

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 ;

and where we have a mind to hate, we have no desire to know, Ordinary professors, a little knowledge serveth their turn, some few obvious truths, but others, such as David, follow on to know the Lord. David, that had a singular measure of knowledge already, yet there is no end of his desire in this psalm; and shall we be contented as if we needed no more?

2. Consider David, a prophet, a teacher, a penman of scripture. There was some knowledge which the prophets got by ordinary means, and some by immediate revelation; as Daniel by vision, and Daniel by reading of books, Dan. vii. 2, ix. 2; either by a new revelation, or by the study of what was already revealed. And if extraordinary men were bound to the ordinary duties of God's service as the means of their improvement and growth in grace, such as reading, prayer, hearing, meditation, use of seals, &c., surely none can plead exemption or conceit themselves to be above duties. Now, that they were thus bound we find by David's prayer for knowledge, Daniel's reading of books, namely that of Jeremiah, and all of them meditating or inquiring diligently what manner of salvation should ensue: 1 Peter i. 10, 11, 'Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow;' meditating and prying into the meaning of that salvation which by the motion of the Spirit they held forth to others, labouring to make these truths their own, and to get their hearts affected therewith. In their prophetic revelations they were *φερόμενοι*, 2 Peter i. 21, forcibly moved by the Spirit, and carried beyond their intention, and the line of their natural strength, but in other things they got knowledge by the same means that we do, and as believers were to stir up the gifts and graces which they had in the ordinary way of duty, waiting and crying for the influences of the Lord's grace. You must distinguish, then, of what they did when they acted as prophets and when they acted as believers.

3. David, that had means external sufficient to direct him in the way of God, as the scriptures then written, the ordinances of the law, and the expositions of the scribes, yet beggeth God to teach him. So must we beg God to teach us, whatever means we have. It is true we have an advantage above the Old Testament church, as we have their helps and more, and the doctrine of salvation is now clearer, and the gifts and graces of the Spirit more plentifully dispensed since the price of redemption is actually paid, than before, when God gave out grace and glory only upon trust; yet still we are to go to God for his teaching, because the means are not successful unless he join his influence; especially to give us this practical knowledge, teaching in order to keeping the way of God's statutes. I say, though we have the word, and many pastors and teachers better gifted than in the Old Testament, Eph. iv. 11, yet God must be our teacher still, if we mean to profit; for 'Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God giveth the increase,' 1 Cor. iii. 6. To seek knowledge in the means with the neglect of God will never succeed well with you; as we ministers must not rest upon our work, but pray much for success

(*bene orasse est bene studuisse*—Luther), so you hearers must not rest in the fruit of our studies, but still beg God to teach you every truth.

But all this will be more evidently made out in the following points.

*Doct.* 1. Divine teaching is necessary for all those that would walk in the way of God's statutes.

1. We have lost our way to true happiness. Adam lost it, and all mankind in him; ever since we have been wandering up and down: Ps. xiv. 3, 'They are all gone aside,' *i.e.*, gone out of the way of holiness as it leadeth to true happiness: Eccles. vii. 29, 'God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions;' wander in a maze. Man at first, that had perfect wisdom to discern the way to true happiness, and ability to pursue it, now is full of crooked counsels, being darkened with ignorance in his mind, and abominable errors and mistakes, and seconded with lusts and passions.

2. We can never find it of ourselves till God reveal it to us: 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good,' Micah vi. 8. It is well for man that he hath God for his teacher, who hath given him a stated rule by which good and evil may be determined.

[1.] Because there are many things which nature would never reveal to him; as the whole doctrine of redemption by Christ. The book of the creatures discovereth the mercy of God, but giveth not the least hint of the way how that mercy should come unto us, speaketh nothing of God incarnate, two natures in Christ's person, the two covenants, the way of salvation by Christ's death, &c. These could never be known by natural reason, for all these things proceed from the mere motion of God's will, without any other cause moving thereunto than his own love and compassion: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And how could any man divine what God purposed in his heart, unless he himself revealed it?

[2.] Because those things that nature teacheth it teacheth but darkly, and with little satisfaction, without the help of scriptures; as that there is one God, the first cause of all, omnipotent, wise, righteous, good, and that it is reasonable he should be served; that reasonable creatures have immortal souls, and so die not as the beasts; that there is no true happiness in these things wherein men ordinarily seek it; that since virtue and vice receive not suitable recompenses here, there must be punishment and reward after this life; that men live justly, do as they would be done to, be sober and temperate; that reason be not enslaved to sensual appetite; all which nature revealeth but darkly: so that the wisest men that have lived according to this light in one thing or other have been found fools: Rom. i. 22, 'Professing themselves wise, they became fools.' But all these things are clearly revealed in scripture, which discovers the nature and way of worshipping the true God, what that reward and punishment after this life is, and the right way of obtaining the one and eschewing the other, with weighty arguments to enforce these things.

[3.] That we may have assurance that the worship which we give to God is pleasing to him, there must be a revelation of his

will; otherwise, when we have tired ourselves in an endless maze of superstitions, he might turn us off with 'Who hath required these things at your hands?' Isa. i. 12. Therefore, for our security and assurance it concerneth us to have a stated rule under God's own hand, and God must be both author and object of worship.

3. Besides the external revelation there must be an inward teaching: 'They shall all be taught of God,' John vi. 45; not all the prophets that wrote scripture, but all that come to Christ for salvation. And this is prophesied of that time when the canon and rule of faith should be most complete; then there will be still a need that they should be taught of God before their hearts be drawn into Christ. As the book of the scriptures is necessary to expound the book of the creatures, so and much more is the light of the Spirit to expound the book of the scriptures. Others teach the ear, but God openeth the heart. The rule is one thing, and the guide is another. The means were never intended to take off our dependence upon God, but to engage it rather, that we may look up for his blessing: 1 Cor. iii. 6, 'I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase;' 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'God, that commanded (ὁ ἐῖπων) light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' Though the gospel hath enough in it to evidence itself to the consciences of men, yet God must make use of his creating power before this light can break in upon our hearts with any efficacy and influence: 'The law is light,' Prov. vi. 23. Yet not comprehended by darkness: John i. 5, 'The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not,' which rests in the hearts of all men that remain in their natural condition. It is not enough to see any object to have the light of the sun, unless we have the light of the eye. The scripture is our external light, as the sun is to the world; the understanding is our internal light. Now this eye is become blind in all natural men, and in the best it is most imperfect; therefore the eyes of the understanding must be opened by the spirit of wisdom and revelation, Eph. i. 17, 18. Though truths be plainly revealed by the Spirit of God in scripture, yet there must be a removal of that natural darkness and blindness that is upon our understandings. Outward light doth not make the object conspicuous without a faculty of seeing in the eye; a blind man cannot see at noonday, nor the sharpest sight at midnight. The work of the Spirit is to take off the scales from our eyes, that we may see clearly what the scripture speaketh clearly. Now scripture is perfected, that is the great work, to strengthen the faculty.

4. This inward teaching must be renewed and continued from day to day, or else we shall soon miscarry by our mistakes and prejudices. David is often pressing God with this request, 'Lord, teach me;' which plainly sheweth that not only novices, but men of great holiness and experience, need new direction every day. The shameful miscarriages of God's wisest people are enough to show the necessity of this, and the many cautions in the word of God do abundantly confirm it: Prov. iii. 5, 6, 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' There is nothing that keepeth up

our dependence upon God, and should quicken us in our daily prayers, as the sense of this. Many times we come to God in the morning, and pray coldly and drowsily, because we go forth to the occasions of the day in the presumption of our wit; but it is a thousand to one but we smart for our folly before the evening come. Alas! such is the inconstancy and uncertainty of man's understanding, that unless we have continual light and direction from God, and he lead us by the hand through all our affairs, passion or unbelief, or some carnal affection, will make us stumble and dash against one divine precept or another. This concerneth all Christians, much more those in public station, whose good or evil is of a more universal influence. Such was David. Men of place and power and interest had need have this often in their mouths and hearts, 'Lord, teach me the way of thy statutes.' Homer has a notable saying in his *Odyssey*—

“Τοῖος γὰρ νόος ἐστὶν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων,  
\*Οἷον ἐπ’ ἡμᾶρ ἄγῃσι πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε.”

See Casaubon, Ep. 702, — a most divine sentence from a heathen poet, that mortal man should not be proud of his wit, for he hath no more understanding of his affairs than God giveth him from day to day. A sentence so admired by the heathens, that many of them transcribed it in their writings with admiration; as Clemens Alexandrinus speaketh of Archilochus, who, as he took other things from Homer, so his putting it into his verse thus—

“Τοῖος γὰρ ἀνθρώποισι θυμὸς, Γλαῦκε, Λεπτίνεω παι,  
Θνητοῖς ὁποῖον Zeus ἐφ’ ἡμέρην ἄγει.”

Augustine *De Civitate Dei*, telleth us, lib. v. cap. 8. Cicero rendered it into Latin verse thus, though with some loss of the sense—

“Tales sunt hominum mentes quales pater ipse,  
Jupiter auctiferas lustravit lumine terras.”

I quote all this to show you how precious such a hint was to heathens, as expressing a great deal of reason; and shall not we Christians wait upon God for the continual direction of his Spirit?

Now there is a twofold reason for this:—

1. Because this actuateth our knowledge, which would otherwise lie asleep in the habit; and then, though we are wise in generals, we should be to seek for direction in particular cases, or at least not have such a lively sense of God's will as to check the present temptations we meet with in the course of our affairs, and do too often induce us to miscarry. The temptation being dexterously managed by Satan, and entertained by our present thoughts, will easily overbear a latent principle long ago received, unless it be afresh revived and set a-work by God's Spirit; therefore we need that the Spirit should be our monitor, and cause truths formerly delivered to return with fresh force upon the heart. And indeed it is his main work to 'bring things to our remembrance,' John xiv. 26, and to blow up our light and knowledge into an actual resistance of whatever is contrary to the will of God, or to furnish us with seasonable thoughts in every business and temptation.

2. We have but a glimmering light when we are blinded with passions, and are in some sort ignorant of what we know, cannot deduce those conclusions which are evidently contained in known and avowed

principles. Hagar could not see the well before her eyes, by reason of her passion and grief, till God opened her eyes : Gen. xxi. 19, ‘And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.’ The ground was not opened to cause the fountain to bubble up, but her eyes were opened to see it. And Calvin giveth the reason why she saw it not, because *dolore attonita, quod expositum erat oculis non cernebat*—things at hand cannot be seen when the mind is diverted by the impression of some strong passion ; and it is true of the eyes of the mind ; we do not see what we see, being overcome by love, or fear, or hope, or anger, or some cloud that interposeth from the passions. As David, when he fumbled about God’s providence, being blinded by the prospering of the wicked, calleth himself beast for not discerning his duty in so plain a case : Ps. lxxiii. 22, ‘So foolish was I, and ignorant, and as a beast before thee.’ In the perplexities of his mind he could not see clear principles of faith which before he had sufficiently learned, but could not then make use of for the settling and composing his heart.

*Use 1* is for information.

1. The difference between the way of God and the way of sin. We have need of none to teach us to do evil—*Vitia etiam sine magistro discuntur* ; we have that from nature ; but in the way of God we must be taught and taught again ; God must be our teacher and daily monitor.

2. It informs us that as to knowledge and direction there must be much done. Poor man, lying in the darkness and shadow of death, it was necessary for him—

[1.] That some doctrine should be revealed by God, by which he might understand how God stood affected towards him, and he ought to be affected towards God.

[2.] That this doctrine being revealed by God, it should be kept safe and sound, free from oblivion and corruption, in some public and authentic record, especially in these last times, when not only the canon is enlarged, but the church propagated far and near, and obnoxious to so many calamities, and men are short-lived, and there are not such authentic witnesses to preserve the credit of a divine revelation.

[3.] That this writing and record be known to come from God’s own hand by some infallible proof, to the end that it may be entertained with the more reverence.

[4.] To own this authority, and discern God’s mind, we need a suitable faculty, or a heart disposed by the Holy Ghost to receive the proof which God offereth, namely, that we should be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and open our eyes.

[5.] It is not enough to own our rule, but we must be continually excited to study it, that we may come to a saving measure of the knowledge of God’s mind in the word.

[6.] After some knowledge our ignorance is apt to return upon us, unless the Holy Ghost do still enlighten us and warn us of our duty upon all occasions.

*Use 2.* In the sincerity of your hearts go to God for his teaching. God is pleased with the request : 1 Kings iii. 9, 10, ‘Give therefore

thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.' Oh! beg it of God.

1. The way of God's statutes is worthy to be found by all.

2. So hard to be found and kept by any.

3. It is so dangerous to miss it, that this should quicken us to be earnest with God.

1. It is so worthy to be found; it is the way to eternal life and to escape eternal death; and in matters of such a concernment no diligence can be too much: Prov. xv. 24, 'The way of life is above to the wise, to depart from hell beneath.' It is the way that leadeth to life and true happiness.

2. It is so hard to find and keep; it is a narrow way: Mat. vii. 13, 14, 'Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' There is defect, here excess. A gracious spirit, that would keep with God in all things, is sensible of the difficulty; there are many ways that lead to hell, but one way to heaven.

3. It is so dangerous to miss it in whole or in part; in whole, you are undone for ever; in part, in every false religion such disadvantages, so little of God's presence and the comforts of his Spirit: 1 Cor. iii. 15, 'If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.' A man should look after the most clear and safe way to heaven.

*Doct. 2.* That divine teaching is earnestly desired by God's children.

How often doth David repeat this request! These expressions are strange to us, who, as soon as we have gotten a little knowledge, think we know as much as we need to know, and are wise enough to guide our way without further direction; but they are not so to the people of God.

*Reas. 1.* It is a hard matter to understand a thing spiritually and as it ought to be understood. There is an understanding of things literally, and a spiritual discerning: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'A natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' There is a knowing things at random and by a general knowledge, and a knowing things as we ought to know: 1 Cor. viii. 2, 'If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.' There is a knowing the truth as it is in Jesus: Eph. iv. 21, 'If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.' It is not every sort of knowledge that is saving; a man may go to hell with speculative light; that never reacheth the heart: such as is practical and operative, the scripture presseth knowledge, and the *modus* of it.

2. God's children are sensible of their own insufficiency, and so of the need of a constant dependence upon God; sound and saving knowledge is ever humble. They have clearer light than others, and so best

see their own defects: Prov. xxx. 2, 'Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man;' and are, too, most sensible of corruptions, and see most of the excellency of the object: 1 Cor. viii. 2, 'If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.' They study their own hearts, and so are conscious to many weaknesses; they know how easily they are misled by the wiles of Satan and the darkness of their own hearts; whereas a presumptuous formalist goeth on boldly, and in the confidence of his own wit runneth headlong into temptation.

3. Their strong affection to knowledge; they desire to know more, for there is more still to be learned in the word of God. Though taught in part, they see what a small measure of knowledge they have attained unto; till they attain the beatifical vision they are never satisfied: Hosea vi. 3, 'Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord;' still increasing and bettering their notions concerning the things of God.

4. Their great care that they may not go astray, nor offend in matter, or manner, or principle, and end. They whose hearts are set upon exact walking would fain know what God would have them to do in every action and in every circumstance: Lord, teach me; let thy Holy Spirit guide me, and direct me in performing acceptable obedience to thee. It was David's resolution, ver. 32, 'I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.' Now we have his prayer for direction in this verse, 'Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes;' I would know it that I may keep it. It is a very troublesome condition to a child of God when he is in the dark, and knoweth not what to do, and is forced to walk every step by guess, and cannot find the ground sure under him. The conflict between duty and danger doth not trouble so much as between duty and duty: John xii. 35, 'He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.' Oh! it is a sad judgment to wander in a maze of confusions, and to be like those that thought to go to Dothan, and found themselves in Samaria, 2 Kings vi. 20.

Well, then, the *use* is, Have we this temper of God's people? Do we look after spiritual knowledge, such as will not only store the head with notions, but enter upon the heart? Are we sensible of our weakness and Satan's wiles, and that God, that hath begun the work, must perfect it? Do we make it our happiness to grow rich in knowledge, and better our apprehensions concerning God and the things of God? Would we understand every point of duty that we may fulfil it? As face answereth to face in water, so should heart to heart, the heart of one child of God to another.

*Doct.* 3. All that teaching that we expect or get from God must still be directed to practice: 'Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.'

1. This is God's intention in teaching, therefore should be our end in learning. The end of sound knowledge is obedience: Deut. iv. 5, 6, 'Behold I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it: keep therefore and do them, for this is thy wisdom.' Others do little more than learn them by rote, when they know



them only to talk of them, or fashion their notions and plausible opinions that they may hang together.

2. It is not the knowing, but obeying, will make us happy. We desire to know the way that we may come to the end of the journey; to inquire the way and sit still will not further us: 'Blessed are they that hear the word and keep it,' Luke xi. 28; 'He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction,' Prov. x. 17. None but desire to be happy; walk in God's way; he goeth on right that submitteth to the directions of the word.

3. All the comfort and sweetness is in keeping: Ps. xix. 11, 'In keeping thy commandments there is a great reward;' many sweet experiences. Notions breed a delectation when they are right, but nothing comparable to practice.

4. He that will do shall know: John vii. 17, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine whether it be of God.' Such as truly fear God, and make conscience of every known duty in their practice, have God's promise that they shall be able to discern and distinguish between doctrine and doctrine; others provoke God to withhold light from them. Not that the godly are infallible. Alas! the best men's humours and fleshly passions do often mislead them, but this is the fruit of their careless walking.

Use 1. Is to reprove them that desire knowledge, but only to inform their judgments or satisfy their curiosity, not to govern their hearts in the fear of God, or to reform their practices. Such are foolish builders: Mat. vii. 26, 27, 'Everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man that built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.' These do but increase their own condemnation: Luke xii. 47, 'That servant which knew his lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.' Like many that study maps, not to travel, but only to talk and understand how countries are situated.

Use 2. It directeth us in our desires of knowledge, what should be our scope. Come with a fixed resolution to obey, and refer all to practice. Knowledge is the means, doing is the end: Deut. v. 31, 'I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.' *Media accipiunt amabilitatem, ordinem et mensuram a fine*—the desire, measure, order of the means are to be esteemed as regulated by the end; therefore still prize this knowledge, so far forth as it directs to practice.

Doct. 4. In this practice we must be sincere and constant. 'I will keep it'—

1. Having such a help as this continual direction.

2. Such an engagement as this condescension to direct and warn a poor creature. And 'to the end,' that is to the end of my life; there is no other period to our obedience but death. The Greek hath it, *διὰ παντός*, 'continually.' The word doth properly signify the heel or sole of the foot; by traduction thence, the end of a thing, and sometimes a reward and recompense.

[1.] It is not enough to begin a good course, but we must go on in it, if we mean to reach the goal, else all our labour is lost; the end crowneth the work.

[2.] God, that made us begin, doth also make us to continue to the end. Is the beginning from God, the end and perfection from us? This is to ascribe that which is less perfect to God, and that which is more perfect to us.

## SERMON XXXVII.

*Give me understanding and I shall keep thy law ; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.*—VER. 34.

IN these words you have—(1.) A prayer, *give me understanding.* (2.) A promise, *and I shall keep thy law.* (3.) The promise amplified, by expressing the exactness and sincerity of that obedience, *yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.* The first point is—

That there needeth a great deal of understanding to keep God's law.

1. That he may know his way, and understand what God commandeth and forbiddeth; for it is the wisdom of a man to understand his way, and to know the laws according to which he liveth: Col. i. 9, 10, 'Filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye may walk worthy of God unto all well-pleasing.' We have such great obligations to God, both in point of hope and gratitude, that we have reason to study our duty exactly, that we may not displease him and cross his will in anything. We take it for granted that a man should comply with the will of him upon whom he dependeth. We have all and look for all from him; therefore we should walk worthy of God unto all well-pleasing, which we can never do without much knowledge and understanding; therefore we should search out the mind of God in everything.

2. To avoid the snares that are laid for us in the course of our duty to God. There is a crafty devil and a deceitful heart; so that a man that would walk with God had need have his eyes about him. For the wiles of Satan: Eph. vi. 11, 'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' His enterprises or devices: 2 Cor. ii. 11, 'Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices.' He is ready to entrap us and ensnare us by plausible temptations; he suiteth the bait to every appetite. Then our own hearts: Jer. xvii. 9, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?' There is a deceiver in our own bosoms, that will represent good under the notion of evil, and evil under the notion of good; that will cheat us of present duties by future promises. And therefore *Ingeniosa res est esse Christianum.* He that would keep God's law had need be a very understanding man, that Satan entrap him not, and his own heart deceive him not, and so he smart for his folly:

‘Walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil,’ Eph. v. 15.

