

First, From sin, ‘I have stuck unto thy testimonies;’ oh! suffer me

not to fall into any such sinful course as may expose me to shame, and make me become a reproach to religion. Observe—

Doct. The fruit of sin is shame.

Shame is a trouble of mind about such evils as tend to our infamy and disgrace. Loss of life is matter of fear; loss of goods is matter of grief and sorrow; but loss of name and credit is matter of shame; and therefore it is a trouble of mind that doth arise about such evils as tend to our infamy and disgrace. Now this infamy and disgrace is the proper fruit of sin. To prove it by scripture, reason, and experience. To prove it by scripture: Shame entered into the world by sin; though they were naked, yet till they had sinned 'they were not ashamed,' Gen. ii. 25, with Gen. iii. 10; there was *verecundia*, an awful majesty, or a holy bashfulness in innocency; but not *pudor*, a fear of reproach and infamy; that came in by the fall. To prove it by reason: There are two things in sin, folly and filthiness, and both cause shame; it is an irrational act, and it hath a turpitude in it; therefore the fruit of sin is shame, and a fear of a just reproof. And then by experience: How do men hang the head and blush when they are taken in any unseemly action! All evil causeth shame. All sin, as soon as it is committed, it flasheth in the face of conscience. Shame is the striving of nature to hide the stain of our souls, by sending out the blood into the face for a covering; it labours most under this passion. And this shame accompanieth sin, not only when men are conscious of what we do, but it is a fear of a just reproof from God, nay, of a just reproof from themselves. There is a double loathness and fear in shame—when men sin, they are loath to look into their own heart, and loath to look God in the face: 1 John iii. 20, 'If our heart condemn us,' &c. When men have guilt upon their hearts, they are loath to take the candle of the Lord and look into the state of their souls. And they are loath to look God in the face; therefore the apostle adds, 'If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God,' that our prayers be not interrupted. As holy David had his shyness when he had been sinning away his peace; he 'kept silence,' Ps. xxxii. 3. He was fain to thrust forth his heart by a practical decree, and bring it by force into God's presence. Indeed some men are grown shameless, having a depraved judgment, and corrupted all their doings, Zeph. iii. 7; such have outgrown the common principles of natural honesty; and of all diseases, those which are insensible are the worst. Therefore when men are grown into a state of insensibility, and lose those feelings of conscience, it is very sad. Yet those which are most obdurate have their hidden fears, and are afraid of God and conscience, and are loath to be alone themselves, and are fain to knit pleasure to pleasure, to keep up this victory, and are forced to live in a jolly course, that they may bring a greater brawn upon their hearts.

Use. Let this press us to avoid sin: Rom. vi. 21, 'For what fruit had ye of those things whereof ye are now ashamed?' If you sin, there will be shame. Sin in the greatest privacy brings shame. Though you should be solitary and alone with yourselves, yet there is an eye sees and an ear hears all that you do. It was one of the rules of Pythagoras, Reverence thyself. If there were no other witness, there is a law of God in our own hearts that will upbraid us for sin.

Again, David makes this request when he had professed perseverance, 'I have stuck unto thy testimonies,' yet, 'Lord, put me not to shame.' Note from thence—

Doct. A man that hath long kept close to God in the way of his testimonies, yet he should pray to be kept from falling into shameful sin. Why?

1. They which are most steadfast are not past all danger: 1 Cor. x. 12, 'Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' He that hath the firmest footing may fall, and that foully too. When he begins to grow negligent and secure, he may be soon surprised, and drawn to dishonour the name of God; and as David, who was a man after God's own heart, sinned so foully that the name of God was blasphemed among the heathen. When once we come out of our fears, and are possessed of the love of God, we think there needs not be such diligence as when we were doubtful, and kept in an uncertain condition, and so carry the matter as if we were past all danger. Oh, no! sin many times breaks out of a sudden; and after the first labours of soul in regeneration and terrors of the law are gone, there is great danger of security, and secretly and silently things may run to waste in the soul. God's children have been in most danger when to appearance there was least cause of fear. Lot, who was chaste in Sodom, fell into incest where there were none but he and his two daughters. He, whose righteous soul was vexed at their abominations, how was his conscience cast asleep by security! A child of God may fall into the grossest sins. David, whose heart smote him for cutting off the lap of Saul's garment, yet afterward fell into uncleanness and blood, and his conscience falls asleep. Therefore there needs watching and praying to the last.

2. The miscarriages of God's children are most shameful. Oh, how will the Huns of the world laugh to see a Noah drunk! So a child of God, when he hath fallen into disorder, how will this furnish the triumphs of the uncircumcised! Blind Samson did not make such sport for the Philistines as a child of God for a wicked man, when he hath fallen into some notable excess: 2 Sam. xii. 14, 'By this deed thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.' Wicked men have a conscience, and they would be glad of any pretext to shake off the name of religion. When the children of God keep up the lustre of it, and live up to the majesty of their religion, the awe of it falls upon wicked men. But when they run into practices condemned by the light of nature and the laws of nations, it hardens wicked men, and takes off this awe and fear upon them. It is no matter what a rude Scythian or barbarous Goth doth, if they should exercise rapine and commit uncleanness; no matter what open enemies which are at defiance with God; though they break the laws of God over and over again, it is no such dishonour; but for a child of God, he that professeth the Christian name, to walk disorderly, it reflects dishonour upon God.

3. Because of the hopes they have of speeding in prayer: 1 Tim. ii. 8, 'I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.' Those that in a humble sense of their own weakness and fear of the mischief of being a blemish to religion, when

they come to pray, they may be persuaded of God's goodness, of whom they have such long experience, that he will not fail them at length.

Use. Let us pray that we may not dishonour the gospel in our trials, that God would not leave us to sin or shame, by total apostasy or by any scandals, that our crown may not be taken from us.