3. That he may respect things according to their order and places, and give them precedency in his care and practice as their worth deserveth, which certainly belongeth to understanding or wisdom to do. As (1.) That God should be owned before man, and served and respected before our neighbour or ourselves; for God hath a right in us antecedent to that of the creature: Acts v. 29, ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’ Many times God’s children are put to it, divided between duty and duty; duty to their parents, duty to their magistrates, and duty to God. Now it requireth understanding how to sort both duties. When the inferior power crosseth the will of the superior, the higher duty must take place, and we must dispense with our duty to men, that we may be faithful to God. Alas! the corruption of nature would teach us to do otherwise; we love ourselves more than our neighbour, and our neighbour more than God. Out of self-interest we comply with the lusts of men, and in complying with the lusts of men make bold with God. This wisdom every one that would keep God’s law must learn, that we are bound to none so much as to God, from whom we have life, and breath, and all things; that none can reward our obedience so surely, so largely, as God, who can bear us out when men fail; that none can punish our disobedience so much as God. If these considerations were more in our hearts, we would not sin so boldly, nor serve God so fearfully and cowardly as usually we do, nor comply with men to the wrong of our souls. We may refuse obedience in a particular instance where we do not refuse subjection. (2.) That heaven is to be preferred before earth, and the salvation of our souls before the interests and concerns of our bodies: Mat. vi. 33, ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.’ And whosoever fail in this point of wisdom are very fools: Luke xii. 20, ‘But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?’ There should be no delays in heavenly matters. We busy ourselves about other things, and defer our care for eternity from day to day; but this should be sought before every other thing. (3.) That present affliction is to be chosen rather than future, and temporal rather than eternal. A wise man would have the best at last, for to fall from happiness is the utmost degree of misery—*Miserum est fuisse beatum*. And therefore better suffer now, with hopes of reward in another world, than take pleasure now, to endure pains to come: 2 Tim. ii. 3, ‘Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.’ It is better to do so than to have all our hopes spent: ‘Son, in thy lifetime thou receivedst thy good things,’ Luke xvi. 25. That which is present is temporal, that which is to come is eternal: 2 Cor. iv. 18, ‘While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.’ The good and evil of the present state is soon over. Now we stand not upon a short evil, so we may compass a great good. (4.) That things of profit and pleasure must give place to things that belong to godliness, virtue, and honesty; for the bastard

good must give place to the true, real good. Profit and pleasure are but bastard goods. They are counted understanding men in the world that make pleasure give way to profit; therefore Solomon saith, 'Where there are no oxen the crib is clean, yet there is much gain by the labour of the ox.' I am sure he is an understanding man before God that maketh both give way to honesty and godliness; for the same reason that will sway us to make pleasure give way to profit will also teach us to make profit give way to the interest of grace. As for instance, that pleasure is a base thing as being the happiness of beasts; so is profit, as being the happiness of the children of this world, in contradistinction to holiness, the perfection of the next. The pleasure of sense is only in this life, so is worldly gain only serviceable in our pilgrimage; pleasure in excess destroyeth profit; so doth profit destroy grace. As the world scorneth a man that hath wasted an estate upon his pleasures, so do God and angels him that, from the abundance of his wealth, maketh havoc of a good conscience, and neglecteth things to come: 'Godliness is the great gain,' 1 Tim. vi. 6. (5.) That the greatest suffering is to be chosen before the least sin. In sufferings, the offence is done to us; in sin, the offence is done to God. The evil of suffering is but for a moment, the evil of sin for ever; in suffering we lose the favour of men, in sin we lose the favour of God; suffering bringeth inconvenience upon the body, sin upon the soul; suffering is only evil in our sense, sin whether we feel it, yea or nay. It requireth spiritual wisdom and understanding to choose of evils the least, as well as of goods the best: Moses, Heb. xi. 25, 'choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.' (6.) That a general good is to be chosen before a particular, and that which yieldeth all things rather than that which will yield a limited and particular comfort. Riches will avail against poverty, and honour against disgrace; but 'godliness is profitable for all things,' 1 Tim. iv. 8; it will yield righteousness, comfort, and peace eternal, and food, and raiment, maintenance, and eternal life. Now these and many such principles must be engrafted in the heart if we would keep God's laws. The reasonableness of such propositions in the theory may easily appear; but as to practice, we are governed by sense and human passion, which judgeth the quite contrary of all this, and causeth us to make bold with God because afraid of men, to follow earthly things with the greatest delight and earnestness, and spiritual things in a formal and careless manner, to be all for the present and nothing for things to come, and to sell the birthright for a mess of pottage, to make a wound in our souls to avoid a scratch in our bodies, and for a little particular contentment to neglect the things of God.

4. Understanding is necessary, that we may judge aright of time and place and manner of doing, that we may do not only things good but well, where to go, where to stand still; as it is said, they sought of God a right way, Isa. viii. 21,<sup>1</sup> and David behaved himself wisely in all that he did, 1 Sam. xviii. 5. It is for the glory of God, and the credit of religion, and the peace of our own souls, that we should regard circumstances as well as actions, and discern time and judgment, that

<sup>1</sup> Qu. Jer. vi. 16?—Ed.

we do not destroy what we would build up. Therefore understanding is necessary. See further ver. 98 of this psalm.

5. Because our affections answer our understanding. If we understand not, how can we believe? If we believe not, how can we love? If we love not, how can we do? Knowledge, persuasion, affection, practice, these follow one another, where the faculties of the soul are rightly governed, and kept in a due subordination. Indeed, by the fall the order is subverted: Titus iii. 3, 'Serving divers lusts and pleasures.' Objects strike upon the senses, sense moveth the fancy, fancy moveth the bodily spirits, the bodily spirits move the affections, and these blind the mind and lead the will captive. But a true understanding makes us more steadfast.

Now all these considerations do show us our need of understanding, and that a Christian should be prudent, not headstrong and precipitant, 'Like horse or mule, that have no understanding,' Ps. xxxii. 9, but wise and knowing in all principles, actions, and circumstances that belong to his duty, if he would honour his profession, and not follow the brutish motions of his own heart, but God's direction. Now, if we would have understanding, we must—

1. Attend upon the word; that will make us 'wise to salvation,' 'wiser than our enemies,' 'than our teachers,' 'than the ancients.' Than enemies: A man that consulteth not with flesh and blood, but the word and rule of his duty, will find plain honesty at length to be the best policy. Than teachers: Because he contented not himself with the naked rules delivered by them, but laboured with his conscience to make them profitable to himself. Than ancients, or men of long study and experience. That is a costly wisdom; when men have smarted often, they learn by their own harms to be circumspect. If there were no other way to be wise than by experience, miserable were man for a long time, and would be exposed to hazards and foul dangers before he could get it. But now scripture, which is not the result of men's experience, but God's wisdom, is not such a long and expensive way.

2. Use much meditation in debating matters between God and your souls: Ps. cxix. 99, 'I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation;' and 2 Tim. ii. 7, 'Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.'

3. Prayer, as David doth here ask it of God. Desire him to remove that darkness of spirit which sin hath brought upon you, that you may not govern your life by sense and passion, but by his direction: Job xxxii. 8, 'There is a spirit in man, but the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding.' Man hath reason, but to guide it to a spiritual use, that is above his power. The Psalmist complaineth of all natural men: 'There is none that understandeth, none that doeth good to no one,' Ps. xiv. 2; and Rom. iii. 11, 'There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.' Therefore it is God must give understanding at first conversion: Acts xvi. 14, 'God opened the heart of Lydia;' and Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins,' &c. By a fuller illumination: Eph. i. 17, 18, 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, that

father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened,' &c.; otherwise we have not a heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear: Deut. xxix. 4, 'Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear unto this day.'

*Secondly*, The next thing that I shall observe is this—

That upon the supposition of this benefit he promiseth obedience, *I shall keep thy law.*

*Doct.* They that have understanding given by God will keep his law.

1. That it is their duty, and they ought so to do, there is no question; for all knowledge is given us in order to practice, not to satisfy curiosity or feed pride, or to get a fame and reputation with men of knowledge and understanding persons, but to order our walk: Col. i. 9, 10, 'For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, cease not to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.'

2. That they will do so is also clear upon a twofold account:—

[1.] Because answerable to the discovery of good or evil in the understanding. There is a prosecution and an aversation in the will; for the will doth necessarily follow *practicum dictamen*, the ultimate resolution of the judgment; for it is *ὁρεξις μετὰ λόγου*, not a brutish inclination, but a rational appetite. God hath appointed this course to nature; therefore when the judgment cometh to such a conclusion as is set down in the 73d Psalm, ver. 28, 'But it is good for me to draw near to God'—not only it is good, but it is good for me—the will yieldeth; for conviction of the judgment is the ground of practice. I know conviction and conversion differ, and the one may be where the other is not. But then it is taken for a partial conviction; the mind is not savingly enlightened and thoroughly possessed with the truth and worth of heavenly things; the most and greatest sort of men have but notions, a weak and literal knowledge about spiritual things, and that produceth nothing; they do not live up to the truth which they know. Others have besides the notion a naked approbation of things that are good. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*—they see better things and approve them in the abstract; but this doth not come to a *practicum dictamen*; it is good, and good for me, all circumstances considered, thus to do. This is the fruit of spiritual evidence and demonstration, which always is accompanied with power, 1 Cor. ii. 4. Carnal men think it is better for them to keep as they are, being blinded with their passions and lusts, though they could wish things were otherwise with them. But a godly man's judgment being savingly enlightened, determineth it is good, it is better, it is best for me; it is better to please God than men, to look after heaven than the world, &c. There is a simple approbation of good things, and a comparative approbation of them. Simple approbation is when in the abstract notion we apprehend Christ and pardon of sins and heaven good; but when compared with other things, and considered

in the frame of Christian doctrine, or according to the terms upon which they may be had, they are rejected. Many approve things simply, and in the first act of judgment, but disallow them in the second, when they consider them as invested with some difficult and unpleasing terms, or compare them with pleasure and profit which they must forsake if they would obtain them; as the young man in the Gospel esteemeth salvation as a thing worthy to be inquired into, but is loath to let go his earthly possessions, Mat. xix. 21, 22. He would have these good things at an easy rate, without mortifying the flesh or renouncing the world. But a godly man, that sits down and counteth the charges, all circumstances considered, resolves, It is good for me; as Boaz, liking the woman as well as her inheritance, took them both, which his kinsman refused, Ruth iv. 9, 10; he would have the inheritance without the woman. They like Christ and his laws, as well as the benefits that he bringeth with him. He doth approve things upon good knowledge, and cometh to a well-settled resolution. Another defect in wicked men is because the judgment is superficial, and so comes to nothing. It is not full, clear, and ponderous; it is not a *dictamen*, a resolute decree, not *ultimum dictamen*, the last decree, all things considered and well weighed.

[2.] God's grace. God doth never fully and spiritually convince the judgment, but he doth also work upon the will to accept, embrace, and prosecute those good things of which it is convinced. He teacheth and draweth; they are distinct works, but they go together; therefore the one is inferred out of the other. Drawn and taught of God, both are necessary; for as there is blindness and inadvertency in the mind, so obstinacy in the will, which is not to be cured by mere persuasion, but by a gracious quality infused, inclining the heart, which by the way freeth this doctrine from exception, as if all God's works were mere moral suasion. The will is renewed and changed, but so as God doth it, by working according to the order of nature.

*Use.* By all means look after this divine illumination, whereby your judgment may be convinced of the truth and worth of spiritual things. It is not enough to have some general and floating notions about them, or slightly to hear of them, or talk of them; but they must be spiritually discerned and judged of; for if our judgments were thoroughly convinced, our pursuit of true happiness would be more earnest; you would see sin to be the greatest mischief, and grace the chiefest treasure, and accordingly act.

God enlightening the soul doth—

1. Take away carnal principles. Many men can talk well, but they are leavened with carnal principles; as (1.) That he may do as most do and yet be safe: Mat. vii. 23, 'Many will say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?' &c.; 'And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity;' Prov. xi. 31, 'Behold the righteous shall be recompensed upon the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner;' Exod. xxxii. &c. (2.) That he may go on in ungodliness, injustice, intemperance, because grace hath abounded in the gospel: Titus ii. 11, 12, 'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live

soberly, righteously, and godlily in this present world ;' and Luke i. 75, 'That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.' (3.) That he may spend his youth in pleasure, and safely put off repentance till age. But Eccles. xii. 1, we are bid to 'Remember our Creator in the days of our youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them ;' and Luke xii. 20, when the rich man said to his soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry ;' God said unto him, 'Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?' Heb. iii. 7, 'Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,' &c. Men think it is a folly to be singular and precise ; that it was better when there was less preaching and less knowledge ; that small sins are not to be stood upon. But God, enlightening the soul, maketh us to see the vanity and sinfulness of such thoughts.

2. There is a bringing the understanding to attend and consider. There is much lieth upon it: Acts xvi. 14, 'The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, so that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul ;' that is, weighed them in her heart.

## SERMON XXXVIII.

*Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.*—VER. 34.

I COME now to the last clause, *I shall observe it with my whole heart.* The point is—

*Doct.* That it is not enough to keep God's law, but we must keep it with the whole heart.

Here I shall show you—

1. That God requireth the heart.

2. The whole heart.

*First*, God requireth the heart in his service. The heart is the Christian's sacrifice, the fountain of good and evil, and therefore should be mainly looked after. Without this—

1. External profession is nothing. Most Christians have nothing for Christ but a good opinion or some outward profession. Judas was a disciple, but 'Satan entered into his heart,' Luke xxii. 3. Ananias joined himself to the people of God, but 'Satan filled his heart,' Acts v. 3. Simon Magus was baptized, but 'his heart was not right with God,' Acts viii. 22. Here is the great defect.

2. External conformity is nothing worth. It is not enough that the life seem good, and many good actions be performed, unless the heart be purified ; otherwise we do, with the Pharisees, 'wash the outside of the platter,' Mat. xxiii. 25, 26, 'when the inside is full of extortion and excess.' It is the heart God looketh after: 1 Sam. xvi. 7, 'For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart ;' Prov. iv. 23, 'Keep



thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.' Cast salt into the spring. As Jehu said to Jonadab, so doth God say to us: 2 Kings x. 15, 'Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?' We should answer, It is. Men are not for obsequious compliances if not with the heart, so neither is God. Though thou pray with the Pharisee, pay thy vows with the harlot, kiss Christ with Judas, offer sacrifice with Cain, fast with Jezebel, sell thine inheritance to give to the poor with Ananias and Sapphira, all is in vain without the heart, for it is the heart enliveneth all our duties.

3. It is the heart whercin God dwelleth, not in the tongue, the brain, unless by common gifts; till he take possession of the heart all is as nothing: Eph. iii. 17, 'He dwelleth in our hearts by faith.' The bodies of believers are temples of the Holy Ghost; yet the heart, will, and affections of man are the chief place of his habitation, wherein he resideth as in his strong citadel, and from whence he commandeth other faculties and members; and without his presence there he cannot have any habitation in us. The tongue cannot receive him by speaking, nor the understanding by knowing, nor the hands by external working: Prov. iv. 23, 'Out of it are the issues of life.' It is the forge of spirits: 'He dwelleth not in temples made with hands,' Acts vii. 48; and Jer. xxiii. 24, 'Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.' He will dwell in thine heart and remain there, if thou wilt give thy heart to him.

4. If Christ have it not, Satan will have it. The heart of man is not a waste; either God is there framing gracious operations, or the devil, who 'worketh in the children of disobedience,' Eph. ii. 2. Will you give them to God to be saved, or to the devil to be damned? Whose they are now they are for ever.

5. If you love any, you give them the heart; and you are wont to wish that there were windows in your bodies that they might see the sincerity of your hearts towards them. Surely if you have cause to love any, you have much more cause to love God. No such friend as he, no such benefactor as he, if you consider what he hath done for us, what blessings he hath bestowed, internal, external, temporal, eternal. He hath given his Son, the great instance of love: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life;' his gospel, that his love might be preached to us; his Spirit, that not only sounded in our ears, but is shed abroad in our hearts, Rom. v. 5; his Christ to save us, his word to enlighten us, his Spirit to guide and direct us till we come to heaven, where he will give himself to us, an eternal inheritance. Certainly, unless void of all sense and common ingenuity, thou wilt say, as the Psalmist, Ps. cxvi. 12, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?' What indeed wilt thou render to him? Love will tell thee; but lest thou shouldst miss, God himself hath told thee: Prov. xxiii. 26, 'My son, give me thine heart.' There is no need to wish for windows in thy body: 'He searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins;' Ps. vii. 9, 'The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins;' and 1 Kings viii. 39, 'Thou knowest the hearts of all the children of men.' The whole world is to him as a sea of glass. He knoweth how much thou esteemest and

honourest him. If thou givest him the whole world, and dost not give him thy heart, thou dishonourest him, and settest something else before him.

6. This is, that all may give him. If God should require costly sacrifices, rivers of oil, thousands of rams, then none but the rich would serve him, and he would require nothing but what many hypocrites would give him. Then the poor would be ashamed and discouraged, not being able to comply with the command; yea, then God would not act like the true God, 'Who accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands,' Job xxxiv. 19. Say not, Micah vi. 6-8, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' But go to God and give him thy heart, this will make thy mite more acceptable than the great treasures of the wicked: Luke xxi. 1-4, 'And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury; and he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites; and he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all; for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God, but of her penury she hath cast in all the living that she had.' We read in pagan story of one that, when many rich scholars gave gifts to Socrates, every one according to his birth and fortunes, a poor young man came to him and said—I have nothing worthy of thee to bestow upon thee, but that which I have I give, and that is myself; others that have given to thee have left more to themselves, but I have given all that I have, and have nothing left me; I give thee myself. The philosopher answered—Thou hast given me a gift indeed, and therefore it shall be my care to return thee to thyself better than I found thee. So come to God; he needeth us not, but it is for our benefit: we should give our hearts and selves to him. He knoweth how much it is for our advantage that he should have our hearts, to make them better, to sanctify and save them.

*Secondly*, The whole heart. Here I shall show you—(1.) What it is to keep the law with the whole heart. (2.) Why we must keep the law with our whole heart.

1. What it is to keep the law with the whole heart. It is taken legally or evangelically, as a man is bound, or as God will accept what is required in justice, or what is accepted in mercy.

[1.] According to the rigour of the law. The law requireth exact conformity, without the least motion to the contrary, either in thought or desire, a full obedience to the law with all the powers of the whole man. This is in force still as to our rule, but not as to the condition of our acceptance with God. This, without any defect and imperfection, like man's love to God in innocency, since the fall is nowhere found but in Christ Jesus, who alone is harmless and undefiled, and will never thus be fulfilled by us till we come to heaven; for here all is but in part, but then that which is in part shall be done away. Then will there be light without darkness, knowledge without igno-

rance, faith without unbelief, hope without despair, love without defect and mixture of carnal inclinations, all good motions without distraction. Here is folly and confusion; here 'flesh lusteth against the spirit' in the best, Gal. v. 17. They have a double principle, though not a double heart.

[2.] In an evangelical sense, according to the moderation of the second covenant; and so God, out of his love and mercy in Christ Jesus, accepts of such a measure of love and obedience as answereth to the measure of sanctification received. When God sanctifieth a man he sanctifieth him as to all the parts and faculties of body and soul, enlighteneth the understanding with the knowledge of his will, inclineth the heart to obedience, circumciseth the affection, filleth us with the love of God himself and holy things. But being a voluntary agent, he doth not this as to perfection of degrees all at once, but successively, and by little and little. Therefore, as long as we are in the world there is somewhat of ignorance in the understanding, perversity in the will, fleshliness and impurity in the affections, flesh and spirit in every faculty, like water and wine in the same cup; but so as the gift of grace doth more and more prevail over the corruption of nature, light upon darkness, holiness upon sin, and heavenliness upon our inclinations to worldly vanities; as the sun upon the shadow of the night till it groweth into perfect day: Prov. iv. 18, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' Therefore, when a man doth heartily apply himself to the things of God, and, acknowledging his defects, doth go on 'from faith to faith,' Rom. i. 17, from love to love, and from obedience to obedience, Heb. vi. 10, and doth study to bring his heart into a further conformity to God, not looking back to Sodom or turning back to Egypt, God accepteth of these desires and constant and uniform endeavours, and will 'spare us as a man spareth his only son that serveth him,' Mal. iii. 17—as a son, an only son, that is obsequious for the main, though he hath his failings and escapes. There is in them integrity, but not perfection; all parts of holiness, though not degrees: as in the body every muscle and vein and artery hath its use. Thus all Israel is said to seek the Lord with their whole desire: 2 Chron. xv. 15, 'And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire.' It is said of Asa, that 'he sought the Lord with his whole heart, yet the high places were not taken away.'

2. Now, the reasons why we must keep the law with our whole heart are these following:—

[1.] He that giveth a part only to God giveth nothing to God, for that part that is reserved will in time draw the whole after it. The devil keepeth an interest in us as long as any one lust remaineth unmortified; as Pharaoh stood hucking; he would fain have a pawn of their return; first their children, then their flocks and herds, must be left behind them. He knew this was the way to bring them back again. So Satan hath a pawn, and knoweth that all will fall to him at last: Hosea x. 2, 'Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty;' halting between God and idols. When men are not wholly and solely for God, but divided between him and other things, God

will be jostled out at last. Grace is but a stranger, sin is a native, and therefore most likely to prevail, and by long use and custom is most strongly rooted. Herod did many things, but his Herodias drew him back into Satan's snare. A bird tied by the leg may flutter up and down and make some show of escape, but he is under command still. So may men have a conscience for God, and some affections for God, but the world and the flesh have the greater share in them. Therefore, though they do many things, yet still God hath no supreme interest in their souls; and therefore, when their darling lusts interpose, all God's interest in them signifieth nothing. As for instance, a man that is given to please the flesh, but in all other things findeth no difficulty, can worship, give alms, findeth no reluctancy to these duties, unless when they cross his living after the flesh, which in time swalloweth up his conscience and all his profession and practice. A man addicted to the world can deny his appetite, seem very serious in holy duties, but the world prevaleth, and in time maketh him weary of all other things.