Secondly, As this shame may be supposed to arise from his sin, so also from his sufferings, or from the disappointment of his hopes. Hope deferred leaves a man ashamed; therefore, Rom. v. 5, the apostle saith 'Hope maketh not ashamed.' When a man hath given out to others he hath such defences, hopes, expectations, and these fail, then he is ashamed. Thus David begs God would own him, that he might not be a scorn to wicked and ungodly men. Note—

When they that stick to God's testimonies are disappointed of their present hopes, it is matter of shame.

Observe it, and humble yourselves in your Father's anger, when he seemeth to go cross to our prayers and hopes, and gives to wicked men advantages against us: Num. xii. 14, 'If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days?' When God doth not make good the confidence of his people, rather the contrary, the confidence of their enemies does as it were spit in their face; then it is time to take shame to themselves, and humble themselves before the Lord.

SERMON XXXIV.

I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.—VER. 32.

In these words there are two parts:—

1. A supposition of strength or help from God, *when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*

2. A resolution of duty, *I will run the way of thy commandments.*

Where—(1.) Observe, that he resolves, *I will.* (2.) The matter of the resolution, *the way of thy commandments.* (3.) The manner how he would carry on this purpose, intimated in the word *run*, with all diligence and earnestness of soul.

The text will give us occasion to speak—

1. Of the benefit of an enlarged heart.

2. The necessary precedency of this work on God's part before there can be any serious bent or motion of heart towards God on our part.

3. The subsequent resolution of the saints to engage their hearts to live to God.

4. With what earnestness, alacrity, and vigour of spirit this work is to be carried on, 'I will run.'

First, Let me speak of the enlarged heart, the blessing here asked of God. The point from hence is—

Doct. Enlargement of heart is a blessing necessary for them that would keep God's laws.

David is sensible of the want of it, and therefore goes to God for it.

1. I shall speak of the nature of this benefit.

2. The necessity of it.

First, As to the nature, what this enlargement of heart is. There is a general and a particular enlargement of heart.

1. The general enlargement is at regeneration or conversion to God. When we are freed from the bonds of natural slavery, and the curse of the law, and the power of sin, to serve God cheerfully, then is our heart said to be enlarged. This is spoken of in scripture: John viii. 36, 'If the son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' There are two things notable in that scripture—that this is freedom *indeed*, and that we have it by the *Son*. (1.) That this the truest liberty, then are we free indeed. How large and ample soever our condition and portion be in the world, we are but slaves without this freedom. As Austin said of Rome, that she was *Domitrix gentium et captiva vitiorum*—the mistress of the nations and a slave to vices; so vicious men are very slaves, how free and large soever their condition be in the world. Joseph was sold as a bondsman into Egypt; but his mistress, that was overcome by her own lust, was the true captive, and Joseph was free indeed. (2.) The other thing observable from this text is, that we have this liberty by Christ, he purchased it for us. This enlargement of heart from the captivity of sin cost dear. Look, as the Roman captain said, Acts xxii. 28, 'With a great sum obtained I this freedom,' they were tender of the violation of this privilege of being a citizen of Rome, a free-born Roman, because it cost so dear. And when the liberties of a nation are bought with a great deal of treasure and blood, no wonder that they are so dear and precious to them, and that they are so willing to stand for their liberty. Certainly our liberty by Christ was dearly bought. One place more I shall mention: Rom. viii. 2, 'For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.' The covenant of grace is there called 'the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus;' and the covenant of works is called 'the law of sin and death.' To open the place: 'The covenant of grace, that is accompanied with the law of the spirit; the covenant of works, that is the law of the letter—that only gives us the letter and the naked knowledge of our duty. *Lex jubet, gratia juvat*; it is 'the law of the spirit;' and not only so, but 'the law of the spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus,' because it works from the Spirit of Christ, and conforms us to the life of Christ as our original pattern. Well, then, this law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, it makes us free. This freedom, though purchased by Christ, is yet applied, executed, and accomplished by the Spirit. The Spirit makes us free, and from what? From 'the law of sin and death;' that is, from the law as a covenant of works, which is therefore called a law of sin and death, because it convinceth of sin, and bindeth over to death. It is the ministry of death to condemnation to the fallen creature.

Let us see what this general enlargement and freedom is from these places. It consists in two things—a freedom from the power and from the guilt of sin, or the curse and obligation to eternal damnation.

The first sort of freedom from the power of sin is spoken of Rom. vi. 18, 'Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of right-

eousness.' There is a freedom *from* sin, and a freedom *for* sin, or a freedom from righteousness, as it is called, ver. 20, 'When you were the servants of sin,' saith the apostle, 'you were free from righteousness.' To be under the dominion of sin is the greatest slavery, and to be under the dominion of grace is the greatest liberty and enlargement. Then is a man free from righteousness, when he hath no impulsions or inclinations of heart to that which is good, when righteousness hath no command over him, when he will not be held under the restraints of grace, when he hath no fear to offend or care to please God. But on the other side, then is a man free from sin when he can thwart his lust, always warring against it, cutting off the provisions of the flesh; when he hath no purpose and care to act his lust, but it is always the bent and inclination of his heart to please God; and this is our liberty and enlargement.

The other part of this liberty and enlargement is, when we are freed from the bondage of conscience, or fears of death and hell. Every covenant hath a suitable operation of the spirit attending upon it: the covenant of works hath an operation of the spirit of bondage; the covenant of grace hath an operation of the spirit of adoption. I say, the covenant of works, rightly thought of, produceth nothing in the fallen creature but bondage, or a dreadful sense of their misery; it is called the spirit of bondage, and every one which passeth out of that covenant hath a feeling of it: Rom. viii. 15, 'You have not received the spirit of bondage, again to fear.' You had it once, but not again. Then are we enlarged in this sense when the shackles are knocked off from our consciences, when we have that other spirit, the spirit of adoption, or that free spirit, as it is called: Ps. li. 12, 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit.' This free spirit enlargeth us, that we may serve God cheerfully and comfortably.