[2.] The whole man is God's by every kind of right and title; and therefore, when he requireth the whole heart, he doth but require that which is his own. God gave us the whole by creation, preserveth the whole, redeemeth the whole, and promiseth to glorify the whole. If we had been mangled in creation, we would have been troubled—if born without hands or feet. If God should turn us off to ourselves to keep that part to ourselves which we reserved from him, or if he should make such a division at death, take a part to heaven, or if Christ had bought part—1 Cor. vi. 20, 'Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's'—if you have had any good work upon you, God hath sanctified the whole in a gospel sense, that is every part: 1 Thes. v. 23, 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;' not only conscience, but will and affections, appetite and body. And you have given all to him for his use: 'I am my beloved's;' not a part, but the whole. He could not endure Ananias, that kept back part of the price; all is his due. When the world, pleasure, ambition, pride, desire of riches, unchaste love, desire a part in us, we may remember we have no affections to dispose of without God's leave. It is all his, and it is sacrilege to rob or detain any part from God. Shall I alienate that which is God's, to satisfy the world, the flesh, and the devil? It is his by creation, redemption, donation. When our flesh, or the world, or Satan, detain any part, this is, with Reuben, to go up unto our father's bed.

Use 1. First, to reprove those that do not give God the heart in their service; secondly, not the whole heart.

1. Not the heart, but content themselves with outward profession: Jer. xii. 2, 'Thou art near in their mouth, but far from their reins.' God is often in their speech, but they have no hearty affection. Never was there an age higher in notions and colder in practice of Christianity. The heart is all; it is the *terminus actionum ad intra, et fons actionum ad extra*. It is the bound of those actions that look inward; the senses report to the phantasy, that to the mind, and the

mind counsels the heart: 'If wisdom enter the heart,' Prov. ii. 10. It is the well-spring of those actions that look outward to the life: Prov. iv. 23, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life;' Mat. xv. 19, and Prov. iv. 4, 'Let thy heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live;' then other things will follow.

2. It reproves those that do not give God the whole heart, for he requireth that, and surely all is too little for so great and so good a master. God will have the heart, so that no part of it be left to others, or for ourselves to dispose of as we will: the true mother would not have the child divided, 1 Kings iii. 26. God will have all or nothing, he will not part stakes with Satan; but Satan, if he cannot have all, will be content with a part. But who are they that do not give God the whole heart?

[1.] Those that are for God in their consciences but not in their affections. Conscience many times taketh God's part. Their affections are for the world, but their consciences are for God, as convinced men that do some outward work commanded in the law, but they have no love to the work. This will not serve the turn, for whatever is done by constraint, or the mere compulsion of a natural conscience, can never hold long. Nature will return to its bias again, however men force themselves for a while to comply with something which God hath commanded. They do not take up his ways by choice, but upon compulsion and the urgings of conscience, which they no way liked.

[2.] Those that have their affections divided between God and the world, halting between two, they have some affection to spiritual things, the favour of God and holiness as the only means to make them happy, but the world and their lusts have the greater share. They are troubled a little, would have the favour of God, but upon their own conditions. The prevailing part of the soul bendeth them to carnal interests; as the person that was told that he must take up the cross and follow Christ, he is offended, Mat. xi. 21; the young man turned away discontented when he heard the terms, Mat. xix. 21, 22. They like God's offers, but not his conditions to come up fully to his mind. They are loath to enter into gospel bonds. These do not entirely give up themselves to God; they have but an affection in part to the comforts of the gospel, but not to the duties of the gospel.

[3.] Those that will do many things, but stick at one part of their duty to God. Men may suffer much for God, sacrifice some of their weaker lusts, but whilst any one sin remaineth unmortified there is possession kept for Satan; as Saul destroyed the Amalekites, but kept the fattest of the cattle, and spared Agag. Herod will not part with his Herodias: Ps. xviii. 23, David saith, 'I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.' Either some lust of the flesh, or of the eyes, or pride remaineth. There are some tender parts of the soul which are as the right hand and the right eye, men are loath to have them touched. They do not unfeignedly comply with God's whole will.

Use 2. To press you to give up the whole heart to God in a course of obedience.

Let us believe in God with all the heart: Acts viii. 32, 'If thou

believest with all thy heart, thou mayest,' &c. ; and Prov. iii. 5, 'Trust in the Lord with all thy heart.' This is the main thing of Christianity, when there is not only a naked assent, but when we embrace Christ with the heart, and there is a full and free consent to take him to all the uses for which God hath appointed him. So for love : Dent. vi. 5, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' When we delight in God, and find full complacency in him as our all-sufficient portion, without reserving any part of our hearts for other things. So for obedience : 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 'And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind ; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts.' But now, how shall we know that we give God all the heart in an evangelical sense ?

*Ans.* 1. When our purpose is to cleave to God alone, and to serve him with an entire obedience both of the inward and outward man, purely and sincerely, without hypocrisy : Ps. li. 6, 'Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom ;' and Phil. iii. 3, 'For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.'

*Ans.* 2. When we do what we can by all good means to maintain our purpose, and are watchful and diligent, and serious in this purpose : 2 Kings x. 31, 'Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart, for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam which made Israel to sin.' See the contrary in Paul : Acts xxiv. 16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.' They bent all their studies and fervency of their spirit this way, with all earnestness of endeavour to come up to God's law.

*Ans.* 3. When we search out our defects, and bewail them with a kindly remorse, Rom. ii. 29 ; when we run by faith to Christ Jesus, and sue out our pardon and peace : 1 John ii. 1, 'My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not ; and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'

## SERMON XXXIX.

*Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight.—VER. 35.*

DAVID in the former verses had begged for light, and now for strength to walk according to this light. We need not only light to know our way, but a heart to walk in it. Direction is necessary because of the blindness of our minds, and the effectual impulsions of grace are necessary because of the weakness of our hearts. It will not answer our duty to have a naked notion of truths, unless we embrace and pursue them. So accordingly we need a double assistance from God ; the mind must be enlightened, the will moved and inclined. The work of a

Christian lies not in depth of speculation, but in the height of practice. The excellency of divine grace consisteth in this, that God doth first teach what is to be done, and then make us to do what is taught, 'Make me to go in the path,' &c.

Here you have David's prayer, and an argument to enforce it.

1. His prayer, *make me to go in the path of thy commandments.*

2. His argument, *for therein do I delight.*

The argument is taken from his delight in the ways of God. This argument may be looked upon as the reason of making the request, or the reason of granting the request.

1. As the reason of asking. Those whose hearts are set upon obedience, they will be earnest for grace to perform it acceptably. Now, saith David, I would not be denied this request, for this is all my delight, to do thy will.

2. As the reason of granting. And there he may be supposed to lay forth his necessity and his hope. His necessity; though God had done much for him, yet he needed more still. God had given him *scire*, knowledge to know his duty; *velle*, to delight; now he begs *perficere*, to practise, to bring it to an issue. Though he had grace in some measure, yet he still needed an increase; God must work in us both to will and to do, Phil. ii. 12. Sometimes God gives one where he gives not the other: Rom. vii. 18, 'To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.' Or else you may suppose him here to lay forth his hope. The granting of one grace makes way for another; for God will perfect what he hath begun, and where he hath given a disposition to delight in his ways, he will give grace to walk in his precepts: John i. 16, *χαρίν ἀντὶ χάριτος*, 'Grace upon grace,' or 'grace after grace;' his giving grace to them is an argument why he will give more grace to them. Two things will be here discussed:—

[1.] The necessity of the efficacious assistance of grace, that we may walk worthy of God in all well-pleasing.

[2.] How acceptable a frame of heart it is when we are once brought to delight in the ways of God.

*Doct.* 1. For the first, that God from first to last doth make us to go in the path of his commandments.

David was a renewed man, a man that had gotten his heart into a good frame; for he owneth his delight in the paths of God's commandments, yet he begs for new strength and quickening, 'Make me to go;' 'Lead or walk me'—*Sept.*

First, That at first conversion God maketh us go in the path of his commandments; that is clear by scripture; for it is said, Eph. ii. 10, that 'we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' When we are renewed, we are as it were created over again; there is a power given us that we had not before to do this work. Clearly the apostle doth not speak there of the first creation—the end of our first creation was to serve God—but he speaks of supernatural renovation; for he saith, 'We are created in Christ Jesus.' There was a twofold creation at first: *Ex nihilo* and *ex inhabili materia*; either that which God created out of nothing, or if out of pre-existent matter, yet such

as was wholly unfit and indisposed for those things that were to be made of it. Now, this latter suits with us: 'We are created in Christ Jesus to good works;' that is, we were altogether indisposed before to that which is good. We have our natural powers, but they are wholly viciously inclined till the Lord worketh on us, and infuseth a principle of new life. Till then we cannot do anything that is spiritually good. But when the Lord createth us anew, he furnisheth us with an inward power and ability to do good. What David prays for, 'Make me to go in the way of thy commandments,' God promiseth, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' God puts his spirit, a new principle of grace. When the gospel is proposed to a man, his will must be determined by something, either by an object or a quality, not by the proposal merely of the object without; for the scripture shows there must be some work upon the heart, some divine quality infused within to incline and bend us to what is good. Well, then, first there must be an infusion of the principles of grace. In sinning, there the mischief began with an act. Adam sinned, and that infected his nature. But in grace the method is contrary; the principle must be before the action, God first sanctifieth our natures, and then we act holily; and this difference there is between acquired and infused habits: acquired habits follow action, for frequent acts beget a habit, as often swimming makes us expert in swimming, and much writing expert in writing; but gracious habits are infused, and so precede the act, as a wheel runs round, not to make itself round, but because it is round. Indeed there is a further radiation of grace by frequent acts as the means which God blesseth. Now, by this first work of grace we have three advantages:—

1. An inclination and tendency towards what is good. As all natures imply a propensity to those things which agree to such a nature, as sparks fly upward, and a stone moves downward—it is their natural propensity—so in the new nature there is a new bent and tendency of heart, which is to live unto God, Gal. ii. 19; there is an inclination towards God and holy things; and therefore the apostle presseth them by virtue of this grace received to act according to the tendency of the new nature: Rom. vi. 13, 'Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead;' that is his argument. As soon as the life of grace is infused, the soul bends towards God.

2. A preparation of heart for holy actions. There is a principle that will carry them to it. These 'vessels are fitted and prepared for their master's use,' and are 'prepared unto every good work,' 2 Tim. ii. 21; they are fitted and rigged for all holy actions and employments: Eph. ii. 10, 'Created unto good works, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them.' He hath prepared them for us, and us to them. There is a suitableness in the new nature to what God requireth. As every creature is furnished with power and faculties suitable to those operations that belong to them, so when the Lord infuseth the principles of grace, and works upon the heart, we are suited to every good work, so that we need not new faculties, but new operations of grace to excite and move us. A ship that is rigged and fitted with sails ready for a voyage needs a pilot to guide and steer it; so we need



influences of grace. Therefore, when the Spirit is shed upon us afterwards, it is in another manner than upon the unregenerate. The unregenerate are objects of grace, but the renewed are instruments of grace; he works upon the one, but he works by the other.

3. There is a power and an ability to do good works when we are renewed; if otherwise, one of God's most precious gifts would be in vain, if we were altogether without strength. That is the description of carnal nature, Rom. v. 6, 'We were without strength;' therefore there is a power which must be improved, not rested in: Gal. v. 25, 'If ye live in the spirit, walk in the spirit.' There is an operation that accompanieth every life, and if there be a life of grace there will be a walking; and Col. ii. 6, 'As ye have received Christ, so walk in him.' Grace received must not lie idle, but be put forth into act. Thus God creates and infuseth such divine qualities as may give us a tendency and preparation of heart, and strength to do that which may be pleasing to him.

Secondly, He vouchsafeth his quickening, actuating, assisting grace, for the improving these principles infused, that their operations may be carried forth with more success: Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' God gives not only life, but the constant motion of that life. Natural things do not act without his daily providential influence; and therefore it is said, Prov. xx. 12, God gives 'the hearing ear and the seeing eye;' not only doth give the eye and ear, the faculty, but the act of hearing and the act of seeing; he concurs to that: and therefore God concurs by his actual assistance, sometimes in a more liberal and plentiful manner, by the freer aids and assistances of his grace, and sometimes more sparingly, according to his own pleasure. He doth not only give us the habits of grace, 'He worketh all our works for us,' Isa. xxvi. 12.

Now this actual help is necessary—

1. Partly to direct us: Ps. lxxiii. 24, 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.' We need not only a principle within and a rule without, but need also a guide. Though we have grace in our hearts, though we have the law of God to direct us, yet we need also a guide upon all occasions. The rule is the scripture, and the guide is the Spirit of God.

2. Partly to quicken and excite us by effectual motions. The heart of man is very changeable, and it is like the eye, easily discomposed and put out of frame. Deadness creeps upon us, and we drive on heavily in the work of God: Ps. cxix. 37, 'Quicken thou me in thy way.' God doth renew the vigour of the life of grace upon all occasions.

3. Partly to corroborate and strengthen that which we have received, and make it increase and grow in the soul, and more firmly rooted there, Eph. iii. 16. The apostle prays that God would 'strengthen you with might by his Spirit in the inner man.' The inward man, the frame of grace that we have received, needs to be strengthened, increased, and be more deeply rooted in the soul. So 1 Peter v. 10, 'The God of all grace make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.' Many words are used, to show how God is interested in maintaining and keeping afoot the grace he hath planted in the soul.

4. Partly in protecting and defending them against the incursions and assaults of the devil. The regenerate are not only escaped out of his clutches, but appointed to be his judges, which an envious and proud spirit cannot endure; therefore he maligneth, assaulteth, and besiegeth them with temptations daily; therefore Christ prays, John xvii. 11, 'Keep through thy own name those whom thou hast given me.' When a city is besieged, fresh supplies are sent in; they are not kept to their standing provision: so it is not the ordinary power of God that doth preserve and keep us from danger; there is new relief and fresh strength: 'We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation,' 2 Peter i. 5. Now we experience the help we have from God, partly by the change and frame of our heart, when we are acted by him, and when we are not. When God by the impulsions of his grace doth quicken and awaken our hearts, we are carried on with a great deal of earnestness and strength; but at other times we seem to be much bound, and have not those breathings from the Spirit of God to fill our sails, and carry us on with the same life and strength. Yea, in the same duty how is a Christian up and down! carried out sometimes with a great deal of zeal and warmth; but if God withdraw that assistance before the duty be over, how do the affections flag! So that we are like the wards of a lock, kept up while the key is turned, but fall again when the key is turned the other way. While the work of grace is powerful, we are kept in a warm and heavenly plight. Thus as to duties we need spiritual relief.

Likewise in temptations, when we are ready to fall into such a sin with great proneness of heart, and the Lord quickens and excites us by his grace. It is often with a Christian as with David: Ps. lxxiii. 2, 'My feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipt;' even carried away by the violence of Satan, and importunate motions of our own lusts; then the Lord gives 'grace to help in a time of need,' Heb. iv. 16. In the original it is no more but this, Seasonable relief God vouchsafeth.

*Object.* Ay! but are we to do nothing when we are indisposed?

This case is often traversed in this psalm.

1. The precept of God falls upon us as reasonable creatures, and doth not consider whether we are disposed or indisposed; and God's influence is not our rule, but our help. We are to stir up ourselves; the Lord complains, Isa. lxiv. 7, 'There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of me;' and Timothy is bid to 'stir up the gift of God which is in him,' 2 Tim. i. 6. God's assistance will be best expected in a way of doing; up and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee. When we stir up ourselves, and set ourselves to the work in the conscience of our duty, we can better expect God's help and assistance.

2. In great distempers there may be some pause. Elisha would not prophesy when he was under a passion of anger; therefore he calls for a minstrel to sing a psalm, 2 Kings iii. 13-15, and as he played upon an instrument, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. He was under a passion, offended with the king of Israel, therefore he would not prophesy until his spirit was composed. Certainly we are not to run headlong upon duties in the midst of these distempers. Sailing is more safely delayed in time of an extreme storm. When the heart

is put into some great disorder, in a great storm of spirit, the distemper should first be mourned for and prayed against.

The reasons why from first to last he must make us go in the way of his commandments.

1. God keeps this power in his own hands, that his grace might be all in all, and it is the glory of his actions always to set the crown upon grace's head. Not only those permanent and fixed habits which constitute the new man, but those daily supplies, without which the motions and operations of the spiritual life would be at a stand, are of grace. When the Lord reckons with his servants about the improvement of their talents, he doth not say, My industry, but, 'Lord, thy pound,' Luke xix. 18; he puts all the honour upon grace. So 1 Cor. xvi. 10, 'Not I, but the grace of God;' so Gal. ii. 20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' So that still they are giving the glory to grace. Acts are more perfect than habits; therefore if we had only the power from God, and acts from ourselves, we should not give all to God. That acts are more perfect than the power is clear; it is more perfect to understand than to have a power to understand; power is in order to the act, and the end is more noble than the means.

2. This is a very great encouragement to us to set upon the exercise of grace in the midst of weaknesses, and several difficulties and temptations wherewith we are encompassed. Because God will enable and assist us, he will not leave us to our standing strength, but he concurs: Phil. ii. 12, 13, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.' Why? 'For it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.' When God will concur to the will and to the deed, to both, when we have wind and tide, he is very lazy that will not take his advantage and ply the oar then. And the apostle was not disheartened with the several conditions he was to run through in his passage to heaven: Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.' When we have such an able second—'God is at our right hand,' Ps. xvi. 8—we need not be so dismayed with temptations and difficulties we meet with in the progress of our duty; though we have many lets and hindrances, yet God will cause us to walk in his ways.

3. This keeps us humble and lowly in our own conceit, and that is very necessary for us; for pride is that sin which cleaves to us all our life, and is called 'pride of life,' and lasts as long as life lasts. How doth this keep us humble and lowly? Partly thus: because we have all by gift; 'What hast thou that thou hast not received?' 1 Cor. iv. 7. All the strength that we have is but borrowed; and who will be proud that is more in debt than others? We would laugh at a groom that is proud of his master's horse. All grace comes from God. Shall we usurp the honour due to God? And partly because we have but from hand to mouth. Though we have all from God, yet we should soon grow proud if God did not diet us, and give out renewed evidences of his love and care over us by degrees, some now, some then, by fresh influences and acts of grace. Look, as David prays, Ps. lix. 11, of his outward enemies, 'Destroy them not, O Lord, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power, and bring them down.' Oh! if all enemies were destroyed at once, the people would forget thee, the

deliverance would be past, antiquated, and out of date, and would not be so freshly thought of, nor produce such warm affections in the hearts of his people. So it is true in the spiritual world, God doth not destroy all at once, but brings down our spiritual enemies, that we may acknowledge whence we have it. And partly because this is a means to make us sensible of the mutability of our nature; for when all depends upon God, his coming and going, it will make us see what poor creatures we are of ourselves. When he comes, we are able to do something; when he goes, what poor creatures are we! 2 Chron. xxxii. 31, 'God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.' When we are renewed yet are not fully recovered, there is a great deal of tang and taste of the old leaven, and if God leave us we shall soon sin; whereas if we were carried on with an even constant tenor of grace that is in our own keeping, we should be proud.

4. It endears the heart to God, and God to the heart, by acts of friendship and familiarity, as it extracts from us acts of prayer and dependence, and as we receive new supplies and daily influences of grace from him. God is more endeared to the soul by his multiplied free gifts. Look, as at every lifting up of the foot there are new influences of life go to that stirring and motion, so all in the spiritual life are his acts of grace. If so much rain fell in one day as would suffice for seven years, there would be no notice taken of God's acts of providence; God would not have such witness to keep up his memory to the sons of men. So here; if we had all graces in our souls, and needed not new excitement, but he dispensed all at once, God and we should grow strangers. When the prodigal has his portion in his own hands, he leaves his father: and therefore there must be continual acts of kindness to maintain a holy friendship between God and us.

*Use 1.* Look after renewing grace; see whether there be a principle of life in you or no, whether you be his workmanship in Christ Jesus. Better never be his creature if not a new creature; a dog is in a better condition. You can do nothing in the spiritual life until there be a principle; in vain to expect new operation before a new creation be passed upon you. The stream cannot be maintained without the spring.

2. Let us pray for strength upon all occasions, and beg the renewings of God's efficacious grace, that we may avoid sin, and be ready to every good work. Alas! there are many discouragements from without, and sundry baits which tickle the flesh, and would seduce us from our duty. Unless the Lord stand by us, and protect and strengthen us within, deadness will soon creep upon us, and our heart run out of order. Look after new influences of grace; this will make you ready to every good work; not only the remote preparation, but the furniture of the faculties and abilities: 'Lo I come to do thy will;' and this will make you fruitful, otherwise you will be as dry trees in God's garden; and this will make you lively and constant, not off and on, but fixed with God.

3. If all depends upon God, then let us not by any negligence of ours, or by presumptuous sins, provoke God to withdraw his assisting grace from us. This is the apostle's meaning when he saith, Phil. ii. 12, 13, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,' &c. Oh!

take heed ; go about the business of religion with holy caution and jealousy over yourselves, and fear the Lord's displeasure, for all depends upon him. Dependence among men begets observance ; where men have their meat, drink, clothing, they will be careful to please there. So 'work out your salvation, &c., for it is God that worketh in you,' &c. You have all from God ; the business of the spiritual life will be interrupted and be at a stand if God withhold his grace. Every sin weakens that you have already, and provokes God to withhold his hand that he will not give more. That which is the greatest ground of comfort and confidence is always the greatest ground of fear and trembling. It is a ground of great comfort and confidence in the spiritual life that he will help us in every action of ours ; and it is a ground also of the greatest fear and trembling, that we should be careful not to offend him upon whom all depends.

The second point :—

*Doct. 2.* That they which delight in God's commandments will beg his gracious assistance, and are most likely to speed in their requests.

I make it to be both the reason of asking and the reason of granting.

*First,* The reason of asking.

1. What is this 'delight in God?' What is necessary to it?

2. What are the fruits and effects of it?

*First,* What is necessary to it?

1. A new nature, for what we do naturally we do with complacency and delight. That which is forced and done against the grain and bent of our hearts can never be delightful, and therefore there needs a principle of grace within: Ps. cxii. 1, 'Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.' Where there is true grace and the fear of God, there we will delight greatly. So Rom. vii. 22, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man.' Where there is an inner man, a frame of grace in the heart, that will bring delight. See the character of a blessed man: Ps. i. 2, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord.' Quite contrary to the hypocrite. He may act from compulsions and urgings of conscience, from legal bondage: it may be a sin-offering, but it is not a thank-offering ; he cannot do it with that delight and complacency that God hath required. Job. xxvii. 10 it is said, 'Will he always call upon God? will he delight himself in the Almighty?' In his pang, in his distress, when his conscience pincheth him sore, he will be calling upon God. Ay! but hath he any delight in God? He wants sincere grace. Some time he may come with his flocks and herds to seek the Lord: Hosea v. 6, 'And cry, Arise, Lord save us,' Jer. ii. 27. Some unwilling services he may perform upon foreign reasons, from constraint, from his affliction and anguish of soul ; but these things are never done with delight ; there needs then a principle of grace.

2. Peace of conscience, or a sense of our reconciliation with God, is very necessary to this delight in the ways of God: Rom. v. 11, 'We joy in God as those that have received the atonement.' Christ hath made the atonement. Now, when we receive the atonement, that is, are possessed of it, and look upon ourselves as involved in the reconciliation Christ hath made for us, then we joy in God. The joy of a good conscience is necessary to this delight in the ways of God.

3. A good frame of heart must be kept up, for the joy of a Christian may be impaired by his own folly and prevalency of carnal distempers. There is dulness and a damp that is apt to creep upon us; either by carnal pleasure, or worldly lusts and cares, we may abate of our cheerfulness. Christ tells us, Luke xxi. 34, that both of them overcharge the heart. Or some presumptuous sin lately committed, when the weight of it lieth upon the conscience, we lose this free spirit: Ps. li. 12, 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit;' our delight is quenched, and we lose that free spirit which otherwise we should have. And therefore we must watch against carnal distempers, and also presumptuous sins, that we may not lose our liberty and our comfortableness in God's service; for when a Christian hath a good frame of heart, he is filled as with gladness, and the joy of the Lord is as oil to the wheels, and it strengthens his affections, and he is carried on with a great deal of cheerfulness.

4. There is needful, too, some experience; for besides the joy of God, there is the inward pleasure of a good conversation. The ways of God are all ways of pleasantness to them that walk in them, Prov. iii. 17. They which will make trial will find Christ's yoke easy; yea, they will find a sweetness in God's ways beyond whatever they could think or expect. Some experience of the pleasantness in the paths of wisdom breeds great delight.

Secondly, What are the effects of this delight?

1. A cheerfulness of spirit, a ready obedience: Ps. xl. 8, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God.' They find more solid joy in living holily than in all the pleasure of sin and vanity of the world; therefore they cheerfully practise that which God requireth of them.

2. They are full of joy and gladness in all their approaches to God: Ps. cxxii. 1, 'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.' Oh! then they can go to God, and draw off from the distractions of this world, that they may unbosom themselves, that they may be in God's company, either in public or private.

3. They are weaned from earthly pleasures. When they have tasted of this hidden manna, the garlic and onions of Egypt lose their relish; and they find more sweetness, more rejoicing, in the testimony of their consciences, than ever they could find in the world. It is their meat and drink to do the will of God, to be just, holy, temperate, strict, to walk closely with God; here is their pleasure and delight of their souls: John iv. 34, 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.'

Now the reasons of this. They which have their hearts set upon holiness must have delight. A man whose heart is set upon earthly things will come and howl for corn, wine, and oil, outward enjoyments, Hosea vii. ; and a man that makes a loose profession of religion would fain be feasted with comforts, and eased of the smart of his conscience; he loves to hear of the privilege part of Christianity; but they come not to God with a true heart, whatever profession they make, Heb. x. 27. They embrace Christ as Judas kissed him, to betray him, or as Joab embraced Amasa, that he might smite him under the fifth rib; so these are so earnest for pardon of sin, and the privilege part of Christianity, but mind not the higher part, which is

sanctification. But now a man that is fallen in love with holiness, and whose heart is sincerely bent to God, desires grace to incline his heart to God and the ways of God, and keep exactly with him.

*Secondly*, As this is the reason of asking, so likewise of granting, 'Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight.' Take four considerations for this:—

1. God will add grace to grace. When God hath given the will, he will give the deed, further grace, to add new influences to his own seed. We tell God of the dispositions that are in our hearts, that he may perfect them, and ripen his own seed: John i. 16, 'Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace;' grace upon grace, or grace after grace. God's giving one grace is an argument why he will give more grace.

2. God looks after affection rather than action. Sometimes he takes the will for the deed, but never the deed for the will. Where there is a will and delight in his ways, that is it which is most acceptable to him. Look, as to love sin is more than to commit it—a man may commit it out of frailty, but he that loves and cherisheth it is exceeding bad—so where there is delight in the ways of God, and the soul is gained to them. This is that God looks after, the affection.

3. Of all our affections delight and complacency is most acceptable. The promise is made to such: Ps. xxxvii. 4, 'Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desire of thine heart.' It is a slander that the hypocrite brings upon God: Job xxxiv. 9, 'He hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.' There is a great deal of profit, for God looks to the affection, and of all affections to the delight.

4. When this delight is not set upon privileges, but upon grace and obedience, this is more acceptable to God, 'I delight in thy ways.' When we set upon obedience it is a sign we mind God's interest more than our own comfort; that is our own interest, but subjection to God and holiness, that is for his glory; therefore, when the heart is set upon obedience, then he will give in supplies of grace.

*Use.* Oh! that we could say that we take joy and pleasure in the way of his commandments: Thou hast given me delight in thy ways, give me strength to keep them. To corrupt nature the ways of God are burdensome, but to his children 'the commandments of God are not grievous;' we shall not then want influences of grace.

## SERMON XL.

*Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness—*  
VER. 36.

IN the former verses David had asked understanding and direction to know the Lord's will; now he asketh an inclination of heart to do the Lord's will,

The understanding needs not only to be enlightened, but the will to be moved and changed.

Man's heart is of its own accord averse from God and holiness, even then when the wit is most refined, and the understanding is stocked and stored with high notions about it; therefore, David doth not only say, 'Give me understanding,' but 'Incline my heart.' We can be worldly of ourselves, but we cannot be holy and heavenly of ourselves; that must be asked of him who is 'the father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.' They that plead for the power of nature shut out the use of prayer; for if by nature we could determine ourselves to that which is good, there would be no need of grace; and if there be no need of grace, there is no use of prayer. But Austin hath said well, *Natura vera confessione, non falsa defensione, opus habet*—we need rather to confess our weakness than defend our strength. Thus doth David, and so will every broken-hearted Christian that hath had an experience of the inclinations of his own soul; he will come to God and say, 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.'

In which words there is something implied and something expressed. That which is implied is a confession; that which is expressed is a supplication. That which he confesseth is the natural inclination of his heart to worldly things, and by consequence to all evil; for every sin receiveth life and strength from worldly inclinations. That which he begs is, that the full bent and consent of his heart may carry him out to God's testimonies. Or, briefly, here is—

1. The thing asked, *incline my heart.*

2. The object of this inclination, expressed positively, *unto thy testimonies*; negatively, *and not unto covetousness.*

Here is the object to which, and the object from which. To which, 'Incline me to thy testimonies,' and suffer me not to decline to worldly objects, expressed here by the lust which is most conversant about them, 'covetousness.'

Let me explain them more fully. 'Incline my heart,' the word implies—

1. Our natural obstinacy and disobedience to God's law; for if the heart of man were naturally prone, and of its own accord ready to obedience, it were in vain said to God, 'Incline my heart.' Ay! but till God bend us the other way we lie averse and awkward from his commandments. As God is said here to incline us, so, John vi. 44, he is said to draw us. There is a corrupt will which hangs back, and desires anything rather than that which is right. We need to be drawn and bent again like a crooked stick the other way.

2. It implies God's gracious and powerful act upon the soul, whereby the heart is fixed and set to that which is good, when there is a proneness another way; this is the fruit of effectual grace.

Now let us see when the heart is inclined, and how this is brought to pass.

1. When is the heart said to be inclined? I answer—When the habitual bent of our affections is more to holiness than to worldly things; for the power of sin stands in the love of it, and so doth our aptness for grace in the love of it, or in the bent of the will, the strength of desire and affections by which we are carried out after it. *Amor meus est pondus meum, eo feror quocunque feror*—our love is the weight that is upon our souls. Nothing can be done well that is not done



sweetly. Then are we inclined, when our affections have a proneness and propension to that which is good. Now these affections must be more to holiness than to worldly things; for by the prevalency is grace determined, if the preponderating part of the soul be for God. It is not an equal poise; we are always standing between two parties. There is God and the world; a sensitive good drawing one way, and there is a spiritual good draws us another way. Now grace prevails when the scales are cast on grace's side. I say it is the habitual bent, not for a pang; the heart must be set to seek the Lord: 1 Chron. xxii. 19, 'Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God;' and the course of our endeavours, the strength and stream of our souls runs out this way; then is the heart said to be inclined to God's testimonies.

2. How is it brought to pass? or how doth God thus reduce and frame our hearts to the obedience of his will? There are two ways which God useth—by the word and by his Spirit, by persuasion and by power; they shall be 'taught of God,' and they are 'drawn of God:' John vi. 44, 'The Lord will allure Japheth;' so he works by persuasion, Gen. ix. 27; and then by power, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, 'I will cause you to walk in my ways,' &c. God tempers an irresistible strength and sweetness together, *fortiter pro te, Domine, suaviter pro me*. He worketh as God, therefore he works strongly and invincibly; but he persuades men as men, therefore he propounds reasons and arguments, goes to work by way of persuasion; strongly according to his own nature, sweetly according to man's, by persuasions accompanied by the secret efficacy of his own grace. First he gives weighty reasons, he casts in weight after weight till the scales be turned; then he makes all effectual by his Spirit. Morally he works, because God will preserve man's nature and the principles thereof; therefore he doth not work by violence, but by a sweet inclination, alluring and speaking comfortably unto us: Hosea xi. 4, 'I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.' God knows all the wards of man's heart, and what kind of keys will fit the lock; therefore he suits such arguments as may work upon us, and take us in our month, and then really and prevailingly, so as the effect may follow. Surely God hath more hand in good than Satan hath in evil; otherwise man were as praiseworthy for doing good as reprobable for doing evil. God inclines the heart to that which is good, and persuades it by his grace. God knows how to alter the course of our affections by his secret power, therefore doth not only lead, but draw, works intimately upon the heart.

*Unto thy testimonies*, so the word of God is called, for it testifieth of his will. There we have a clear proof and testimony how God stands affected to every man, what kind of affection God hath to him.

*And not to covetousness*. Mark the phrase 'incline,' &c. Doth God incline us to covetousness? No; but he permits us to the inclinations of our own hearts, justly denying his grace to those that do offend him, and upon the suspension of his grace nature is left to her own sway: the presence of the master or pilot saves the ship, his absence is the cause of the shipwreck. And so the schools say, God inclines to good *efficienter*, working it in us; and to evil *deficienter*, withdrawing his grace from us. A like expression you have Ps. cxli. 4, 'Incline not my heart to any evil thing.' God may as a lord do what he pleaseth

with his own; and as a just judge may give over our hearts to their own natural wicked inclination; therefore David deprecates it as a judicial act.

‘Not to covetousness.’ This is mentioned because our too much love to worldly things is the special hindrance of obedience; it takes off our hearts from the love and care of it. And then, when he saith ‘Not to covetousness,’ he herein implies his own esteem and choice, as preferring God’s testimonies above all riches; and possibly intimates the sincerity of his aims, that he would not serve God for temporal advantages and worldly respects. Satan accuseth Job for such a perverse respect: Job i. 9, ‘Doth Job serve God for nought?’ David, to prevent such a surmise, that he was not led by any thought of gain to desire godliness, saith, ‘To thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.’

Two points offer themselves from these words:—

1. That it is God alone that sets our hearts right, or inclines them from their carnal bent to his own testimonies.

2. That covetousness, or the flagrant desire of worldly things, is a great let or hindrance from complying with God’s testimonies.

*Doct.* 1. That it is God alone that sets our hearts right, or inclines them from their carnal bent to his own testimonies.

That I shall illustrate by these considerations:—

First, The heart of man must have an object unto which it is inclined or whereunto it doth cleave; for it is like a sponge, that being thirsty in itself, sucks in moisture from other things; it is a chaos of desires, seeking to be filled with something from without. We were made for another, to be happy in the enjoyment of a being without us; therefore man must have something to love; for the affections of the soul cannot lie idle and without an object: Ps. iv. 6, ‘The many will say, who will show us any good?’ We all hunt about for a match for our affections, for some good to satisfy us.

Secondly, The heart being destitute of grace, is wholly carried out to temporal things. Why? Because they are next at hand, and suit best with our fleshly natures. I say, out of a despair of meeting with better, we take up with those objects that we are most conversant about, which are carnal contentments, the good of which we can apprehend and relish with our natural faculties. There are two reasons of the addictedness that is in man’s heart to temporal things—(1.) Natural inclination; and (2.) Inveterate custom.

1. Natural inclination. That there is a greater proneness in us to evil than good is clear, not only by scripture but by plain experience. Now whence is it that we are thus viciously disposed? The soul being created by God, he infuseth no evil into it, for that would not stand with the holiness of his nature. I answer—Though the soul be created by God, yet it is created destitute of grace or original righteousness; and being destitute of the image of God, or original righteousness, can only close with things present and known, having no other light and principle to guide it. Now things known and things present, they are the pleasures of the body, as meats, drinks, natural generation, wealth, and honour. Now, these being wholly minded, avert us from the love and study of supernatural things. It is true these things are good in themselves, and that self-love which carrieth us out

to them is naturally good ; but though it be naturally good, it proves morally evil when the love of these things destroys the love of God, which must needs be if we be destitute of grace. The love of ourselves and outward things necessarily grows inordinate, not being guided and directed by grace. It is a rule among divines, *Si non inest quod inesse deberet, necessario inerit quod non inesse deberet*—a privation falling upon an active subject (such as the soul of man is) doth necessarily infer disorder and irregularity in its operations. Take away light from the air, it must be dark, and when the sun is down it must be night. So it is if grace be taken away. The great work of grace is to make God our last end and our chiefest good. Now, this last end being changed, all things must needs run into disorder with man. Why? For the last end is *principium universalissimum*, the most universal principle upon which all moral perfections depend. Look, as Adam and Eve, after they had eaten the forbidden fruit, forfeited the image of God, and were polluted, so we. Why? Did God infuse pollution and filthiness in them? or had the fruit any such poisonous quality? No; their last end was changed, which is the great principle that runs through all our actions; and when our end is changed, then all runs to disorder. They fell from God, whom before they made their chiefest good, and their last end. I say, they fell from God as envious, false, and wishing ill to them; and by the devil's instigation turned to the creature to find happiness in them, against the express will and command of God. As the first man was infected, so are all men wholly perverted, for sin still consists in a conversion from God to the creature, Jer. ii. 13; 2 Tim. iii. 4. By the change of our end all moral goodness is lost, for all means are subordinate to the last end, and are determined by it. Now necessarily thus it will be without grace; there will be a conversion of a man to the creature and the body, with the conveniences and comforts thereof; the interest and concernments of the body are set up instead of God. For though the soul cometh down from the superior world, yet it soon forgets its divine original, and being put into the body, it conforms itself to the body, and only adheres to objects visible and corporeal. As water, being put into a square vessel, hath a square form, into a round vessel, hath a round form, so the soul, being infused into the body, is led by it, and accommodates all its faculties and operations to the welfare of the body. And thence comes our ignorance, averseness of soul from holiness, unruliness of appetite, and inclination to sensual things. In short, without grace, a man's mind is carried headlong after worldly vanities. As water runs where it finds a passage, so the soul of man, being destitute of the image of God, finds a passage towards temporal things, and so runs out that way.

2. As man is thus corrupted and prone to worldly objects by natural inclination, so by inveterate custom. As soon as we are born we follow our sensual appetite, and the first years of man's life are merely governed by sense; and the pleasures thereof are born and bred up with us, and deeply engraven in our natures; and by constant living in the world, conversing with corporeal objects, the taint increaseth upon us, and so we are more deeply dyed and settled in a worldly frame, and we live in the pursuit of honour, gain, and pleasure, accord-

ing as the particular temper of our bodies and course of our interest do determine us : Jer. xiii. 23, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.' Custom is as another nature, and hardly left. We find by experience, the more we are accustomed to any course of life, the more we delight in it, and are weaned from it with a very great difficulty. Every act disposeth the soul to the habit, and after the habit or custom is produced, then every new deliberate act adds a stiffness of bent or sway unto the faculty into which the custom is seated; and the longer this evil custom is continued the more easily are we carried away with temptations that suit it, and more hardly swayed to the contrary. Now this stiffness of will in a carnal course is that which the scripture calls hardness of heart and a heart of stone, for a man is ensnared by these customs; and of all customs, covetousness or worldliness is the most dangerous. Why? Because this is a sin of more credit and less infamy in the world, and this will multiply its acts in the soul most, and works incessantly: 'Having hearts exercised with covetous practices,' 2 Peter ii. 14.

Well, then, these lusts being born and bred up with us from our infancy, they plead prescription. Religion, that comes afterward, and finds us biassed and prepossessed with other inclinations, which by reason of long use is not easily broken and shaken off; as upon trial, whenever we are called upon, or begin to apply ourselves to the ways of life, we shall be easily sensible of this stiffness of heart and obstinacy that bends us another way.

Thirdly, The heart being thus deeply engaged to temporal things, or things base and earthly, it cannot be set upon that which is spiritual and heavenly; for David propounds these things here as inconsistent, 'To thy testimonies Lord, and not to covetousness.' If the heart be addicted to worldly things, it is necessarily averse from God and his testimonies; for the habitual bent of the heart to any one sin is inconsistent with grace or a thorough obedience to God's will. That which the heart is inclined to hath the throne. Now, when we inquire after grace, Have I grace or no? have I the work of God upon my heart? the question is not what there is of God in the heart, but whether that of God hath the throne. Something of God is in the heart of the wickedest man that is, and something of sin in the best heart that is; therefore which way is the sway, the bent, the habitual and prevailing inclination of the soul? what hath the dominion? 'Sin hath not the dominion, for ye are not under the law, but under grace,' Rom. vi. 14. What hath the prevalency of the heart? Though the conscience takes part with God, as it may strongly in a wicked man, yet which way is the bent of our souls? And as all sin in its reign is inconsistent with grace, so much more worldly affections: Mat. vi. 24, 'No man can serve two masters,' &c. It is as inconsistent as for a man to look two ways at once. And the Chaldee on this very text, 'Incline my heart to thy testimonies,' reads it, 'and not unto mammon.' You cannot be inclined to God and mammon: 1 John ii. 15, 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' The world draws men from the love of God and from his service, and labour after temporal things deadens and hindereth us from

looking after things which are eternal, and we lose the relish of things to come and things spiritual, the more the love of worldly things doth increase upon us. The schoolmen say of worldliness, it is that which most of all draws us off from God as our last end and chief good, and makes us cleave to the creature; therefore it is called 'adultery' and 'idolatry': adultery, James iv. 4, as it draws away our love, delight, and complacency from God; and idolatry, Col. iii. 5, as it diverts our trust, and placeth it in wealth and sublunary things. The glutton or sensualist's love is withdrawn from God, and therefore his belly is said to be his god, Phil. iii. 19. Interpretatively that is a man's God which is the last end of his actions, and upon which all his thoughts, affections, and endeavours run most. But now covetousness is not only a spiritual fornication, and adultery which draws off our affections from God, but idolatry. Considering our relation in the covenant, it is spiritual adultery; and above this, it is idolatry, because men think they can never be happy, nor have any comfortable being, unless they have a great portion of these outward things.

Fourthly, This frame of heart cannot be altered until we be changed by God's grace. Why? For there is no principle remaining in us that can alter this frame, or make us so far unsatisfied with our present state as to look after other things, that can break the force of our natural and customary inclinations. There are three things which lie against the change of the heart towards God.

1. There is nature, which wholly carrieth us to please the flesh, and inordinately to seek the good of the body. Now nature cannot rise higher than itself, and determine itself to things above its sphere and compass; as the philosopher saith of water, it cannot be forced to rise higher than its fountain. Our actions cannot exceed their principle, which is self-love. But besides this—

2. There is custom added to nature, which makes it more stiff and obstinate; so that if it may be supposed that conscience is sensible of our mistake and ill choice, and some weighty considerations should be propounded to us, as it is easy to show that eternal things are far better than temporal, and spiritual things than carnal;—if conscience, I say, should come in, and represent the ill state wherein we are, yet because the poise of our hearts doth customarily carry us another way, we are not inclined to God, or to the concerns of eternal life; for it is not argument merely will do it. In a pair of scales, though the weights be equal, yet if the scales be not equal there may be wrong done; so though the argument be never so powerful, yet if the heart that weighs them be customarily engaged and carried away with the momentary and cursory delights of the flesh, alas! these will sway us, and affect us more than all those pure, everlasting delights we may enjoy by communion with God. In all reason a lesser good should not be preferred before a greater; and worldly delights, which are not only base and dreggy, but also short and vanishing, and the occasion of much evil to us, these should not be preferred before eternal happiness. But here lies our misery, though the pleasures which affect us be less in themselves, yet our habitual propension and customary inclination to them is greater. Look, as in a pair of balances, though the weight of the one side be less, yet if the scales be not even and equally

pendant, if the beam be longer on the side than the other, the lesser weight on the longer side of the beam will overpoise the greater weight on the shorter side; so while the soul is perverted by evil customs, and the heart doth hang more to temporal things than to spiritual and eternal, certainly there must be something from above that must determine us. Man's heart can never be swayed until the Lord joins the assistance of his grace.