According to this double captivity (the slavery of sin and bondage of conscience) so must our freedom and enlargement be interpreted; a freedom from the power of sin, and a freedom from the guilt of sin. The carnal estate is often compared to a prison; as Rom. xi. 32, 'God hath concluded,' or 'shut them all up together in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all;' Gal. iii. 22, 'The scripture hath concluded,' or 'shut up all under sin;' *συνέκλεισεν*, that is the word. A man in his sinful and unbelieving state is like a man shut up in a strong prison, that is made sure and fast with iron bars and bolts, so that there is no hope of breaking prison; mercy alone must open the door to him: this being in prison notes the power of sin. But take the other notion, because of the guilt of sin. Now this prison is all on fire in the apprehension of the sensible sinner; and therefore the poor trembling captive, when the prison is all on a light flame, runs hither and thither, seeking an outgate and a way of escape, and mourns and sighs through the grates of the flaming prison. This is all our condition by nature. Now, when God loosens the bolts, and shoots back the many locks that were upon us, as the angel made Peter's chains fall off, Acts xii. 12, then are we said to be enlarged, to run the way of his commandment, or, as it is expressed Luke i. 74, to be 'delivered out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life;' when we are

delivered from the powers of corruption, which are as bolts and locks upon us, and the power of sin is broken, and we let out of the stocks of conscience, that we might serve God without slavish fear. This is the first thing we should mainly look at; the general enlargement must always go before the particular. First see that you be converted to God. It is that which hardeneth many. You shall find many are praying for strengthening grace when they should ask renewing grace; and when they should bewail the misery of an unregenerate carnal state, they confess only the infirmities of the saints, and so are like little children, that attempt to run before they can stand or go. Therefore here God must enlarge you, free you from the slavery of sin and bondage, that you may serve God.

2. There is a particular enlargement, or the actual assistance of the Lord's grace, carrying us on in the duties of our heavenly calling with more success. This is that which David begs in this place, 'If thou wilt enlarge my heart.' There are, after grace is received, many spiritual distempers which are apt to seize upon us. Sometimes we are slow of heart, sometimes in bonds and straits of conscience as to God's service. A man of spiritual experience is sensible of these things, of a damp which is many times upon his life and comfort, and want of strength and largeness of heart for God's service. Whosoever makes conscience of daily communion with God, and that in every service would do his uttermost, cannot but be sensible of straits; and therefore it is grievous to him to be under bonds and restraints, and that he cannot so freely let out his heart to God. Others that do not make communion with God their interest, that go on in a dead track and course of duty, are never sensible of enlargement or straitening.

But briefly, that we may know when the heart is enlarged, understand the nature of it, let us see when the heart in scripture is said to be enlarged.

1. You may look upon this enlargement as the effect of wisdom and knowledge; and so Solomon is said to have a large heart: 1 Kings iv. 29, 'And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart even as the sand that is on the sea-shore.' The greater stock of sanctified wisdom and knowledge a man hath, the more is the heart enlarged; for he hath a treasure within him, and he is ready to bring out of the good treasure of his heart good things. He that hath more gold than brass farthings, when he puts his hand into his pocket, will more easily bring forth gold than farthings; so when the heart hath a good stock of holy principles within, they are ready at hand, they break out more easily in our discourse, in our praying; we are ready in all temptations to check the sin. All grace is increased to us by knowledge: 2 Peter i. 2, 'Grace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord.' Still this way doth God enlarge the heart of his people. When the understanding is full of pregnant truths, the greater awe there is and check upon the heart to sin, and the greater impulsion to duty. Look, as the influences of heaven pass through the air, but they produce their effects in the earth; they do not make the air fruitful, but the earth; so do the influences of grace pass through the understanding, but they produce their fruit in the will, and show

forth their strength in the affections; and therefore when we would have our affections for God, the way is to enlarge the understanding.

2. You may look upon it as the effect of faith, which wideneth the capacities of our souls, and doth cause us more to open towards God, that we may take in his grace; it doth enlarge our desires and expectations: Ps. lxxxi. 10, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' Surely a temple for the great God, such as our hearts should be, should be fair and ample. If we would have God dwell in our hearts, and shed abroad his influences, we should make room for God in our souls by a greater largeness of faith and expectation. The rich man thought of enlarging his barns when his store was increased upon him: Luke xii.; so should we stretch out the curtains of Christ's tent and habitation, have larger expectations of God, if we would receive more from him. The vessels failed before the oil failed. We are not straitened in God, but in ourselves, by the scantiness of our own thoughts; we do not make room for him, nor greatness God: Luke i. 46, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' Faith doth greatness God. Why, can we make God greater than he is? As to his declarative being, we can have greater and larger apprehensions of his greatness, goodness, and truth.

3. We may look upon it as an effect of comfort and joy, through the assurance of God's love; for that enlargeth the heart, but sorrow straitens it, and puts it in bonds. The word that we translate *grief*, Judges x. 16, 'His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel;' in the Hebrew it is 'shortened' or 'lessened.' A man's mind is lessened when he is under that passion. Grievings contract and lessen the soul, but joy enlargeth it, as Isa. lx. 5; and in this sense it is said, Ps. iv. 1, 'Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.' In sorrow the spirits return to comfort and support the heart, but in joy they are dilated and scattered abroad; and so this is that affection which sends abroad strength and life into all our actions. As this is true of joy and sorrow in common, so especially of spiritual joy and spiritual sorrow, which are the greatest of the kind; no sorrow like that sorrow, no joy like that joy; therefore nothing more enlargeth the heart. When God hides his face, when pressing troubles do revive a sense of wrath, alas! 'My soul is troubled,' saith the Psalmist, 'I cannot speak;' we cannot pour out our hearts to God with that largeness, that measure of strength, spirit, and life as before. But now, when we can joy in God as those that have received the atonement, when we have the comfort of a good conscience, the joy in the Holy Ghost, this causeth a forward and free obedience; and those that could hardly creep before, but languished under the burden of sorrows, when cheered and revived with the light of God's countenance, they can run and act with vigour and alacrity in God's service: Neh. viii. 10, 'The joy of the Lord is their strength.' It is as oil to the wheels, as wings by which we mount to meet with God: Ps. xxx. 11, 'Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.' It is an allusion to those eastern countries; when their garments were girded and tucked up, they were more expedite and ready to run. So here, when thou shalt enlarge my heart, then I will run the way of thy commandments. When our soul is filled with gladness, and comfortable

apprehensions of the Lord's grace, we are carried out to God with greater strength and liveliness.

4. We may look upon it as a fruit of love. For thus the apostle doth express his love to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. vi. 11, 'O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.' It is love which is the great poise and weight upon the soul that sets all the wheels a-going. When love is strong, the heart is carried out with fervour and earnestness: Neh. iv. 6, 'We built the wall.' Why? 'For the people had a mind to the work;' then it went on speedily. Where we have no affection to a thing, the least service is burdensome; but when our hearts are for it, then the most difficult thing will seem easy; Jacob's seven years' hard service were sweetened by his love to Rachel; yea, duties against the hair, as Shechem for Dinah's sake submitted to be circumcised. Love sets us a-work strongly.

Thus the general enlargement is when we are freed from the slavery of sin and bondage of conscience, that we may serve God cheerfully; and the particular enlargement, you may look upon it as a fruit of wisdom and knowledge, or of faith, or of joy, or of love; when we have a fruitful understanding, a large faith, a sweet delight in God, and a strong love to him.

Secondly, For the necessity of this, that the heart should be enlarged before we can run the way of God's commandments.

1. There needs a large heart because the command is exceeding broad: Ps. cxix. 96, 'I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad.' A broad law and a narrow heart will never suit. We need love, faith, knowledge, and all to carry us through this work, which is of such a vast extent and latitude.

2. We need an enlarged heart because of the lets and hindrances within ourselves. There is lust drawing off from God to sensual objects: James i. 14, 'Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.' Therefore there needs something to poise us, to incline us, to draw us on, to carry us out with strength and life another way, to urge us in the service of God. Lust sits as a clog upon us; it is a weight of corruption, Heb. xii. 1, retarding us in all our flights and motions, thwarting, opposing, breaking the force of spiritual impulsions, if not hindering them altogether, Gal. v. 17. Well, then, lust drawing so strongly one way, God needs to draw us more strongly the other way. When there is a weight to poise us to worldly and sensual objects, we need a strength to carry us on with vigorous and lively motions of soul towards God, an earnest bent upon our souls, which is this enlargement of heart.

Use 1. Let us therefore look after this benefit, and acknowledge God in it.

First, Ask it often of God. God keeps assisting grace in his own hands, and disposeth it at pleasure, that he may the oftener hear from us. The prodigal, that had his portion in his own hands, went away from his father; and therefore we have but from hand to mouth, that we may be daily kept in a dependence and constant course of communion with God. It is pleasing to God, when we desire him to renew his work, to bring forth the actings of grace out of his own seed, to blow with his wind, with the breath of his Spirit upon our

gardens, that the spices may flow out, Cant. iv. 15. But now, when we depend upon ourselves, and neglect God, and think to find always a like largeness of heart and a like savouriness of spirit, we shall be but like Samson: Judges xvi. 20, 'When his locks were gone, he thought to go forth and shake himself as at other times, and wist not that the Lord was departed from him.' So when our strength is gone and God withdrawn, we shall not find a like pregnancy and consistency of thoughts, a like readiness and vigour of affections in holy duties, but all will be out of order; the understanding is lean, dry, and sapless, the heart averse and dead; and therefore God will be acknowledged in our enlargements, both as to prayer and praise. In a way of prayer we should often seek to him; and he will be acknowledged in a way of praise likewise: Ps. lxxiii. 8, 'My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me.' If you find any strong actings of faith and love stirred up to follow hard after God, to pursue him close in holy duties, when you feel any of these vigorous and lively motions, ascribe it not to yourselves, but to God's right hand; he is to be owned in the work.' 'Not I,' saith the apostle, 'but the grace of God wrought in me.'

Secondly, Avoid the causes of straitening, if you would have this enlarged heart. What are they?

1. Ignorance and defect of gifts; for it is by knowledge all grace comes into the soul: Col. iii. 16, 'Let the word of God dwell in you richly.' When the understanding is fraught with spiritual treasure, when the word of God dwells in us richly, then we have it upon all occasions to help us, we have at home a truth ready, and can call it to mind, either for suppressing of temptation, or encouraging us to duty, or for allaying of such a grief, speaking comfort under such a cross; otherwise we are lean, dry, and cannot act with that fulness of strength. But—

2. Another thing that straitens the heart is the love of present things. So much as your hearts are enlarged to the flesh, so much they are straitened to the spirit, 2 Cor. vi. 13; as what the land loseth the sea gains. By pleasures and by the cares of the world your hearts are straitened towards God, they are 'overcharged,' Luke xxi. 34.

3. Sorrow and uncomfortable dejection of spirit, through the fears of God's wrath, or by reason of desertion, when we have a sense of his wrath, and when we can find no effects of his grace. God withdraws, you have not your wonted influences, your wonted answers of prayer: Ps. lxxvii. 4, 'I am so troubled that I cannot speak.' This locks up the heart, and hinders it in the service of God, that it cannot so freely come and pour out its soul.