3. There is God's curse, or penal hardness. For as nature groweth into custom, so by our sinful customs God is provoked, and doth withdraw those common influences of grace by which our condition might be bettered, and in justice he gives up our hearts to their own sway: Hosea iv. 17, 'Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone;' Ps. lxxxii. 12, 'So I gave them up unto their own heart's lusts, and they walked in their own counsels.' So that we have not those frequent checks and gripes of conscience, those warnings and good thoughts as before. 'Let him alone;' providence, let him alone; conscience, let him alone; and the sinner is left to his own will. Therefore, out of all the work remaineth to be God's alone, who only hath authority to pardon, and power to cure the distempers of our hearts; he hath authority to take off that judicial hardness which he as a judge may continue upon us, and which the saints deprecate in these forms of speech, 'Incline my heart to thy testimonies,' &c. And so he hath power to take off the natural and customary hardness which is in us, 'For the heart of man is in his hand as the rivers of water,' Prov. xxi. 1, and can as easily draw us out to good as water followeth when the trench is cut. But what needeth more arguing in the case? David saith here, 'Lord, incline mine heart; and 1 Kings viii. 58, 'The Lord be with us, that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and keep his commandment.' It is God's work alone to bend the crooked stick the other way. But you will say, this work sometimes is ascribed to man; for instance, ver. 112 of this psalm, 'I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end;' and Josh. xxiv. 23, 'Incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.'

I answer—These places do only note our subordinate operation, or the voluntary motion and resolution on our part. When God hath bent us and inclined us to do his will, when God hath made our love to act, and poised us to that which is spiritual and good, then we do incline, we bend our hearts this way. So that all these expressions do not imply a co-ordinate but subordinate operation on man's part.

Fifthly, In this change there is a weakening of the old inclination to carnal vanities, and there is a new bent and frame of heart bestowed upon us. The heart is taken off from the love of base objects, and then fixed upon that which is good: Deut. xxx. 6, 'The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart,' &c. First, there is a circumcising, a paring away of the fleshliness of the heart; then an unfeigned love to God. So Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, 'I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' First the untowardness of the will and affections is removed, and then a heart is given to us, which is tractable and pliable for gracious purposes. First the weeds are plucked

up, then we are planted wholly with a right seed. Or first we 'cast off the old man,' then 'put on the new,' Eph. iv. 22, 23. The natural inbred corruption, which daily grows worse and worse, is more and more done away, as we cast off the old rotten garment when we put on the new.

Sixthly, When our hearts are thus changed, they are ever and anon apt to return to the old bent and bias again. For David, a renewed man, he doth thus speak to God, 'O Lord, incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness.' He found his heart bowing and warping back again, and being sensible of the distemper, complains of it to God. The inclination that is in them to evil is not so lost to the best of God's children, but it will return unless God still draw us after him. The spouse saith, Cant. i. 4, 'Draw me, and we will run after thee.' The spouse of Christ, those that were already taken into communion with him, they say, 'Draw me.' This is not a work to be done once and no more, but often to be renewed and repeated in the soul; for there are some relics of our natural averseness from God, and enmity to the yoke of his word, yet left in the heart: Gal. v. 17, 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit.' There are two active principles within us, and they are always warring one upon another. Therefore there is need not only to be inclined at first, and drawn towards God, but we must go to him again and again, and pray to him daily that he would continue the bent of our hearts right, and weaken carnal affections, that we may mind better things.

*Use 1.* The use is to set you right in point of doctrine as to the necessity of grace, to bring us into a state of doing God's will; because some do grant the necessity of grace in words, but in deed they make it void.

Pelagius at first gave all to nature, acknowledged no necessity of divine grace; but when this proud doctrine found little countenance, he called nature by the name of grace; and when that deceit was discovered, he acknowledged no other grace but outward instruction, or the benefit of external revelation, that a man might by the word of God know and be put in mind of his duty. Being yet driven further, he acknowledged the grace of pardon, and before a man could do anything acceptably there was a necessity of the remission of sin, and then he might obey God perfectly. But that not sufficing, he acknowledged another grace, the example of Christ, which doth both secure our rule and encourage our practice; and so made the grace of Christ consist, not in the secret efficacy of his Spirit, but only in the example of Christ. But being driven further to acknowledge the same internal grace (I mean, his followers), they made it to consist in some illumination of the understanding, or some moral persuasion, by probable argument to excite the will; and this not absolutely necessary, but only for facilitation, as a horse to a journey, which otherwise a man might go on foot. Ay! but 'the law was impossible through our flesh,' Rom. viii. 3. But all this is short of that divine grace that is necessary.

Now, there are others grant the secret influences of God's grace, but make the will of man be to a co-ordinate cause with God; namely, that God doth propound the object, hold forth inducing considerations, give some remote power and assistance; but still there is an indiffer-

ency in the will of man to accept and refuse as liketh him best. Besides all this, there is a prevailing efficacy, or a real influence from the Spirit of God on the will, whereby it is moved infallibly and certainly to close with those things which God propounds unto him. God worketh efficaciously and determinately, not leaving it to the liberty of man's will to choose or refuse it, but man is determined, inclined, and actually poised by the grace of God to that which is good.

*Use 2.* To press you to lay to heart these things.—(1.) Be sensible of the strength and sway of thy affections to temporal objects; there the work begins. And till we have a sight of the disease, we are not careful after a remedy. David, though regenerate, took notice of some worldly tendencies in his heart; and if we observe our hearts, we shall find so. Paul groaned under the relics of the flesh, and so should we under our bondage by sin. (2.) And then bewail it to the Lord, 'I am as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke,' Jer. xxxi. 18, to bewail this stiffness of heart, and the treachery of sin, whereby we are enchanted, wholly bent to that which is evil. (3.) And observe the abating of this strength of affection, and weaning of thy soul from such desires; for then the work of grace goes on when we begin to savour other things, and have inclinations of soul towards that which is heavenly and spiritual: 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit.' (4.) And then to press you to perpetual watchfulness over your own hearts, that you do not return to your old bent and bias again; for certainly thus they will do if we do not keep a severe hand over them, and be lifting up our affections to things that are above, where God is, and Christ at the right hand of God.

## SERMON XLI.

*And not unto covetousness.*—VER. 36.

*Doct. 2.* That covetousness, or an inordinate desire of worldly things, is the great let or hindrance to complying with God's testimonies.

By way of proof, I need to produce but that scripture, 1 John v. 3, 4, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous; for whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.' The reason implies that if we had a greater conquest over worldly affections, it would not be so grievous to us to keep God's commandments; for the apostle's argument is built upon this supposition, that God's commands are only burdensome to them that lie under the power of carnal affections. All the difficulty in obedience cometh from our temptations to the contrary. Now all or most temptations from Satan and our own flesh have their strength from the world, and its suitableness to our affections. Master your love to the world, and temptations lose their strength.

To make this more clear, let us see—

1. What is covetousness.



2. How it hindereth from complying with God's testimonies.

*First*, What is covetousness? I shall give the nature, the causes, the discoveries of it.

*First*, the nature of it. It is an inordinate desire of having more wealth than the Lord alloweth in the fair course of his providence, and a delight in worldly things as our chiefest good.

1. There is an unsatisfied desire of having more. We may desire temporal good things for necessity and service. We carry about earthly tabernacles, that must be supported with earthly things, and therefore God alloweth us to seek them in a moderate way. But now when these desires grow vehement and impatient of check, and by an immodest importunity are still craving for more, it is an evil disease, and it must be looked unto in time, or it will prove baneful to the soul. There is a vital heat necessary to our preservation, and there are unnatural predatorial heats which argue a distemper. See how this desire is expressed in scripture: 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, 'He that will be rich falls into temptation and a snare,' &c. He doth not say, He that is rich, but, He that will be rich; he that hath fixed that as his scope, and makes that his business; for the will is known by fixedness of intention, and earnestness of prosecution: he that makes it his work to grow great in the world. So Prov. xv. 27, 'He that is greedy of gain troubles his own house.' Desires are the vigorous motions of the will; when they are eager, impatient, and immoderate, then they discover this evil inclination of soul. So Eccles. v. 10, 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase. This is also vanity.' There is a spiritual dropsy, when our desires grow the more the more we receive and enjoy; as fire by the addition of new fuel grows more fierce the more the flame increaseth. The contrary to this is expressed by Agur, and should be the temper of every gracious heart: Prov. xxx. 8, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me.' As to worldly things we should be indifferent, and refer ourselves to the fair allowance of God's providence, that he might carve out our portion, and do by us according to his own pleasure.

2. Not only this greedy thirst discovereth covetousness, but a complacency, delight, and acquiescency of soul in worldly enjoyments. So Christ Jesus in his parable against covetousness brings in a carnal wretch singing lullabys to his soul: Luke xii. 19, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' He doth not wish for more, but pleaseth himself with what he had already, and yet in his language would Christ impersonate and set forth the dispositions of a covetous heart. So we are cautioned, Ps. lxii. 10, 'If riches increase, set not your hearts upon them.' When we set up our rest here, and look no further, we are guilty of this sin.

But now, because we may delight in our portion, and take comfort in what God hath given us; let us see when our delight in temporal things is a branch of covetousness. I answer—When we delight in them to the neglect of God, and the lessening of our joy in his service, and our hopes of eternal life are abated and grow less lively; when we so delight in them as to neglect God and the sweet intercourse we should have in him. Therefore covetousness is called idolatry, Eph.

v. 5 ; Col. iii. 5, as it robs God of our trust, while we build upon uncertain riches as a stable happiness, and the best assurance of our felicity : Mark x. 23, 24, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God !' And when the disciples wondered, our Saviour answered, 'How hard is it for them that trust in riches !' &c. ; that is, that set their confidence in them in that degree and measure as is only due to God. Then it is called adultery, James iv. 4, because out of love to worldly things we can dispense with our love to God and delight in him, as the harlot draws away the affection from the lawful wife. In short, when we seek them and prize them, with the neglect of better, as spiritual and heavenly things are, Luke xii. 21 ; Mat. vi. 19-21, 33. Next to the love of God we must love ourselves, and there first our souls. Now we are besotted and enchanted with the love of the world, so as to slight the favour of God and the hopes of blessedness to come, this is adultery spiritual, and sets up another chief good.

Secondly, Let us come to the causes of it, and they are two—distrust of God's providence, and discontent with God's allowance. You have both in one place : Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have.' These two, distrust and discontent, have a mutual influence upon one another. Distrust breeds discontent with our present portion, and discontent breeds ravenous desires, and ravenous desires breed distrust ; for when we set God a task to provide for our lusts, certainly he will never do it. I say, we can never depend upon him that he should provide for our lusts.

1. For the first of these, that is, distrust, or a fear of want, together with a low esteem of God's providence, which maketh us so unreasonably solicitous about outward provisions ; therefore when Christ would cure our covetousness he seeks to cure our distrust : Luke xii. 29, 'And seek ye not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.' Do not hover like meteors in the air, antedating your cares, making yourselves more miserable by your own suspicions, and your own fears what shall become of you and yours. So Mat. vi. 34, 'Take no thought for to-morrow ; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' I say, this carking about future things makes us so impatient and earnest after present satisfaction. God trained up his people to a waiting upon his providence. Manna fell from heaven every day, so 'sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' Every day we need look no further : 'Give us this day our daily bread.' But men fear future need and poverty, and so would help themselves by their own carking. So then diffidence of God's promises is the latent evil which lodgeth in the heart. Sordid sparing and greedy getting, that is on the top ; but that which lies near the heart is distrust. We incline to sensible things, and cannot tell how to be well without them, and so resolve to shift for ourselves.

2. Discontent. Men have not so much as their rapacious desires crave, though they are allowed moderate supplies to keep them till they go to heaven ; and therefore everything that they get serves but as a bait to draw them on further, so they are always 'joining house to house, and laying field to field,' Isa. v. 8. When once men trans-

gress the bounds of contentment prescribed by God, there is no stop or stay. Look, as the channel wears wider and deeper the more water falls into it, the water frets more and more; so the more outward things increase upon us, the more are our desires increased upon us. No man hath vast and unlimited thoughts at first. Men would be a little higher in the world, and a little better accommodated, and when they have that they must have a little more, then a little more; so they seize upon all things within their grasp and reach. Whereas if we had been content with our estate at first, we might have saved many a troublesome care, many a sin, many needless desires, and many a foolish and hurtful lust that proves our bane and torment. Be content with such things as you have now, or you will not be content hereafter; the lust will increase with the possession. As in some diseases of the stomach, purging doth better than repletion, not to feed the humour but to purge away the distemper; so here, it is not more that will satisfy us, but our lusts must be abated; if we were better satisfied with God's fair allowance we might be happy men much sooner than ever we shall be by great wealth.

Thirdly, For the discoveries of this sin. Aristotle, as it is a moral vice, placeth it in two things—in a defect in giving, and an excess in taking. We may better express both in scripture phrase, by greedy getting, and unmeet withholding.

1. Greedy getting, manifested either—

[1.] By sinful means of acquisition; as lying, cozening, oppression, profaning the Lord's day, grinding the faces of the poor, carnal compliances, or any other such unjust or evil arts of gain. Men stick not at the means when their desires are so strongly carried out after the end: Prov. xxviii. 20, 'He that maketh haste to be rich cannot be innocent.' They leap over hedge and ditch, and all restraints of honesty and conscience, to compass their ends, all their endeavours are suited to their profit, and therefore consult not with conscience but with interest; and so prove treacherous to God, unthankful to parents, disobedient to magistrates, unfaithful to equals, unmerciful to inferiors, and care not whom they wrong, so they may thrive in the world.

[2.] Though it go not so high as injustice, yet it appeareth by excessive labours, when endeavours are unreasonably multiplied, to the wrong both of the body and the soul. To the wrong of the body; see how they are described in scripture: Ps. cxxvii. 2, 'They rise early, they sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows;' and Ps. xxxix. 6, 'He disquieteth himself in vain.' By biting cares: Eccles. ii. 23, 'All his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night;' Eccles. iv. 8, 'There is no end of his labours, neither is his eye satisfied with riches.' Men are full of biting cares, cruciating unquiet thoughts, and so 'pierce themselves through with many sorrows,' 1 Tim. vi. 10. Riches are compared to thorns, not only for choking the good seed, but as piercing us through with many sorrows, as they prove troublesome comforts to a covetous man. And they wrong the soul when the heart is dead and oppressed by them: Luke xxi. 34, 'Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and

drunkenness and the cares of this life.' The heart is burdened and oppressed, so as it hath no life and vigour for spiritual things, but is unbelieving and hard-hearted. The following the world brings a deadness upon us, and these preposterous and eager pursuits spend the strength of our affections, so that God and religion is jostled out and hath no due respect; the lean kine devour the fat, and Sarah is thrust out of doors instead of Hagar. Thus is greedy getting seen by unjust means, and the immoderate use of lawful means to the oppression of the body and soul.

2. The other discovery is an unworthy detention: Prov. xi. 24, 'There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.' This covetousness in keeping is seen partly—

[1.] By a sordid dispensing of our estate, or a denying of ourselves and others that relief which they should have. Ourselves: Eccles. iv. 8, 'He bereaveth his own soul of good;' that is, of the comforts of the present life. But chiefly denying of others that relief they should have, a duty which our religion often presseth us to: Luke xii. 33, 'Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth.' We should rather scatter than hoard. The only means to discover we are not covetous, and to keep ourselves from the filth of this and other sins, is to be much in charity and distributing to those that have need: Luke xi. 41, 'Give alms of such things as you have, and behold all things are clean unto you.' It bringeth a blessing, purgeth the soul from that stain which it secretly contracteth by possessing worldly things, as our fingers are defiled by telling of money. But now, when men are backward this way, part with a drop of blood as soon as anything for God's use, when they shut up their bowels against the miseries of others, then is there this unmeet withholding.

[2.] By our loathness to part with these things for the testimony of a good conscience. When we are put to trial, as Joseph was, to lose our coat that we may keep our consciences, I mean, to part with these outward things, or to defile ourselves by compliance with men; when we are put to this trial, those that will withhold and can dispense with the conscience of their duty to God, they are guilty of this sin: 2 Tim. iv. 10, 'Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world.' Oh! it is a mighty insinuating thing that gets into the hearts of those that profess religion many times, so that they cannot deny any small conveniences for God. But the contrary is in those saints that 'take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance,' Heb. x. 34.

[3.] It appears again when we are loath to part with them in a way of submission to God's providence. Grief at worldly losses shows that these things have gained too much of our love. If we did 'rejoice in them' when we have them 'as if we rejoiced not,' then we would 'weep' for the loss of them 'as though we wept not,' 1 Cor. vii. 31. They are both coupled together, for one makes way for the other. So we find the other couple: 2 Peter i. 6, 'Add to temperance patience.' Where there is temperance and moderation in the use of worldly things, there will be patience, a submission to God in the loss of them.

He lost them without grief, because he possessed them without love. The greatness of our affliction comes from our affection to these things. Did we sit more loose from our earthly comforts, it would not be so irksome to part with them. Grief is always a sign of affection: John xi. 34, and 'Jesus wept;' and then they said, 'Behold how he loved him!' When we are surprised with so great sorrow and trouble at the parting of outward things, it may be said, 'Behold how we loved them.' Our hearts are not at so great an indifferency as they should be. The root of all trouble of spirit lieth in our inordinate affection. Get off that, and then what comfortable lives might we live!

*Secondly*, I am to show how it hindereth us from complying with God's testimonies. I shall do it by these arguments.

1. It disposeth and inclineth the soul to all evil, to break every command and law of God: 1 Tim. vi. 10, 'The love of money is the root of all evil.' Let that once get into the heart and reign there, and then a man will stick at no sin, he becomes, as Chrysostom speaks, a ready prey to the devil; such a man doth but stand watching for a temptation, that Satan may draw him to one sin or other: Micah ii. 2, 'They covet fields, and take them by violence.' First they covet; suffer that to possess the heart, and a man will stop at nothing, but break out into all that is unseemly. Let Judas be but inured to the bag, and enchant his thoughts with this pleasing supposition that he may make a gain of his master, and he will soon come to a *quid dabitur*: What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? he will soon betray him. Gehazi, let him but affect a reward, and he will dishonour God, and lay a stumbling-block in the way of that noble Syrian, that new convert: 'Is this a time to take bribes?' &c. Let Achan's heart be but tickled and pleased a little with the sight, and he will be purloining the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment. Tell Balaam but of gold and silver, and he will curse Israel against his conscience, he will venture, though there be an angel in the way to stop him. Let Ahab but have a mind to Naboth's vineyard, and he will soon consent to Naboth's blood. Ananias and Sapphira, let them but look upon what they part withal, let but covetousness prevail upon their hearts, and they will keep back part of that which is dedicated to God. Simon Magnus will deny religion, and return to his old sorceries again, that he may be some great one. So that there is no sin, be it never so foul, but covetousness will make it plausible, and reconcile it to the consciences of men.

2. As it doth dispose and incline the soul to evil, so it incapacitates us for God's service, both in our general and particular calling.

In our general calling, it makes us incapable of serving God. Why? It destroys the principle of obedience, is contrary to the matter of obedience, and it slights the rewards of obedience.

[1.] It destroys the principle of obedience, which is the love of God. This is that which constrains us, which carrieth us out with life and sweetness in God's service. Now, 1 John ii. 5, 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' It destroys the principle that should act us in obedience.

[2.] It is contrary to the matter of obedience, which are the commands of God. The commands of God and mammon are contrary,

Mat. vi. 24. What are his commands? God saith, Pity the afflicted, relieve the miserable, venture all for a good conscience, seek heaven in the first place, seek it with your choicest affection, your earnest diligence. What saith mammon? Be sparing of your substance, follow the world as hard as you can, stick at nothing, lie, steal, swear, forswear, comply with the lusts of men, then you shall be rich. Well, now you see he that is ruled by mammon, or swayed by the inordinate love of worldly good, can never serve God; he is enslaved to another master; he loves wealth above all, he trusts it more than God's providence, he serves it more than God himself. Though his tongue dares not say that the earth is better than heaven, that the things of this life are better than the favour of God, yet his life saith it; for more of his heart and care runs out upon these matters. In short, it unfits you not only for one duty, but for all duties required of us. God's laws you know require respect to God, your neighbour, and to yourselves. Now he that is a slave to mammon, overcome by the love of worldly things, denies that which is due to God, his trust, his love, his choice affection. He denies what is necessary for his neighbour, and he denies what is comfortable for himself. He is unthankful to God, unmerciful to his neighbour, and cruel to himself.