4. Great sins work a shyness of God. The faulty child blusheth, and is loath to look his father in the face, when he hath been doing some offence. The Israelites, after they had sinned in the matter of the calf, they stood afar off, and worshipped every man in his tent-door. You lose your freedom by gross sins: 1 John iii. 21, 'If our hearts condemn us not, then *παρρησίαν ἔχομεν*, we have confidence towards God;' we may come into God's presence without a self-accusing and condemning conscience. You have not this liberty and

enlargedness of heart towards God when an accusing conscience pursues you. When a man hath lost his peace and comfort, he cannot come and tell God all his mind, his temptations, straits, doubts, fears.

5. Unbelief. That is a cause of straitening, when it represents God under an ill notion; as terrible: Lam. iii. 10, 'He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places;' Isa. xxxviii. 13, 'I reckoned till morning, that as a lion so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.' It fills us with misconceits of God, as if he were terrible. When one came tremblingly with a petition to Augustus, What! said he, art thou giving a sop, a bit to an elephant? We disguise the majesty of God by our unbelieving thoughts; we come to him as to a bear and lion that is ready to tear us in pieces, and then we cannot have that cheerfulness and delight in his service.

6. Pride. We are not humbled, but puffed up, when our heart is enlarged, and abuse the quickening influences of the Lord's grace to feed our pride: Ps. li. 15, 'Open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.' He doth not say, Mine own praise; then I will discover my gifts, and show what I can do: but, Thy praise. Many beg quickening and enlargement to set off themselves, and ask contributions of heaven to supply the devil's service; or as he that lighted his lamp at the altar that he might go and steal with it. We would put up self as an idol in God's stead, and have help from God that we might make him serve with our iniquities, that we might set off ourselves with honour and esteem in the world. Therefore God withdraws and withholds his hand. These are the causes of straitening.

Use 2. Let us then see if we have this benefit, an enlarged heart, which is so necessary for the keeping God's commandments.

Two things will deceive us: many think they have it when they have it not, and many think they have it not when indeed they have it.

1. Many think they have it when they have it not. Enlargement of gifts differs from enlargement of grace. A ready tongue many have—that depends upon the temper of the body—but not a humble heart. They may take pride and complacency in their own gifts, and yet not delight in communion with God. There are many in the world that have abilities of utterance, and some fanatical joys accompanying the exercise of it, and yet they have not an unfeigned love to God. Such as are enlarged in point of gifts, it is many times seen in this, that generally in private they are more careless, and they are more in expression than in feeling. The great deceit and counterfeit of grace is parts and common gifts, especially when exercised in holy things, in a spiritual way, and for the good and edification of others. Certainly men have not spiritual enlargement when they still lie under the bondage and dominion of sin; and so though they may seem to have particular enlargement in some duties, and may be carried on with a great flush of gifts, yet they have not a general enlargement, the yoke is not broken, but still they are the servants of corruption.

2. On the other side, some think they have it not when indeed they

have it. Why? Because they are not carried out in the work of God, as sometimes they seem to have been, with that liveliness and comfort. Let me tell you, there are necessary aids of grace, and there are more liberal aids of grace, over and above the necessary. If you have the necessary aids of grace, you are to acknowledge God hath enlarged your hearts, though you have not the larger measure, strength, and activity in God's service, which, upon the days of his magnificence and spiritual bounty, he is wont to dispense to his people. God doth not always continue these dispensations. Sometimes we find that Christians outgo themselves, and are enlarged beyond the ordinary pitch. Let me represent it by a similitude. We are not to esteem a river by its swelling and running over the banks after a mighty, long, and continued rain, but by its constant course; nor are we to judge of a town by the great concourse at a fair or market, the town is not every day so filled. So neither are we to judge of God's assistance by those high tides of comfort or strength of gracious impulses which, in the days of spiritual bounty, he is wont to give. If you are enabled to walk humbly with God, though you have not such heights of affection, you should be thankful.

So much for the first thing the text offers, the blessing asked, viz., an enlarged heart.

SERMON XXXV.

I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.—VER. 32.

THE second thing that is offered here is the necessary precedency of this work on God's part before there can be any serious bent and motion of heart towards God on our part. 'When thou shalt enlarge my heart.' *When* is causal, *because* thou shalt enlarge it. God only can enlarge the heart. We are sluggish, and loath to stir a foot in the ways of obedience, therefore God must enlarge. From first to last God doth all in the work of grace; he gives the habit and act. He plants graces in the heart, knowledge, faith, love, and delight; and then excites and quickens them to act. The habit of grace is called 'the seed of God,' 1 John iii. 9; there it begins. Before we can fly we must get wings, we must have grace before we can run the way of God's commandments; and then quickening of the habits, the exciting of the soul to action; the deed as well as the will, Phil. ii. 13; it is from God, the first inclination and actual accomplishment; he giveth to will, that is, the first inclination: 1 Kings viii. 58, 'That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways,' &c. And then the deed, the outward expression of our obedience, it is still from God: Acts iv. 29, the apostle goes to God for that, 'Grant unto thy servants that, with all boldness, they may speak thy word;' and so Col. iv. 3, he begs, prays to God to open a door of utterance for them. There is a door shut until God opens it. We cannot utter and express ourselves in a way of obedience without God's concurrence.

Use. Whenever you would undertake for God, get God first to undertake for you, as Hezekiah doth: Isa. xxxviii. 14, 'O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.' Let every earnest prayer be accompanied with a serious purpose, and let every serious purpose be accompanied with earnest prayer: Cant. i. 4, 'Draw me and we will run after thee.' So here, 'Lord, I will run the ways of thy commandments.' Ay, but as to the event, we must suspend it: 'If thou wilt enlarge my heart.' This is the method we should use: first engage God by prayer, then engage our hearts by promise. Though we cannot lay wagers upon our own strength, yet we may resolve in God's strength, and ought to engage ourselves to duty: Jer. xxx. 21, 'Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?' We must promise what is due, but not presume as if we could carry our purpose without God. As to the event, they speak conditionally, 'When thou shalt enlarge my heart.' The children of God have no other confidence of their own affections but as God will put forth his power. They know they have a deceitful and corrupt heart; and to stand to their resolutions immutably, faithfully, needs more strength than their own. They resolve as to work, but as to event, they suspend that; they know their resolution will not be brought to anything unless God continue his grace and favour. The children of God, as they would own Christ as Lord, and commanding the work, so they promise obedience; that is their duty; and as they would own him a Saviour in helping them through the work, so they promise conditionally in his strength. As they are swayed by his sovereignty in his command, so they depend upon his all-sufficiency in his promise.

Here two cases may be handled; one is more generally—

Case 1. Whether we are to resolve upon a course of obedience when we are uncertain of God's assistance? The reason of doubting is, because we cannot perform it in our own strength. I answer—

1. It is your duty to engage and consent to give up yourselves to God's service whatever comes of it: 2 Chron. xxx. 8, 'Yield yourselves unto the Lord.' In the Hebrew it is 'strike hands with him' in his holy covenant: Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, present yourselves,' &c. You ought to come and present yourselves, own yourselves solemnly in a way of dedication to God. It was implied in our baptism, which is therefore called, 1 Peter iii. 21, 'An answer of a good conscience towards God;' an answer upon God's demands in his covenant. An answer supposeth a question. God puts us to the question, Will you be my people? will you serve me faithfully and do my will? Then we ratify it by baptism. Necessary duties must be done whatever comes of it, as Abraham 'obeyed God, not knowing whither he went.'

2. As this is your duty, so, whether you resolve or no, you are already obliged by God's command. This actual resolution of entering into covenant with God is only required as a means to strengthen us. Natural relations enforce duty without consent; a father is a father whether a child will own him in the quality of that relation, yea or nay. God's right is valid whether you will consent or not. Actual consent or purpose in your heart doth not give God greater right, but makes duty more implicit and active upon your own hearts. We cannot make the

bonds of duty stronger, for God's authority is greater than ours, but we have a deeper sense when we own God's authority by our own engagement.

3. You have more cause to expect God's assistance in this way of engaging your heart to him than in standing loose from God, and neglect of his appointed means. You know the promise is made, Rev. xxii. 17, 'To him that will, let him take of the waters of life freely.' When there is a fixed bent of heart that comes from a secret impression of God's grace which causeth this will in you, when you have declared your will, you have more reason to expect God's concurrence.

4. It is a foolish course to refuse to *make* the covenant for fear of *breaking* it; as if a tradesman should neglect his calling, forbear to set up, because it is possible losses may come. Make it, then keep it in God's strength. Make it, but remember, your security lieth in God's promises, not in your own. It is your duty to engage to God; but as to the event, you cannot say you can go through with it, unless the Lord put in with his grace.

Case 2. The second case is more obvious and usual, viz., whether we are to do duties in case of deadness, indisposition, and straits of spirit? The reason of doubting is, because David seems to suspend his running upon God's enlarging—If thou wilt enlarge, then I will run. *Ans.* He suspends the event, but not his duty. He doth not say I will not stir unless thou enlarge my heart, but, If thou enlarge then I shall run. The plea of weakness must not be used, from the doctrine of God's concurrence to all acts of grace, as a shift, or turned into a plea for laziness. The right use of this doctrine is a constant dependence in a sense of our own weakness, and hearty thanksgiving when we have received any command from God. Now a form of thanksgiving is abused when it is made a plea for laziness. To resolve upon a loose course, and give over all, is an absurd inference from this doctrine; it is as if a man should say, my ploughing and sowing, unless God give the increase, will never make the corn grow, therefore I will hold my hand, and take the other sleep. It is God sends the wind, therefore I will not put forth the sails; that is no good inference. For further arguments, see ver. 25, where the question is handled, whether we are to do duties in case of deadness. It is a most commendable thing to work notwithstanding indispositions. There is more faith in it; God's love is glorified when you can cast yourselves into his arms, then when he seems to shut up himself from your prayers, and to suspend the influences of his grace, Esther had great confidence to venture when no golden sceptre was held forth; so when we have no sensible comfort, then to venture and cast ourselves upon God. And it argues more faith in the power of God. As Abraham's faith was commended, that he could believe against hope; so, when all is dead, yet you will see what God will do for the quickening and enlarging of the soul. Then there is more obedience in it. No duty so commendable as that which is recovered out of the hands of difficulty, when in the face of temptation we can venture to go to God. And there is humility in it, when we can look upon ourselves as bound though God be free. I must wait upon him in the use of means, though I have a dead heart.

Thirdly, The subsequent operation of the saints; they that are acted by God act under him: 'Then will I run the way of thy commandments.'

First, Mark, he resolveth, 'Then I will run.' He doth not say, Then I *should* run, but *will* run, as binding his soul by a resolution, and his resolution by a solemn promise, 'Then I will run the way of thy commandments.' Here I might take occasion to speak of the good of binding the heart, and being resolved in a course of godliness. It is good to engage us to come to God, to keep to God, and to be hearty in his service.

1. This is that which engageth us to come to God, because of ourselves we are off and on, hanging between heaven and hell, and have many loose and wavering thoughts, until we come to a firm purpose and determination, and that engageth the heart: Jer. xxx. 21, 'Who is this that engageth his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord?' Before we come to this engagement, there are several things:—(1.) A simple and bare conceit of the ways of God, or of the goodness of holiness, this will not bring us to God, some general approbation of his ways. Many will say, 'God is good to Israel,' Ps. lxxiii. 1; but the heart never comes off kindly to choose God till the judgment determines, 'It is good for me to draw nigh to God,' ver. 28. This puts an end to many anxious traverses, debates, and delays in the soul. (2.) There are weak and wavering purposes, and faint attempts in the soul, that end but in wishes, which are soon broken off; but we are never converted and thoroughly brought to God till there be a full and fixed purpose: Acts xi. 23, 'He exhorted them all, that with full purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.' When it comes to a plenary thorough purpose of heart, then grace hath wrought upon us.