[3.] It slights the encouragements of obedience, which are the rewards of God, as it weakens our future hopes, and depresseth the heart from looking after spiritual and heavenly things. They despise their birth-right for a mess of pottage; and when they are invited to the wedding, the choice things God hath provided for us in the gospel, they prefer their farm, oxen, merchandise before it. As it unfits us for the duty of our general, so for our particular callings and relations. The love of the world will make him altogether unfit for magistracy, ministry, the master of a family, or any such relation. In magistracy, who are the men that are qualified for that office? Exod. xviii. 21, 'Such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.' Let covetousness possess the heart a little, and it will make a man act unworthily, timorously, with a base heart. Nay, for a piece of bread will that man transgress. Take a minister, and what a poor meal-mouthed minister will he make if his heart be carried out with love to worldly things? Therefore it is the qualification of his person: 1 Tim. iii. 3, 'Not greedy of filthy lucre.' Let a minister be greedy of gain, it makes him sordid, low-spirited, flattering and daubing, to curry favour with men, more intent upon his gain and profit than the saving of souls. So for his work: 1 Peter v. 2, 'Feed the flock of God which is among you; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.' What a low flat ministry will that be, that is inspired with no other aim and impulsion but the sense of his own profit! If that be his great inducement to undertake that calling, and his great encouragement in discharging the duty of that calling, how will men strain themselves to please men, especially great ones, and writhe themselves into all postures and shapes that they may soothe the humours and lusts of others! He will curse where God hath blessed, if he be such as Balaam, who 'loved the wages of unrighteousness.' It is a powerful imperious lust, saith God, 'Will you pollute me for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live?'

Then you shall have them declaiming against the good, hardening the evil, complying with the fashions of the world. So in other callings. If a man be called to be a master of a family: Prov. xv. 27, 'He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house.' What a trouble and burden will this man be to his servants and all about him! and how little will he glorify God in that relation! Nay, in all other stations this will make him an oppressing landlord, a false tradesman, an ill neighbour; and therefore it is the very pest and bane of human societies. Thus you see how it unfits us for the service of God, both in our general and particular calling.

3. It hinders the receiving of good, and those means of reformation that should make us better. It fills us with prejudice against whatever shall be spoken for God and for the concernments of another world: Luke xvi. 14, 'And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and derided him.' Come with any strict and holy doctrine that shall carry out men to the interest of another life, and they will make a scoff at it. If the word stir us a little, and make us anxious and thoughtful about our eternal condition, the thorns, which are the cares of this world, choke the good seed, Mat. xiii.; it stifles our conviction, while it distracts our head with cares, and puts us out of all thought about things to come. If a man begins to do some outward thing, it makes him soon weary of religion and attendance upon the duties thereof: Amos viii. 5, 'When will the Sabbath be gone, that we may set forth wheat?' They think all lost that is bestowed upon God. As Seneca said of the Jews, they were a foolish people, they lost the full seventh of their lives because of the Sabbath; so they think all Sabbath time lost. Nay, it distracts in duty: Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 'With their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.' It interlines our prayers, and the world will still be creeping; and when we are offering incense to God, we shall be mingling sulphur and brimstone of worldly thoughts with it; our minds will be taken up with worldly projects; and then it perverts the good we do, as they followed Christ for the loaves, John vi. It turneth religion into *venale artificium*, a trade to live by. If they do good things, it is for worldly ends; they make a market of their devotion, as the Shechemites would be circumcised, for then their substance and their cattle will be ours.

Use 1. It informs us of the evil of covetousness. Most will stroke it with a gentle censure, and say, Such an one is a good man, but a little worldly, as if it were no great matter to be so. Nay, they are apt to applaud those that are tainted with it: Ps. x. 3, 'He blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.' He that getteth honour and riches by hook and crook is the only prudent and serious man in their account. It is a foul sin, though the men of the world will not believe it. Surely we have too mild thoughts of it, therefore do not watch and strive against it. The sensualist shames himself before others; but covetousness is worse than prodigality in many respects, as being not occasioned by the distemper of the body, as excess of drinking and lust is, but by the depravation of the mind; and when other sins decay, this grows with them; it is an incurable dropsy, Luke xii. 15. The words are doubled for the more vehemency. Christ doth not only

say, 'Take heed,' but 'Take heed and beware of covetousness.' Sins that are more gross and sensual are more easily discovered, and a sinner sooner reclaimed; but this is a secret sin, that turns away the heart from God, and is incessantly working in the soul. Look, as the scripture tells you, to make you careful against rash anger, that it is murder, 1 John iii. 15; so to make you careful to avoid covetousness, the scripture tells you it is idolatry; and is that a small crime? What, to set up another God? Who are you that dare to harbour so great an evil in your bosom, and make no great matter of it? Will you dethrone that God which made you, and set up another in his stead? How can you hope he will be good to you any longer when you offer him so vile an abuse? It is adultery; it is a breach of your conjugal vow. You promised to renounce the world in your baptism, and gave up yourselves to his service, and will you cherish your whorish and disloyal affections that will carry you to the world in God's stead? We cannot think badly enough of such a sin.

*Use 2.* If covetousness be the great let and hindrance from keeping God's testimonies, then let us examine ourselves, Are we guilty of it? Doting upon the creature, and an inordinate affection to sensible things, is a natural, a hereditary disease, more general than we are aware of: Jer. vi. 13, 'From the least to the greatest every one is given to covetousness.' It is a relic of original sin, and it is in part in the godly man, though it do not bear sway in him; there is too much of this worldly wretched inclination in a godly man's heart. Nay, those that seem most remote from it may be tainted with it. A prodigal, that is lavish enough upon his lusts, yet he may be sparing to good uses; so he is covetous; as the rich man that fared deliciously every day yet denied a crum to Lazarus, Luke xvi. 19-21. Those that aim at no great matter for themselves, that have not ravenous impatient desires, yet may be full of envy at the increase of others, and vexed to see them flourish; it may be they have no ability or opportunity to do anything for themselves, but have an evil eye at the increase of others. Most men are more industrious for the world, whereas they are overly and slight in heavenly matters; and that is evidence enough. Some are not greedy, but they are too sparing. They seek not, it may be, a higher estate, but they are too much delighted with present comforts. The gallant that pampers himself, and wastes freely upon his pride and lusts, may laugh in his sleeve, and say, I am free from this evil; yet his heart desires wherewith to feed his excess and bravery and pride. Covetousness may be entertained as a servant where it is not entertained as a master; entertained as a servant to provide oil and fuel to make other sins burn. Therefore let us see indeed whether we be not guilty of this sin?

1. It may be discovered by frequent thoughts, which are the genuine issue of the soul, and discover the temper of the mind; thoughts either by way of contemplation or contrivance. By way of contemplation, when our minds only run upon earthly things, and that with a savour and sweetness: Phil. iii. 19, 'Minding earthly things.' What a man doth muse upon, most think of when he is alone, and speak of in company, that will show him the temper of his heart. When men think of the world, and speak of the world, their heart is where their trea-



sure is, Mat. vi. 21. Nay, when they cannot disengage themselves from these thoughts in God's worship; their hearts go away in covetousness, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. Or else thoughts by way of contrivance: Isa. xxxii. 7, 8, 'The liberal man deviseth liberal things, and the wicked man deviseth wicked devices.' The deliberations and debates of the soul discover the temper of it. A carnal heart is altogether exercised in carnal projects, as the rich fool discoursed and dialogised with himself. When men are framing endless projects, carking and caring, not how to grow good and gracious, but great and high in the world, they discover the spirit of the world.

2. And as by thoughts, so by burning and urgent desires; they are the pulses of the soul. As physicians judge by appetite, so may you by desires. A spiritual dropsy or an unsatisfied thirst argues a dis-tempered soul, when, like the horseleech's daughter, you still cry, Give, give, and you are never contented, but must have more.

3. By the course of your lives and actions, and the uniformity of your endeavours. How shall we know who is the covetous man whom the Lord abhors? Luke xii. 21, 'So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God,'—a man that is always growing in estate, and never looks to his soul, and to be rich in grace, spiritual experiences, and rich in good works, which is chiefly meant there by being rich towards God, a man that seeks not the kingdom of God in the first place, for that which you love best you will seek for, you will be most careful and diligent to obtain. Well, then, when you mind heavenly things by the by, and are very slight in seeking and inquiring after God, furnishing your souls with grace, and getting assured hopes of heaven, and do not spy out advantages for the inward man, this evil disposition of the soul hath mightily invaded you, and then you can never do God any service.

*Use 3.* To press you to take heed of this great sin; and if you would mortify it, mortify the roots of it, which are distrust and discontent.

1. Distrust of God's providence. You that think you cannot do well unless you have a greater portion of worldly things, and that sets you upon carking, and if you have not this you cannot see how you and yours can be provided for; cure this. How? By God's promises: 1 Peter v. 7, 'Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you.' Cannot you trust God upon the security of a promise? Cannot you go on in well-doing when the Lord hath said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee'? Cure it by observing the usual course of God's providence. God provides for the young ravens, he clothes the lilies. It is Christ's argument, Will he be more kind to a raven than a child? will he take more care of a flower than of a son, one that is in covenant with him? Cure it by holy maxims and considerations. Remember all dependeth upon God's blessing: Luke xii. 15, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness.' How should we do so? 'For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' Alas! all is in God's hand, both being and well-being, life and estate, and all things else. God can soon blast abundance, and can relieve us in the deepest wants; he can give you a sufficiency in your deep poverty, 2 Cor. viii. 2. If you should go on carking and caring and

feathering your nests, God may take you off, or set your nests on fire. A little serves the turn to bring us to heaven; and when our desires are moderate, God will not fail: Prov. xvi. 8, 'Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.'

2. For discontent with your portion, that you may not always be craving more, meditate upon the baseness and vanity of worldly things. They do but deceive us with a vain show; they cannot give us any true joy of heart, or peace of conscience, or security against future evil; they cannot give you health of body, nor add one cubit to your stature, nor one day to your lives. Now, should we disquiet ourselves for a vain show? Shall there be such toil in getting, such fear of losing, when they are of no more use to us in the hour of death? When you need strength and comfort most, all these things will leave you shirtless, helpless, if they continue with you so long. Nay, reason thus: the more estate the more danger, the greater charge lieth upon you. Larger gates do but open to larger cares. There is more duty, more danger, more snares, more temptations. When you have more, you will be more difficultly saved. It is a truth pronounced by the Lord of truth, that it is 'a hard matter for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.' It will be more hard to keep the flesh in order, to guide our spirits aright in the ways of God. If you must needs be coveting, labouring, and carking, you are called to better things: John vi. 27, 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life;' 'Covet the best gifts,' 1 Cor. xii. 31. Be as passionate for grace as others are for the world. If once you were acquainted with these better things, it would be so with you; you would never leave the fair and fresh pastures of grace for the barren heath of the world. If you did once taste the sweet of heavenly things, then let dogs scramble for bones and scraps; you have hidden manna to feed upon, the sense of God's love to look after, hopes of everlasting glory wherewith to solace your souls. If once you did taste of these everlasting riches you would do so: 1 Tim. vi. 10, 11, there are many that 'through the love of money have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.' Let the men of the world, whose portion and happiness lieth here, scramble for these things; but you, that profess yourselves children of God, follow after all the gifts and graces of the Spirit; let that be your holy covetousness, to increase in these things.

## SERMON XLII.

*Turn thou away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.—VER. 37.*

DAVID still continueth his requests to God for grace, and entitleth him to the whole work. He had prayed before that God would incline his heart, now that he would 'Turn away his eyes from beholding

worldly vanities.' In this prayer there are two branches—the one concerneth mortification, the other vivification.

*First, Turn away, then quicken, &c.* The first request is for the removing the impediments to obedience, the other for addition of new degrees of grace. These two are fitly joined, for they have a natural influence upon one another; unless we turn away our eyes from vanity, we shall soon contract a deadness of heart. Nothing causeth it so much as an inordinate liberty in carnal vanities. When our affections are alive to other things, they are dead to God; therefore the less we let loose our hearts to these things the more lively and cheerful in the work of obedience. On the other side, the more the vigour of grace is renewed, and the habits of it quickened into actual exercise, the more is sin mortified and subdued. Sin dieth, and our senses are restored to their proper use. These two requests are fitly joined. Let us consider them asunder.

1. 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' There observe—(1.) The object, *vanity*; (2.) The faculty, *mine eyes*; (3.) The act of grace desired, the *removing* of this faculty from this object.

[1.] The object, 'vanity.' Thereby is meant carnal and worldly things, worldly pleasures, worldly honour, worldly profits; all these are called vanity, because they have no solid happiness in them, and do so easily fade and perish. Thus it is said, Prov. xxxi. 30, 'Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain.' The same is true of any other transporting objects: 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,' Eccles. i. 2; and Job xv. 31, 'Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity, for vanity shall be his recompense;' Rom. viii. 20, 'The creature is made vanity.' By *vanity* there is understood the vain things of the world, which do so often deceive us as to the happiness they promise.

[2.] The faculty is mentioned, the eye. It is employed and commanded by the heart. But this enkindleth new flames there; and as it is set awork by it, so it sets the heart awork again. It is the instrument of increasing sin in us.

[3.] The act, 'turn away.' Our evil delight is too apt to fix it, and become a snare to us, till God cure both heart and sense by grace. He prayeth not from beholding it altogether, but from beholding as a snare.

*Doct.* It concerneth those that would walk with God to have their eyes turned away from worldly things. I shall give you the meaning in these propositions.

1. He that would be quickened, carried out with life and vigour in the ways of God, must first be mortified, die unto sin. The apostle there speaks of the fruit of Christ's death, being dead unto sin before he can live to God, 1 Peter ii. 24. David first maketh it his request, 'Turn away mine eyes,' then 'Quicken.' Many would fain live with Christ, but first they must learn to die unto sin. It is impossible for sin and grace to live in the same subject.

2. One great means of mortification is guarding the senses, eyes, and ears, and taste, and touch, that they may not betray the heart. I put it so general, because the man of God that is so solicitous about his eyes would not be careless of his ears and other senses. We must watch on all sides. When an assault is made on all sides, if one gate be open, it is as good as all were. The senses are the *cinqve ports* by

which sin is let out and taken in. The ingress and egress of sin is by the senses, and much of our danger lieth there; partly because there are so many objects that suit with our distempers, that do by them insinuate themselves into the soul, and therefore things long since seemingly dead will soon revive again, and recover life and strength. There are no means to keep the heart unless we keep the eye. And partly because in every creature Satan hath laid a snare for us, to steal away our hearts and affections from God. Partly because the senses are so ready to receive these objects from without to wound the heart, for they are as the heart is. If the heart be poisoned with sin, and become a servant to it, so are the senses of our bodies 'weapons of unrighteousness,' Rom. vi. 13. Objects have an impression upon them answerable to the temper and the affections of the soul, and what it desireth they pitch upon; and therefore if we let the senses wander, the heart will take fire presently; and if we do not stop evil at the beginning, but let it alone to take head, we cannot stop it when we would, nor repress the motions of it from flying abroad.

3. Above all senses the eye must be guarded.

[1.] Because it is the noblest sense, given us for high uses. There is not only a natural use to inform us of things profitable and hurtful for the outward man, but a spiritual use to set before us those objects that may stir us and raise our minds to heavenly thoughts and meditations. For by beholding the perfection of the creatures we may admire the more eminent perfection of him that made them: Ps. xix. 1, 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork;' and Ps. viii. 3, 'When I considered thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained.' David, when he walked abroad in a moon-shining night, admired the glory of the moon and stars; the moon and stars are mentioned because it was a night meditation; his heart was set awork by his eyes: Rom. i. 20, 21, 'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead,' &c. The perfections of the creatures are to draw us to God, and their imperfections and defects to drive us from themselves. The eye, as it is used, will either be a help or a snare; either it will let in the sparks of temptation, or enkindle the fire of true devotion. These are the windows which God hath placed in the top of the building, that man from thence may contemplate God's works, and take a prospect of heaven, the place of our eternal residence. *Os homini sublime dedit*—God made man with an erect countenance, not grovelling on the earth, but looking up to heaven, and viewing the glorious mansions above.

[2.] Because they have a great influence upon the heart either as to good or evil, but chiefly to evil. In this corrupt state of man, ἐκ τοῦ ὁρεῖν γίνεται τὸ ἐρᾶν<sup>1</sup>—by looking we come to liking, and are brought inordinately to affect what we do behold: Num. xv. 39, 'That ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring;' Job xxxi. 7, 'If my step hath turned out of the way, and my heart walked after mine eyes.' These are the spies of the heart—brokers to bring it and the temptation together; the eye seeth, and

<sup>1</sup> Qu. "ἐκ τοῦ ὁρεῖν γίνεται τὸ ἐρᾶν"?—ED.

then by gazing the heart lusteth, and the body acteth the transgression. It is more dangerous to see evil than to hear it; the impression is greater; the relation of anything doth not affect us so much as the sight of it. Those that hear of the fury of wars, firing of houses, ravishing of virgins, killing and wounding of men, and the like, cannot have so deep a sense of those things as they that see it. The sight of heaven works more than the report of it; as Paul, when he had a sight of these things, was in an ecstasy: the look doth immediately work on the heart. Well, then, it is dangerous to fix the eye on enticing objects, for it exciteth more than hearsay.

[3.] The eye must be looked to, because it hath been the window by which Satan hath crept in, and all manner of poison conveyed to the soul. I shall prove it—(1.) Doctrinally; (2.) Historically.

(1.) I shall give you doctrinal assertions. The eye hath been the inlet of all sin; as uncleanness: 2 Peter ii. 14, 'Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls,' &c. In the original, it is 'eyes full of the adulteress;' and the eye enkindles impure flames in the heart: Prov. vi. 25, 'Lust not after her beauty in thy heart, neither let her take thee with her eyelids.' Gazing on the beauty of women enkindleth foul flames within the breast, and we feel strange transports of soul when we give way to it. The evil heart is in its element when it is thus. Then covetousness gets into the heart by the eye: 1 John ii. 15, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' And therefore the apostle, when he maketh a division of sin, he saith, 'For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world;' because the mind is so secretly enchanted with the love of those things it beholds, and are represented to it by the external senses. And Eccles. iv. 8, 'There is no end of all his labour, neither is his eye satisfied with riches;' that insatiable thirst is enkindled in the soul by beholding the splendour of outward things; it is born and bred and fed by it, and the heart is secretly enchanted with a love to it, and therefore we must have more of it. Again drunkenness: Prov. xxiii. 31, 'Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright;' that is so as to entice the heart to crave more and more till it cometh to excess. So envy: Mat. xx. 15, 'Is thine eye evil because mine is good?' The more they see and behold the flourishing of others, the more is their evil disposition nourished.

(2.) Historical instances. Let me begin with the first transgression. It is said, Gen. iii. 6, 'And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof,' &c. She was first corrupted in her sense; gazing on the fruit with delight, that was the first sin, before eating. The devil tempted Christ when he sought to corrupt the second Adam: Mat. iv. 8, 'He taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.' He knew the best way to work was by sight, and though he could not prevail against Christ, he took that way that was most accommodate to his purpose. And afterwards what

an account have we in scripture, how many were wounded by their eyes : The devil knoweth that is the next way to work upon the heart. So Potiphar's wife : Gen. xxxix. 7, 'And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph, and she said, Lie with me.' There the mischief began ; she pleased herself with looking on the Hebrew servant. So Achan : Josh. vii. 21, 'When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels' weight, then I coveted them and took them,' &c. First saw, then coveted, then took, and then hid ; and then Israel falls before the Philistines, and he is attached by lots and brought to judgment. So Shechem and Dinah : Gen. xxxiv. 2, 'And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.' Seeing always cometh between the sense and the heart. So of Samson : Judges xvi. 1, 'Samson went to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her.' So David was ensnared by looking on Bathsheba : 2 Sam. xi. 2, 'And it came to pass in an evening tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house ; and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself ; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.' That fired his heart, and brought such mischiefs upon him. Naboth's vineyard was hard by Ahab's palace, 1 Kings xxi. 1. It was ever in his eye, and therefore he is troubled and falls sick for it. So how many may thus complain that their souls have been by their eyes betrayed ! As Jacob's sheep, by looking on the rods, brought forth young ones coloured by the rods, so our actions receive that from the objects we take in by the senses.

*Use* is to reprove those that are so careless of their senses. When they are left at random they soon prove the ruin of the soul. Solomon giveth us the reason of his folly and warping from God : Eccles. iv. 10, 'Whatsoever mine eye desired I kept not from them.' I kept not mine eyes from any toy. Those men lie under the power of sin that let the boat run with the stream and never use any restraint ; they are wafted down apace into the gulf of destruction. Those open the gates to the enemy, and give them free entertainment. 'A man that is careless of his senses is like a city without walls,' that lies open to all comers. The heart is a thoroughfare for sin and temptations. But because most men, yea, good men, have and may miscarry this way, whereby great mischiefs may come upon them, let me produce some considerations that they may see their folly that let their hearts run at random.

1. Foul sinners<sup>1</sup> are awakened which we thought long since laid asleep, when we let the object strike too freely upon the soul. Who would have thought that David's heart should have been fired by a look ? It is dangerous to dally with temptations, and to think no great harm will come of it. Stones running down hill are not easily stopped. So here ; when we yield a little to Satan's temptations, he carries us away by force ; we cannot stop when we please.

2. Evil thoughts will be begotten in us, and they make us culpable before God, though they break not out into sinful acts. Looking causeth lusting, and that is adultery before God : Mat. v. 28, 'But I say unto you, Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'sins' ?—ED.

committed adultery with her already in his heart.' Christ came to restore the law to its spiritual sense. The Pharisees did not think the law broken but by outward gross acts and actual defilement; but Christ sheweth that a wanton look is adultery; an envious look murders; the heart consenteth to sin though the body acts it not.