2. As it will bring us to come to God, so it causeth us to keep to God. He that is unresolved is never constant: James i. 8, 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' There is in us a changeable heart, a rebelling nature; that meeting with temptations from without, unless there be a fixed purpose, alas! we shall be unstable in all our ways; all good wishes and faint purposes come to nothing, but we shall give out at every assault. But when we are firmly and habitually resolved, Satan is discouraged. This bindeth our holy purposes, like hemming of the garment, that keepeth it from ravelling out. Whilst we are thinking and deliberating what to do, we lie open to temptations, the devil hath some hope of us; but when the bent of our hearts is set another way, and the devil sees we are firmly resolved, and have holy purposes, he is discouraged. This was that which made Daniel so courageous and resolute in God's service: Dan. i. 8, 'He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat.'

3. By resolution we are quickened to more diligence and seriousness. Good purposes are the root of good works, and without the root there is no fruit to be expected. A true and inward purpose will not let us be idle, but still urging and soliciting us to that which is good, then we make a business of religion; whereas otherwise we make but a sport and recreation, that is, mind it only by the by. But now, 'One thing have I desired, and that will I seek after,' Ps. xxvii. 4. When the heart is set upon a thing we follow it close, whatever we neglect. Whereas otherwise we are very lazy, careless, and do it

as if we did it not ; this makes us diligent, earnest, careful to maintain communion between God and us.

Use. Well, then, do you thus resolve and engage your hearts to walk with God. And for your direction—

1. Let it be the resolution of the heart, rather than the tongue : Jer. xxx. 21, ‘Who is this that engageth his *heart*?’ And Acts xi. 23, ‘He exhorted them *with purpose of heart* to cleave to the Lord.’ Our resolution is not to be determined and judged of so much by the course of our language as by the bent of our heart. Empty promises signify nothing unless they are the result of the heart’s determination : Deut. v. 28, 29, ‘The people hath said well,’ saith God, ‘all that the Lord hath said, we will do. Oh, that they had such a heart within them!’ Otherwise the duty hath no root, unless it be a fixed determination of the soul.

2. Let it not be a weak, broken, but full resolution. Cold wishes are easily overcome by the love of the world : Acts xxvi. 23, ‘Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.’ That will not do, unless we be altogether. Carnal men, though they are not converted, yet they have a kind of half turn ; they have good wishes on a sudden upon a lively sermon ; they would, but they will not. There needs a strong bent of heart. Bad purposes are more easily resolved and performed than good ; Satan, the world, and the flesh do not hinder, but further them ; so that good resolutions need to be thoroughly made : 1 Chron. xxii. 19, ‘Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.’ When the heart is fixed by a persevering durable purpose, grace possesses it.

3. Let it not be a rash but a serious resolution, all difficulties being well weighed. In a fit or pang of devotion men will resolve for God, but it is soon gone : Josh. xxiv. 19, 20, ‘We will serve the Lord, for he is our God : and Joshua said, Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is an holy God, he is a jealous God ;’ that is, do you consider what you say ? When you have weighty reasons and considerations to bear you up, you are more likely to hold. Sit down and count the charges ; if you resolve for God, see what it is like to cost you, and consider where it is likely to fail, what difficulties you are most likely to meet withal, what lusts are most apt to break your purpose.

4. It must be a thorough, absolute, and peremptory resolution. Whatever it cost you, resolve to part with all for the pearl of price, Mat. xiii. 46, 47, and take Christ for better for worse. A marriage may be almost made, but there is one article they stick at, and it is broken off ; so some are at the very point of giving up themselves to God, but there is one article they stick at ; it is not an absolute resolution.

5. Let it be a present, and not a future resolution : Ps. xxvii. 8, ‘When thou saidst, Seek ye my face ;’ like a quick echo he returns upon God, ‘Thy face, Lord, will I seek.’ As soon as you hear God’s voice, before the heart grow cold again, it is good to resolve ; for afterwards it is but a cheat to put off importunity of conscience for the present.

6. Let it be a resolution made in a sense of your own insufficiency, and with dependence upon Christ, not in a confidence of your own

strength. Peter went forth in a confidence of his own resolution, 'Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I;' but how soon did he miscarry! Resolve in God's strength: Ps. cxix. 8, 'I will walk in the way of thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.' If God forsake you, all comes to nothing; therefore in and by God's strength resolve for God.

Secondly, The matter of the resolution, 'The way of thy commandments.' Which we may consider either simply and absolutely in itself, or with respect to the resolution. With respect to the resolution observe, the matter is good he resolves upon. Some will resolve upon a course of sin, as they, Acts xxiii. 12, that bound themselves under a curse to kill Paul. In this case a vow is a bond of iniquity. Many will bind themselves never to forgive their neighbour such an offence. Again, the matter is necessary. It is contrary to christian liberty needlessly to bind ourselves where God hath left us free. Many will in some indifferent things bind themselves, make rash and unnecessary vows, as to play no more at such a game, drink no more in such a house or company. Alas! what doth this do to cure the heart? This is but like the stopping of one leak in a ruinous ship that is ready to fall in pieces. Resolution is for the weighty things of christianity, or cleaving to God in a course of obedience, not for some by-matters. Resolve on the most necessary work. Again, this resolution is propounded universally, indefinitely, 'in the way of God's commandments,' whatever shall appear to be the will of God. When our consent is bounded with reservations, we do not come up to the mind of God, and that will bring you but half way to heaven. He that is half holy, half religious, will be but half saved. Paul gives God a blank, and bids him write his terms: Acts ix. 6, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' So we must submit ourselves to all the ways of God without exception. Thus we may consider it as it falls under a resolution, 'The way of thy commandments.'

But consider the expression absolutely, why are the commandments called a *way*?

1. There is an end for which man was appointed, and that was to seek after true happiness. All desire to be happy by an inclination of nature, for hereunto were we appointed by God. 'Many say, Who will show us any good?' Ps. iv. 6; but men's practice is contrary, they live as if their end were to be miserable.

2. This true happiness lieth in the enjoyment of God; that is the great end of reasonable creatures, angels and men, actively to glorify God, and to enjoy him: other creatures were made to glorify him objectively, but not to enjoy him.

3. For the compassing this end there is a way; for every end is attained by the means. What is this way? God's commandments: Eccles. xii. 13, 'Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.' That was the result of Solomon's critical search in and about the ways of true happiness; he found that a constant, uniform, universal obedience was the only way to true happiness.

4. The commands of God are legal and evangelical: they are both to be regarded:—(1.) The evangelical commands come first into consideration by the fallen creature; there the great command is to believe

in Christ, John vi. 29, 1 John iii. 23. To believe in Christ is the only way to the Father. Then (2.) The moral law, that is the rule of our duty, without which we can never be saved, Rom. x. 14.

Use. Well, then, let me press you to consideration and resolution. (1.) Consideration, that we may think of our end, and think of our way, and may not go on as beasts, without any recollection. Luke xv. 17: We never 'come to ourselves' till we consider the end why we were born and why God sent us into the world. Whence am I? why do I live here? To delight myself in the creature, to wallow in pleasures, or to look after communion with God? We live but as beasts, not as men, till we return and remember our creator, in the enjoyment of whom is our only happiness. (2.) Then come to resolution; there is *intentio*, *electio*, *consensus*, and *imperium*; all these should be fixed after we have considered for what am I made? what is the way I am to walk? The first act of the soul is *intentio*; that belongs to the last end; surely this must be my scope, that God may be my portion. The next act is *electio*, or choice; that belongs to the means. Now the great means is Christ Jesus, he is the way to the Father. Oh, let me choose him that I may enjoy God for my portion! The next act is *consensus*, the will and understanding together; there is a consent to the terms. Notwithstanding all the conditions upon which these means are to be had, yet there is a full consent of the will to use them, so a consent to take Christ upon his own terms. After this there is *imperium*, a command for an industrious prosecution; this shall be my business, this I will look after. There should be a decree in our souls for God; God is my scope, Christ my way; I must take him; I will go about this work, walk in this way, that I may at length enjoy him.

Fourthly, The last circumstance is the manner, 'I will *run* the way,' &c. By running is meant cheerful, ready, and zealous observance of God's precepts. It is not go or walk, but run. They that would come to their journey's end must run in the way of God's commandments. It noteth speedy or a ready obedience without delay. We must begin with God betimes. Alas! when we should be at the goal, we scarce set forth many of us. And it noteth earnestness; when a man's heart is set upon a thing, he thinks he can never soon enough do it. And this is running, when we are vehement and earnest upon the enjoyment of God and Christ in the way of obedience. And it notes, again, when the heart freely offereth itself to God. Now this running is very necessary, as it is the fruit of effectual calling. When the Lord speaks of effectual calling, the issue of it is running; when he speaks of the conversion of the Gentiles, 'Nations that know thee not shall run to thee;' and 'Draw me, and we will run after thee;' and 'In the day of thy power thy people shall be a willing people.' There are no slow motions, but when God draws there is a speedy, an earnest motion of the soul. And this running, as it is the fruit of effectual calling, so it is very needful; for cold and faint motions are soon overborne with every difficulty and temptation: Heb. xii. 1, 'Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.' When a man hath a mind to do such a thing, though he be hindered and jostled, he takes it patiently; he goes on, and cannot stay to debate the business. A slow motion is easily

stopped, whereas a swift one bears down that which opposeth it ; so when men run and are not tired in the service of God. And then the prize calls for running : 1 Cor. ix. 24, ' So run that ye may obtain.' There is a prize, which is eternal life in Christ Jesus, the reward or crown which he keepeth for us in heaven. They that ran for a garland of flowers in the Isthmic games—the apostle alludes to them—how would they diet themselves that they might be in breath and heart to win a poor garland of flowers ! There is a crown of glory set before us, therefore we should so run that we may obtain, and be temperate in all things ; we should keep down the body, deny fleshly lusts, and the like.

Use. To reprove faint cold motions in the things of God. Many, instead of running, lie down, or, which is worse, go back again, or at best but a very slow pace. Christ is running to you to snatch you out of the fire, and will you not run towards him ? When we have abated the fervour of our motion towards God, then we lie open to temptation ; therefore let us not loiter ; run, it is for a crown. If heaven be worth nothing, lie still ; but if it be, run. Wicked men run fast to hell, as if they did strive who should be soonest there ; bewail your slowness and lameness in obedience.

SERMON XXXVI.

Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.—VER. 33.

THE man of God had promised to run the way of God's commandments ; but being conscious of many swervings, beggeth God further to teach him.

In the words two things are observable :—

1. A prayer for grace.
2. A promise made upon supposition of obtaining the grace asked.

He promiseth—

[1.] Diligence and accuracy of practice, *I will keep it.*

[2.] Perseverance, *unto the end.*

First, In the prayer for grace observe—

1. The person to whom he prays, *O Lord.*
2. The person for whom, *teach me.*
3. The grace for which he prayeth, *to be taught.*
4. The object of this teaching, *the way of God's statutes.*

The teaching which he beggeth is not speculative, but practical ; to learn how to walk in the way of God.

1. David, a man after God's own heart, maketh this prayer. The more love any have to God, the more they desire to know his ways. Carnal men are of another spirit ; they say, Job xxi. 14, ' Depart from us ; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' The more ignorant the more quiet. They that love their lusts cannot heartily desire the knowledge of those truths which will trouble them in the following of their lusts. We often consult with our affections about our opinions ;