3. By leaving the senses without a guard, evil dispositions are impressed upon us secretly. Though we are not aware of any sensible disorder for the present, the heart groweth vain and carnal by letting loose the eye to vanity. Job doth not only take notice of his eyes when they did stir up carnal thoughts for the present, Job xxxi. 7, but saith, 'If my eyes have walked after my heart, and if my steps have turned out of the way;' he speaks twice of the disorders of his eyes. The heart may be corrupted by the eye, and therefore it concerns you to set a guard upon the senses: Prov. iv. 25, 'Let thine eyelids look on, and thine eye straight before thee.' Let us mind our business, which is to go to heaven; whereas by gazing and wandering the heart comes to be enchanted with earthly things.

4. By wandering and letting loose the eye the heart is distracted in duty. Distraction in duty is a great and usual evil, and one cause of it is the curiosity of the senses. How often do we mingle sulphur with our incense, and come to worship God having our hearts to the ends of the earth! Men let loose their eyes, and then away go their hearts; and therefore, as Solomon saith, 'Take heed to thy foot when thou enterest into the house of God,' Eccles. v. Many come hither merely to see and to be seen, and to display their vanity by their vain attire. How many are there that let loose their eyes to vanity, when they should give up their ears to the counsel of God! Some dress up themselves in such vain attire and indecent fashions to draw the eyes of others to gaze upon them; this is a great affront to God's worship. Solomon saith, Prov. xvii. 24, 'The fool's eyes are to the ends of the earth.' One cause of distraction is the curiosity of the senses; our eyes run to and fro, and then our hearts wander and rove from the business we are about. It is a strange constancy and fixedness that is spoken of the priests at Jerusalem, that when Faustus, Cornelius, and Furius, and Fabius broke into the city with their troops, and rushed into the temple ready to kill them, yet they went on with the rites of the temple, as if there had been no such thing. And strange is that other instance of the Spartan youth, that held the censor to Alexander while he offered sacrifice. A coal lighting upon his arm, he suffered it to burn there rather than by any crying out of his disturb that worship. These instances are a shame to Christians, that we do not more fix our hearts when we are in the service of God.

*Use 2.* The second use is to press us to this piece of mortification, even to 'turn away your eyes from beholding vanity.' To help you in it you must—

1. Take Job's course: Job xxxi. 1, 'I made a covenant with my eyes.' Job and his eyes were in covenant; there was a covenant between heart and eyes. Eyes, be you faithful to my soul, that there be nothing that may stir up carnal and impure thoughts, that there be no unclean objects that may fire my heart. Oh, the fool-hardiness of this age! Some will smile at this kind of discipline, to be so strict

and precise. Why, is sin grown less dangerous, or is man's nature more wise and strong, or are we better fortified against temptations? Are our hearts in a better posture than the servants of God of old? Surely not; and therefore set a watch upon your eyes, that sin break not in upon your heart.

2. Consider the vanity of the things we dote upon and take in by the eyes. So saith David, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' They are poor vain perishing things, yet they suit too well with our senses. And consider what Solomon saith of these things, 'Wilt thou set thine heart upon that which is not?' We inflame our hearts with these things, and lust putteth a lovely face upon the object that suiteth with it; but alas! what are they? Whatever they seem to the beholder, it is but vanity: Ps. xxxix. 6, 'Man flattereth himself in a vain show.' All the splendour and beauty of it is but vain: 1 Cor. vii. 31, 'The fashion of this world passeth away;' it is but an empty thing, flying bubbles. Though the world is of some use to us in our pilgrimage, yet poor things they are, as that for them we should neglect our duty to God, and grow less lively therein, or have our hearts withdrawn from God. It is the temptation that maketh them seem comely. When these alluring vanities are before our eyes, lust puts a gloss upon them. But consider what they are indeed, and in comparison of those things from which they tempt you, namely, heaven and eternal blessedness.

3. Consider the cursed issue of these things, of letting loose thy eye and heart to vanity. When you please the eye you wound the heart, and make you unfit for your great account: Eccles. xi. 9, 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: yet know that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.' Go, drench and steep thy soul in carnal delights; when thy wandering and wanton eye doth influence the lusts of thy heart, and they begin to boil up, when thou hast not denied thyself anything thy heart can wish and thine eye look upon, put in a little cool water to stop the boiling and raging of thy lust; remember that God will bring thee to judgment; though thou dost now smother thy convictions, and drown thy reason in these sensual delights, yet God will call thee to an account for all thy time, and parts, and strength, and wit, and talents intrusted with thee.

4. Pray, as David doth here, 'Turn away mine eyes.' He calleth upon God for the assistance of his grace; and Ps. cxli. 3, 'Set a watch upon the door of my lips.' He that bendeth and inclineth the heart by his grace to look after better things, must also bridle the senses. It is lust sets the eye awork, and causeth a deep complacency and delight in carnal things, and that is cured only by God's grace, Mark x. 27; therefore go and beg this mercy of him.

5. Constant watchfulness. Alas! we cannot open our eyes but we meet with a temptation, a door open for Satan to enter by; therefore we had need diligently and constantly to watch, especially when lusts are like to be stirred. Lot's wife might not look towards Sodom, but Abraham was bidden to look upon it. It was no temptation to him, but it was to her; she had her heart hankering after it, Gen. xix. 17,



compared with ver. 28. When we are in danger of a temptation, we should keep a severe and strict hand upon the senses, that they may not dwell unnecessarily upon alluring objects.

6. We have renounced the pomps and vanities of the world in baptism, and shall our eyes and hearts run after them? This is implied in our baptism, for baptism is called 'the answer of a good conscience towards God,' 1 Peter iii. 21. It is an answer to God's demand in the covenant. God puts us to the question whether we will renounce the world and the vanities and pleasures thereof. Now, when we have renounced these things, shall our eyes and our hearts run after them? shall we turn the senses against God who gave us the use of them? yea, against our souls? To shame you that have been no more faithful to your baptismal vow, consider what heathens have done. Basil relateth that Alexander, a young man, in the heat of blood and in the flower of his age, refused to see Darius's daughter. It is a shame, saith he, for him that hath conquered so many men to be conquered by a woman. It is said of some heathen that he put out his eyes that they might not be a snare to him. We have grace that we may not use such violence to our nature, but certainly the eyes of our lusts should be put out; you see our baptism engageth us. If heathens, those that never came under such an engagement to God, if they by the light of nature saw that the guarding of the senses was a help to the soul, it concerns us much more to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world.

*Secondly*, We come to the request, 'Quicken thou me in thy way.' By quickening is meant the actuation of the spiritual life; he beggeth grace to perform his duty to God with cheerfulness, liveliness, and zeal.

*Doct.* Quickening is very necessary for them that would walk in God's ways.

I shall not consider it here as a prayer to God, or as it is a blessing to be asked of God, but as it is necessary to obedience; and here I shall inquire—

1. What quickening is.
2. Show the necessity of it.

First, What quickening is. It is put for two things—(1.) It is put for regeneration or the infusion of grace; (2.) For the renewing the vigour of the life of grace, the renewed influence of God, whereby this grace is stirred up in our hearts. First, for regeneration or the infusion of grace: Eph. ii. 1, 2, 'When we were dead in trespasses and sins, yet now hath he quickened us.' Then we are quickened or made alive to God when we are new born, when there is a habitual principle of grace put into our hearts. Secondly, Quickening is put for the renewed excitation of grace, when the life that we have received is carried on to some further increase; and so it is twofold, either by way of comfort in our afflictions, or enlivening in a way of holiness.

1. Comfort in afflictions; and so it is opposed to fainting, which is occasioned by too deep a sense of present troubles, and distrust of God and the supplies of his grace. When the affliction is heavy upon us, we are like birds dead in the nest, and are so overcome that we have no spirit or courage in the service of God: Ps. cxix. 50, 'This is my

comfort in affliction, for thy word hath quickened me.' Then we are said to be quickened when he raiseth up our hearts above the trouble, by refining our suffering graces, as faith, hope, and patience. Thus he is said to 'revive the contrite one,' Isa. lvii. 15; to restore comfort to us, and to refresh us with the sense of his love.

2. There is a quickening in duty, which is opposed to deadness of spirit, which is apt to creep upon us, that is occasioned by negligence and slothfulness in the business of the spiritual life. Now, to quicken us, God exciteth his grace in us. An instrument, though never so well in tune, soon grows out of order. A key seldom turned rusts in the lock; so graces that are not kept awork lose their exercise and grow lukewarm, or else it is occasioned by carnal liberty or intermeddling with worldly things. These bring a brawn and deadness upon the heart, and the soul is depressed by the cares of this world: Luke xxi. 34, 'Now, when you are under this temper of soul, desire the Lord to quicken you by new influences of grace.'

Secondly, Let me show the necessity of this quickening, how needful it is.

1. It is needful, for without it our general standing is questionable, whether we belong to God or no: 1 Peter ii. 5, 'Ye are living stones built up into a spiritual house.' It is not enough to be a stone in Christ's building, but we must be living stones; not only members of his body, but living members. I cannot say such a one hath no grace; but when they have it not it renders their condition very questionable; a man may be living when he is not lively.

2. Without it we cannot perform our duties aright. Religion to a dead heart is a very irksome thing. When we are dead-hearted we do our duties as if we did them not in our general course of obedience. We must go to God: Ps. cxix. 88, 'Quicken me after thy loving-kindness, so shall I keep the testimonies of thy mouth.' Then we do good to good purpose indeed. It is not enough for us to pray, but we must pray with life and vigour: Ps. lxxx. 18, 'Quicken me, and I will call upon thy name.' So we should hear with life, not in a dull, careless fashion, Mat. xiii. 15.

3. All the graces that are planted in us tend to beget quickening; as faith, hope, and love; these are the graces that set us awork, and make us lively in the exercise of the spiritual life: 'Faith that works by love,' Gal. v. 6. It sets the soul awork by apprehending the sense of God's love; whereas otherwise it is but a dead faith, 1 James ii. 16. Then for love, what is the influence of that? It constrains the soul, it takes the soul along with it, 2 Cor. v. 14, and Rom. xii. 1. And then hope; it is called 'a lively hope,' 1 Peter i. 3. All grace is put into us to make us lively; not only the grace of sanctification, but the grace of justification is bestowed upon us for this end, that we may be cheerful in God's service: Heb. ix. 14, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ purge our consciences from dead works, that we may serve the living God?' Sin and guilt make us dead and heavy-hearted; but now the blood of Christ is sprinkled upon the conscience, and the sentence of death taken away, then we are made cheerful to serve the living God. Attributes are suited to the case in hand; he is called the living God, because he must be served in a living manner.

4. All the ordinances which God hath appointed are to get and increase this liveliness in us. Wherefore hath God appointed the word? Isa. lv. 3, 'Hear and your souls shall live.' It is to promote the life of grace, and that we may have new encouragement to go on in the ways of God. Moses, when he received the law, is said to receive 'the lively oracles of God,' Acts vii. 38. So the doctrine of Christ; they are all spirit and life, and serve to beget life in us. As the redemption of the world by Christ, the joys of heaven, the torments of hell, they are all quickening truths, and propounded to us to keep us in life and vigour. The Lord's Supper, why was that appointed? There we come to taste the flesh of Christ, who was given for the life of the world, John vi.; that we might sensibly exercise our faith upon Christ, that we might be more sensible of our obligations to him, that we might be the more excited in the diligent pursuit of things to come.

*Use 1.* Is reproof. David considereth the dulness and deadness of his spirit, which many do not, but go on in a cold track of duties, and never regard the frame of their hearts. It is a good sign to observe our spiritual temper, and accordingly go to God. Most observe their bodies, but very few their souls. If the body be ill at ease or out of order, they complain presently; but love waxeth cold, and their zeal for God and delight in him is abated, yet they never lay it to heart.

*Use 2.* To exhort us to get and keep this lively frame of heart.

1. Get it, pray for it. Liveliness in obedience doth depend upon God's blessing; unless he put life and keep life in our souls, all cometh to nothing. Come to God upon the account of his glory: Ps. cxliii. 11, 'Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake; for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.' His tender mercies: Ps. cxix. 156, 'Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord; quicken me according to thy judgments.' Come to him upon the account of Christ: John x. 10, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly;' and John vii. 38, 'He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' Every new act of faith draweth from Christ some increase of spiritual life.

2. Stir up yourselves: Isa. lxiv. 7, 'There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee;' 2 Tim. i. 6, 'Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands;' Ps. xlii. 5, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the helps of his countenance.' We have liveliness enough in all businesses of secular concernment. Consider what the business is that we are about. It is about our everlasting estate, whether we shall live for ever in heaven or hell; and shall we trifle here? You had life in a way of sin; worldly men are lively. How dishonourable a thing is it to serve the living God with a dead heart? A lukewarm frame is hateful to God: Rev. iii. 16, 'Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.' Take heed you do not lose quickening, and that—

[1.] By our corruption, by any heinous sin: Ps. li. 10-12 'Create

in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me ; cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me : restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.' The spirit is a tender thing. A wound in the body lets out the life-blood.

[2.] By an inordinate liberty in worldly pleasures : 1 Tim. v. 6, ' But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' Vain company, vain speeches, and the like, these things shun and avoid, but, Heb. x. 24, ' Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works ;' let us follow good examples. We grow formal and slight by imitation. Others profess religion, and yet are dead-hearted and vain, and so are we. The idolaters encouraged one another : Isa. xli. 6, 7, ' They helped every one his neighbour, and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage ; so the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smoothed with the hammer him that smote the anvil.' We should encourage one another in the way of godliness, and keep up a lively frame of heart towards God, and pray with the Psalmist in the text, ' Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.'

### SERMON XLIII.

*Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.—*

VER. 38.

IN these words observe—

1. A request, *stablish thy word unto thy servant.*

2. A motive to enforce it, *who is devoted to thy fear.* The motive is taken from the qualifications and disposition of the person who makes the request.

In the request you have—

1. The matter prayed for, *stablish thy word.*

2. The person for whom, *unto thy servant*, that is, unto me who am so.

I shall begin with the first of these, the benefit asked, ' Stablish thy word.' David, that had prayed before, ' Stablish me according to thy word,' ver. 28, now saith, ' Stablish thy word unto me.'

By the word is meant the word of promise. Now the promise of God is established when it is confirmed and made good : 2 Cor. xiii. 1, ' In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established,' that is, accounted valid and firm ; and 2 Sam. vii. 25, when he speaks of God's promises he prays, ' Stablish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.' Look, as on the one side we are said to establish the law of God when we observe it ; for so it runs, Deut. xxvii. 26, ' Cursed be he that confirmeth,' or ' establisheth not all the words of this law to do them.' The law is then confirmed when it hath its force and effect upon us ; whereas otherwise, when they observe it not, it is said to be void. That sentence is repeated by the apostle thus : Gal. iii. 10, ' Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are

written in the book of the law to do them.' Well, then, the promise is established when it is made good.

*Quest.* But why doth David pray thus, 'Stablish thy word to me,' since God's word is most certain and stable in itself, so as it cannot be more? 2 Peter i. 19, 'We have a more sure,' or 'a more stable word of prophecy,' as the word signifies. How can the word be more stable than it is?

*Ans.* I answer—It is sure in regard of God, from whom it comes, and in itself. In regard of the things propounded, it cannot be more or less stable, it cannot be fast and loose; but in regard of us, it may be more or less established. And that two ways—

1. By the inward assurance of the Spirit increasing our faith.

2. By the outward performance of what is promised.

1. By the inward assurance of the Spirit, by which our faith is increased. Great is the weakness of our faith, as appears by our fears, doubts, distrusts; so that we need to be assured more and more. We need say with tears, as he doth in the Gospel, Mark ix. 24, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief,' and to cry out with the apostles, 'Lord, increase our faith,' Luke xvii. 5. There is none believeth so but he may yet believe more. And in this sense the word is more established when we are confirmed in the belief of it, and look upon it as a sure ground for faith to rest upon.

2. By actual performance, when the promise is made good to us. Every event which falls out according to the word is a notable testimony of the truth of it, and a seal to confirm and strengthen our faith. Three ways may this be made good:—

[1.] The making good of some promises at one time strengthens our faith in expecting the like favour at another. Christ was angry with his disciples for not remembering the miracle of the loaves, when they fell into a like strait again: Mat. xvi. 9, 'Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves?' &c. We are to seek upon every difficulty; whereas former experience in the same kind should be a means of establishment to us: 2 Cor. i. 10, 'He hath delivered, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.' In teaching a child to spell, we are angry if, when we have showed him a letter once, twice, and a third time, yet when he meets with it again still he misseth; so God is angry with us when we have had experience of his word in this, that, and the other providence, yet still our doubts return upon us.

[2.] The accomplishment of one promise confirms another; for God, that keepeth touch at one time, will do so at another: 2 Tim. iv. 17, 'I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion; and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me blameless unto his heavenly kingdom.' In such a strait God failed not, and surely he that hath been true hitherto will not fail at last.

[3.] When the word is performed in part, it assureth us of the performance of the whole; it is an earnest given us of all the rest: 2 Cor. i. 10, 'For all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen.' A Christian hath a great many promises, and they are a-performing daily. God is delivering, comforting, protecting him, speaking peace to his conscience; but the greater part are yet to be

performed. Present experiences do assure us of what is to come. Thus, 'stablish thy word,' that is, make it good by the event, that I may learn to trust another time, either for the same or other promises, or accomplishment of thy whole word.

*Doct.* That it is a matter of great consequence to have the word of God established to us, or to be confirmed in a certain belief of his promises.

David asketh it here as a very necessary thing, 'Stablish thy word unto thy servant.' Give me, Lord, to look upon it as a stable and firm thing. This will appear if you consider the conveniency, necessity, utility, and profit of this establishment.

1. The conveniency and suitableness of it. It is very convenient that we should build strongly upon a strong foundation, that sure truths shall be entertained with a certain faith, and things taken as they are uttered. There is *certitudo objecti*, a certainty of the object itself; and *certitudo subjecti*, the certainty of the subject, our being persuaded of the certainty of it. The one warrants the other, and both are necessary to our comfort; that is, as the word is certain in itself, so it should be certain to us. No matter how strong the foundation be, if the building upon that foundation be weak, down it falleth. The word of God is stable in itself, but if we are not persuaded it is so, we are soon shaken with temptations. To stay a ship from being tossed upon the rocks, it is necessary the anchor-hold be good itself, and be fastened upon somewhat that is firm; therefore, Heb. vi. 18–20, the apostle speaks first of the stability of the ground, and then of the strength of the anchor. There is a firm rocky ground to build upon, the immutable promises of God; and a solid strong anchor, which is our faith and affiance. As faith without the promises is nothing but groundless and fruitless conceit, so the promises yield us no comfort without faith. 'The promises are Yea and Amen in Christ,' 2 Cor. i. 20; and then presently, 'Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ is God.' It is not sufficient that the promises be established, but we must be established upon them. They are Yea and Amen in Christ; but what is that to us? God may lose the glory of his truth, and we the comfort, if we be not established.

2. The necessity of it will appear if we consider—(1.) How natural unbelief is to us all; and (2.) How weak the faith of most is.

[1.] If we consider how natural unbelief is to us; it is a sin we suck in with our milk. When our first parents sinned against God, his word was not believed, and thereupon the sin was committed, Gen. iii.

4. The devil contradicted that which God delivered with his own mouth; his Nay prevails above God's Yea. 'Ye shall not surely die,' that was that which let in the first sin, and ever since it is very natural to us: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed lest there be an evil heart of unbelief in you, in departing from the living God.' Unbelief is the special part of the heart's wickedness; partly because we have wronged God, therefore are apt to suspect him; for men are always jealous of those whom they have wronged, and that they cannot mean well to them from whom they have received ill. We have wronged God, and therefore are suspicious of him and of his good-will to sinners. And partly because the truths of God lie cross to our lusts and carnal in-

terest, which maketh us so ready to pick quarrels with him. Ahab would not hear Micaiah, not because he prophesied false, but evil: John iii. 20, 'They will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd.' I say, such strict rules, such close and quickening truths, as God hath published in the gospel, men could wish they were not true; that there were no heaven, nor hell, nor world to come; and therefore, because it lies so cross to our lusts, our wishes gain upon our understanding and blind us, and we are not apt to believe these things. Who will close with that which makes against him? Men, that are loath the word of God should prove true, are therefore slow of heart to believe it, Luke xxiv. And partly, because ever since we were born we have been trained up to live by sense; and are affected only with the things we see, hear, and feel; and therefore are little skilled in faith, which is 'the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1, which carrieth us to things above sense to the concernments of another world. In short, then, for these reasons, because it is natural to us to live by sense, to indulge our own lusts, and to suspect those whom we have wronged, therefore unbelief of God is so rife in the world.

[2.] The necessity of establishment in the word of God will appear if we consider how weak the faith of most is. There are few that entertain the word as a sure and certain truth. There are several degrees of assent; there is conjecture, opinion, weak faith, and faith that is stronger, and that which comes up to an assurance of understanding, as the apostle calls it. There is conjecture, or a lighter inclination of the mind to the word of God, as possibly or probably true; a suspicious knowledge of things, or bare guess at them, when we go no higher than It may be so, that all this is true which God hath spoken concerning Christ and salvation. There is beyond this opinion, when the mind is more inclined to think it true, when we are so convinced of the truth of it that we are not able reasonably to contradict it; we think it true; but there is still a fear of the contrary, that it is not true, which prevails over us, and taints our practice, and weakens our affections, and withdraws them from things to come. Then beyond this there is faith, or a firm and undoubted persuasion of the truth of God's word, which also hath its latitude. There is weak faith, which hath its incident doubts. And there is beyond this, 'receiving the word in much assurance,' as the expression is, 1 Thes. i. 5. Still we may increase higher in the degree of our assent; for in this life there is never so much but there may be more, there is not so much faith but there may be more. There is something lacking to our faith, and it is not easy to grow up to the riches of the full assurance of understanding. The best have but a fluctuating doubting knowledge of spiritual truths, not a full assurance and persuasion of them. Therefore we need to ask establishment.

3. Consider the utility and profit of it. When once the word is established to us, we shall know how to live and how to die, and upon what terms to maintain comfort and holiness; whereas otherwise men live loosely and carelessly: Heb. iv. 2, 'The word profited not, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' Until the word of God be owned as a divine and infallible truth, it hath no efficacy upon us. When it is received merely by conjecture, as a possible truth, it works

but weakly. Ay! but then it profits when we receive the word of God as the word of God, as a certain truth; when the soul comes to determine, Surely these are truths in which I am deeply concerned, upon which my eternal life or death doth depend. Without this God can have no service, and we no comfort, but are at a great uncertainty of spirit. On the other side, let me tell you that all our coldness in duty, and all our boldness in sinning, it comes from unbelief.

[1.] Our coldness in duty. What is the reason, when God offereth such great things to us as the eternal enjoyment of himself, glory, comfort, and happiness as much as heart can wish, that men are so dead-hearted, lifeless, and careless in the ways of God? when our work is so good, our ways so excellent, what is the reason of all our coldness and carelessness in the profession of religion? We have not a lively sense of eternity; we do not believe God upon his word. If we did, it would put life into us. Saith the apostle, Phil. iii. 14, 'This one thing I mind, and I press towards the mark.' Why? 'For the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.' When we mind our work, seriously and above all other things, not superficially and by the by, when we can see the prize of our high calling, as to run and hold the eye upon the mark, then he presseth onward that he may not lose the garland. So when we feel the rewards of grace, when we are persuaded of them, this puts spirit into us, and encourageth us against all deadness and faintness. Ay! press onward then with a great deal of vehemeny and earnestly. So 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Be ye steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.' Here is the description of a godly man. How shall we do to keep the heart in such an earnest frame? By a sound belief of the promises; for so it follows, 'Forasmuch as you know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.' If holiness doth not flourish, there is a worm at the root, atheism and unbelief lies at the heart, and the want of such an assent to those great and glorious promises which God hath made known to us in Christ.

[2.] Our boldness in sinning. Why do men go on securely in ways of disobedience against God? Because they do not know whether the word be true, yea or nay. If a man had heaven and hell in his eye, if he were soundly persuaded of these things, certainly he would not venture the loss of heaven for a trifle; and would not upon such small temptations run the hazard of everlasting torments. You cannot drive an ass, the most stupid creature, into the fire which is burning before his eyes. So if these things were before our eyes we would not be so bold with God and so daring as we are. Temptation to sin must needs prevail with us when we have not faith; for when the temptation is strong and faith weak, where are we? A man will yield to his base lusts; for there is present profit, present pleasure, and we have no undoubted certainty of the rewards of obedience, and of the promises which are to be set against the temptation. But now, when we consider we have so great and precious promises, this will make us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; we will not easily sin against God, kick against the pricks, and run upon danger laid before our eyes: 'In vain is the snare laid in the sight of a bird.'



*Use 1.* To reprove us for looking so little after the establishment of the word. There are many that content themselves with a loose profession of the name of Christ, but are not established in a sound belief of the scriptures. Ask them why they are of this and that religion. They have been taught so, been brought up in it; and so they might have been Mahometans upon the same account that they are Christians, if they had been bred there where the name of Mahomet is of more request than the name of Christ. But then there are others that live by guess, and carry on some natural devotion; but their souls were never acquainted with the mystery of grace, never soundly established in it; they have a conjecture. There are others that can dispute for their religion, that see a reasonableness in the Christian faith, and why they should be of this opinion rather than that. Ay! but their hearts were never subdued to God. Hath the Spirit established divine truths upon thy soul, and wrought these things upon thy heart? hath it convinced thy judgment, awakened thy conscience, changed thy heart, given thee any taste of God's love in Christ, drawn thee out of the world into near and sweet communion with God? Truths are by him established to us, and represented with evidence and power, 1 Cor. ii. 4. Alas! all else we can attain to is but cold and fruitless notion, which will not warm the heart; some cursory opinions, that will not hold thy heart under the awe of God, and guide thee in the paths of holiness to eternal life; and therefore rest not in this, that you have some knowledge concerning Christ and privileges by him. But are your hearts established? have you a sense of these truths wrought in you by the Holy Ghost?

*Use 2.* It exhorteth us to use the means whereby the word may be established.

1. Chiefly observe experiences, how it is accomplished in the course of God's providence, and inward feeling of thy own heart. What answers of prayer have you when you have been wrestling with God and putting his promises in suit at the throne of grace? Every day God is fulfilling one promise or another, to train us up to look for more at his hands. That we may trust him for our inheritance and our final blessing, he first giveth us a proof of his truth in lesser matters. The more you observe the dealings of God with your own souls, and the fulfilling his word to you, the more will your heart be confirmed against atheism, and established in the belief of the divine authority of the scripture. It concerns us much to look to this, that our hearts be firmly settled against atheism, especially when such errors are abroad, and divisions in the church, and the name of God is blasphemed. Now, by these daily mercies doth God stablish his word, make it good to your souls: Ps. xviii. 30, 'The word of the Lord is a tried word.' There is more than letters and syllables; God standeth to it, it is 'a tried word.' When you have challenged him you have found the scripture fulfilled upon appeals to God and applications to the throne of grace. When you have been pleading with God; Lord, is not this thy handwriting, the promises thou hast made to thy people? the Lord hath answered this from heaven, and said, Yea, this is my promise. He hath given in an answerable promise.

2. It engageth you to dependence and assurance of faith: Ps. ix.

10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.' Whosoever hath observed God's dealings will see God is to be trusted, he may be depended upon if he hath said anything in his word—'they that know thy name,' they that have acquainted themselves with God and the course of his dispensations. The promises will not lie by as a dead stock: Ps. cxvi. 1, 2, 'God hath heard my voice and my supplications, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.' This is that which will quicken you to rejoice in God and to a holy thankfulness, when you compare his word with the effects of it, when you see how it is made good: Ps. lvi. 10, 'In God will I praise his word; in the Lord will I praise his word.' A single mercy is not so much, nor so engaging upon our hearts to thankfulness, as when observing the mercy hath been the fruit of a promise. This hath been the practice of God's saints; Joshua takes notice of it: Josh. xxiii. 14, 'Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you;' 1 Kings viii. 56, 'There hath not failed one word of all his good promises, which he hath promised by the hand of Moses his servant.' You will often find the very letter of the promise made good in the course of God's dealings, and if you would but observe his daily providence, you would be trained up in more waiting upon God for your final blessings.

Secondly, Let us come to the person for whom he prays, 'Stablish thy word;' but to whom? 'To thy servant.' Here note—

*Doct.* That particular application of general promises is necessary.

This word which he would have to be established was most likely to be a promise of sanctification; for in the former verse he had prayed for mortification and vivification, and now for sanctification. But be it any other promise, certainly that word which was made to others was likewise made to me, as if he had been specified therein by name. Thus must general truths be taken home by particular application, that they may lie the closer to our hearts. Ps. xxvii. 8, the offer of God's favour is general, 'Seek ye my face;' but the application is particular to himself, 'Lord, I will seek thy face;' David takes it as spoken to him in particular. So Ps. cxvi. 15, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints;' and then, 'Truly, Lord, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid.' The comfort concerned all God's children. The life and death of the saints is very precious in the eyes of God; he hath a particular care over them, and tells all their bones. Now, Lord, saith David, let me have the comfort of this promise; I am thy servant. So 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying,' &c., 'whereof I am chief.' This holy art should we learn of creeping under the covert of a promise, and working ourselves by faith into the comfort of it.

But rather, secondly, you may observe the character that he puts upon himself, *Thy servant*. David was a king, but at the throne of grace he styles himself God's servant, the fittest title that he could use when he prays for grace. Hence note—

*Doct.* He that is a servant of God may seek and expect grace from him.

Here I shall show—

1. Who is God's servant.

2. Why we must use this plea when we come to have promises accomplished.

1. Who is God's servant? I answer—He that dedicates himself to God's use, and he that lives under a sense and conscience of his dedication.

[1.] He that dedicates himself to God's use. We are God's servants by covenant and voluntary contract. It is true our service is due to him upon other accounts, but we enter into it by contract. It is due by virtue of creation, for he made us out of nothing; therefore we owe him all that we have, and thus all creatures were made for God's service: Ps. cxix. 91, 'They continue this day according to thine ordinances; for all are thy servants.' Heaven and earth, and sun and moon, and stars, and beasts, and every creeping thing, and every plant and herb, they all serve God according to the ends for which they were made. But especially men and angels; they were made for God's use immediately. Other things were made ultimately and terminately for God; man immediately for God, Ps. ciii. 21. The angels are his ministers, and so is man God's servant. And then by the right of redemption; we are bound to serve him as the captive was to serve the buyer; he that bought another out of slavery, all his time and strength belonged to him: 1 Cor. vi. 20, 'Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your souls and bodies.' But this shows only *de jure* what we ought to be; we ought all to be God's servants, as he created us, and redeemed us by the blood of Christ. But *de facto* none are his servants but those who resign and yield up themselves to his use: Rom. vi. 13, 'Yield up yourselves to the Lord.' God will have his right and title confirmed by our consent, and therefore he that is a servant of God one time or other hath entered into covenant with God, he hath consented to yield up himself to walk with God in a strict obedience. All that thus yield up themselves to be God's servants they do it with shame; they are ashamed they did no sooner think of their creator, in their youth, at their first coming to the use of reason, and think of him that bought them by his blood: 1 Peter iv. 3, 'For the time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles,' &c. They have too long dishonoured God, destroyed their own souls, and kept their creator out of his right. And they do it too with a sense of God's love, in the new title he hath by redemption: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constrains us,' &c.

[2.] He is one liveth under a sense and conscience of his dedication, not as his own, but God's. When you have given up yourselves to God's service, you must not walk as you list, but as your master pleaseth. Aristotle makes it the property of a servant to be one that cannot live as he would, that hath no will of his own, but hath given up himself to be commanded and directed by another, and sometimes contrary to his own inclination. They are rebels and not servants that said 'Our tongues are our own,' Ps. xii. 3. Your tongues are not your own to speak what you please, nor your hearts your own to think what you please, nor your hands your own to do what you please. You are God's servants, therefore must be wholly at his will. The angels, that

are God's ministers, when they are described, they 'do his pleasure,' Ps. ciii. 21. So your business is to do the will of God; not to please yourself, men or the flesh, but to please God, to do the will of God, without any respect to your own inclinations and worldly interests; and therefore your hearts will rise against sin upon this account, when you are tempted to do anything that is contrary to the will of God: Oh! I am not my own; these members are Christ's. You look upon everything as God's, to be employed to his service.

2. Those that would have the word to be established, why must they be servants of the Lord?

[1.] God doth not look to the work, but to the qualification of the person. God will not accept a man for one good work, one prayer; but he looks to the qualification of his person. 'The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,' Prov. xxviii. 9. How is that? Not only when it is managed in a careless fashion, when a wicked man prays wickedly. No; let him do his best; for it is said, Prov. xxi. 27, 'The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?' At best it is an abomination; God will not accept of a sacrifice at his hands; and therefore the qualification of the person is to be regarded when we pray for a blessing promised, James v. 16. There is the qualification of the prayer; it must be 'fervent, effectual;' a prayer driven with life and motion, that hath spirit and life. Ay! but it must be of 'a righteous person.' As naturalists speak of a jewel which, if put into a dead man's mouth, loseth all its virtue and efficacy, so prayer in the mouth of a wicked carnal man loseth its efficacy with God. When one that had revolted from the Romans sent gifts to the Roman general, he made him this answer, He should first return to his obedience to the state of Rome. So God saith to wicked men, first let them be God's servants, and then they shall have the blessing of his promises.

[2.] It is agreeable to the covenant, for the covenant is mutual: 'I will be your God, and you shall be my people.' All promises relate to a covenant. Now, in every covenant there is *ratio dati et accepti*—something required as well as something given, for it binds mutually; therefore if we would have God give us grace, we must yield obedience. Precepts and promises go hand in hand; and therefore they that would have promises performed, they must observe precepts, and mingle resolutions of duty with expectations of mercy. That is the covenant way of dealing with God; there must be a sincere purpose and endeavour to serve God. I am thy servant, therefore stablish thy word to me.

*Use.* To press you to become God's servants. I might bring motives both from the time past, present, and to come. (1.) From the time past. You are obliged to be so. You are his creatures; you have life, being, and all things from him. We cannot receive a small kindness from man but it doth produce respect; I am your servant. Shall a kindness from God less effect us, who made us, and gives us life, breath, and all things? We take no notice of what comes from an invisible hand. Here is the wonder, that the great God, who hath no need of us, so often provoked by us, that is of such excellent majesty, so far above us, should take notice of us. Therefore, if God made us, keeps us, and maintains us from day to day, and abaseth himself

to behold us, to look after us, this should engage us. (2.) And then from what is present. The honour that is put upon you ; it is a great advancement to be God's servant. The meanest offices about princes are accounted honourable. Jesus Christ himself as mediator he hath this title put upon him, 'My righteous servant,' Isa. liii. 11 ; and the angels they are your fellow-servants, Ps. ciii. 21 ; they are called 'ministers of God.' Likewise for the present you have free access to God : God's servants may stand in his presence, and they have liberty to ask anything they need of. The Queen of Sheba said concerning Solomon in 1 Kings x. 8, 'Happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom,' Much more may it be said concerning God's servants, blessed are those that stand in his presence, that have such free leave to hold communion with God ; to come, and have assurance of welcome whenever they come. (3.) And for the time to come. God's service will issue itself into everlasting blessedness ; God's servants have excellent wages : John xii. 26, 'If any man serve me, he shall be there where I am, and my Father will honour him.' Christ and his Father will study what honour they can put upon him. Therefore be God's servants that you may please him for the present, and comfortably wait for his everlasting blessing. Thus I have gone over the first thing, namely the request, 'Stablish thy word unto thy servant.'

*Secondly,* The motive and argument, 'Who is devoted to thy fear.'

The word may be rendered either *which*, or *who*, as relating either to *thy word* or *thy servant*.

1. Thy word ; for in the original Hebrew the posture of the verse is thus, 'Stablish to thy servant thy word, which is to the fearing of thee ;' that is, given that thou mayest be feared, there being in the word of God the greatest arguments and inducements to fear and reverence and obey him. The word of God was appointed to this use, to plant the fear of God in our hearts, and to increase our reverence of God. Not that we may play the wanton with promises, and feed our lusts with them. I rather take our own translation as more accommodate, and it hath such a sense as that, Ps. cix. 4, 'But I give myself unto prayer.' In the original it is, 'But I prayer ;' and 'Stablish thy word to thy servant, who is to thy fear.' Our translators add, to make the sense more full, 'addicted,' 'devoted to thy fear,' that is, that makes it his business, care, and desire to stand in the fear of God.

2. Now this is added as a true note and description of God's servants, as being a main thing in religion : Ps. exi. 10, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,' the first in point of order, and it is the first thing when we begin to be wise, to think of God, to have awful thoughts of God ; it is a chief point of wisdom, the great thing that makes us wise to salvation. And it is added as an argument of prayer : Neh. i. 11, 'O Lord, let thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name.' The more any is given to the fear of God, the more assurance they have of God's love, and readiness to hear them at the throne of grace. The point is this—

*Doct.* That man is indeed God's servant who is devoted to his fear.

There may be weaknesses and failings, but for the main he is swayed by the fear of God.

1. What it is to fear God.

2. Why this is a sure note of God's servant, because it removes all the lets of obedience.

1. What it is to fear God. There is a servile and a filial fear; a fear of wrath, which the worst may have : James ii. 19, 'The devils believe and tremble;' and a fear of offending, which the best must have : Prov. xxviii. 14, 'Blessed is he that feareth alway;' a reverent disposition of heart towards God as our sovereign lord and master, yea, as our father in Jesus Christ.

For the first of these:—

[1.] A fear of wrath. Every fear of wrath is not sinful; it is a duty rather than a sin. All God's children are bound to have a tender sense of God's wrath or displeasure against sin, to make them awful and serious in the spiritual life; as in Heb. xii. 27, 'Let us serve God with reverence and godly fear.' Mark, upon that account and consideration, as he is 'a consuming fire;' that should have an influence upon our godly fear; and Mat. x. 28, 'Fear not them that can but kill the body, but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.' The words do not only contain a description of the person who ought to be feared, but the ground and reason why he is to be feared; and therefore it is not simply the fear of wrath that is sinful, but it is the servility and slavishness of it. Now, what is the servility and slavishness of the fear of wrath? Partly when our own smart and terror is feared more than the displeasing of God; and they have a mind to sin but are afraid of hell; and it is fear accompanied with hatred. Servile fear, though it keep us from some sins, as a wolf may be scared from the prey, yet keeps its devouring nature. It is accompanied with hatred of God: all that fear God they hate him; and indeed they could wish there were no God, none to call them to account; they could wish he were not so just and holy as he is. And so here lies the evil of it, not so much fear of wrath, for that is a grace rightly conversant about its object, but as it tends to this hatred of God. And partly too servility lies in this, as it makes us shy of God, and run away from him rather than draw near to him, as Adam ran into the bushes to hide himself. Holy fear is an awe of God upon the soul, but that keeps us in a holy communion with him: 'I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me;' but that fear which makes us fly from God is slavish. And partly as it hath torment and perplexity in it, and so hindereth us in God's service: 'Fear hath torment in it.' The fear of wrath, that is a duty; but slavish fear is such a fear of wrath which makes us hate God and shun his presence, and afraid more of wronging ourselves than wronging of God; and such a fear that hath torment and perplexity in it, that cannot serve God so cheerfully.

[2.] There is a filial fear, a fear of reverence. This fear of God was in Christ as mediator, Isa. xi. 1, 2. Among other graces there reckoned up which do belong to 'Jehovah the branch,' to Christ Jesus, this is one, 'The fear of the Lord.' Christ as man had a reverent affection to his Father whom he served, and this fear it continueth to all eternity in the blessed spirits that are in heaven. The saints and angels have this kind of fear, a dread of the holy God, and a reverent and awful respect

to his majesty. It is an essential respect which passeth between the creature and the creator, and can never be abolished. Now, this fear of reverence consisteth in a high esteem of God, of his majesty, glory, power, and in the sense and continual thoughts of his presence; and then a loathness to sin against God, or to offend in his sight, to do anything that is unseemly when God is a looker-on. What! can a man sin freely that lives in the sight of the holy God, when he hath a deep sense of his excellency imprinted on his heart? This is that fear which is the note of God's servants.

2. This must needs be the note of God's servants, because it is the great principle that both hindereth us from sin and quickeneth us to duty. The fear of God is one of the radical and essential graces which belong to a Christian; it is a mighty restraint from sin. The beasts were made to serve man, and how are they held in subjection and obedience to man? 'The dread of you,' saith God, 'shall be upon every beast of the earth,' Gen. ix. 2. So we are made for the service of God. Now, how are we kept in subjection to God? When the fear of God is upon our heart, that will not suffer us freely to do anything that is displeasing to God: Exod. xx. 20, 'God is come to prove you, that his fear may be before your faces, that you sin not.' It is a great remedy against all temptation of gain, and worldly profit, and temporal convenience. Look, as that man that had a fear of the king upon his heart: 2 Sam. xviii. 12, 'Why didst thou not smite him to the ground?' saith Joab; and the man answered, 'Though I should receive a thousand shekels, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son;' just such a fear hath a child of God of his heavenly king: No; though I should have never so much offered me to tempt me from my duty; no, I dare not, the Lord hath charged me to the contrary. Or, as when the Rechabites were tempted to drink wine, pots were brought before them to inflame their appetite: No; we dare not. These passages express the workings of heart in one that fears God; though temptation be present, and never so much convenience thereby, yet how can they do this wickedness and sin against God?

*Use.* It informeth us who are God's servants; those that have most of this fear of God planted in their hearts: Neh. vii. 2, 'He was a faithful man, and feared God above many.' And then that they express it in their conversation. God will not take it planted in our hearts, if we do not obey him in those things that are contrary to our interests and natural affections. When God tried Abraham that was to offer his Isaac, Gen. xxii., 'Now I know that thou fearest me, since thou hast not withheld thine only son,' &c. Why? was Abraham unknown to God before that time? As Peter told Christ, 'Lord, thou knowest all things.' Cannot God see the inward springs and motions of our souls, and what affections are there? Could not God tell what was in Abraham? But now, I acknowledge. For God will not acknowledge it in this sense until we express it. They are the true servants of God that have his fear planted in their hearts, and express it upon all occasions.

## SERMON XLIV.

*Turn away my reproach which I fear ; for thy judgments are good.*—VER. 39.

IN these words you have—

1. A request, *take away my reproach.*

2. A reason to enforce it, *for thy judgments are good.*

*First*, For the request, ‘Turn away,’ roll from upon me ; so it signifies. He was clothed with reproach ; now roll from me my reproach. Some think he means God’s condemnatory sentence, which would turn to his reproach, or some remarkable rebuke from God because of his sin. Rather, I think, the calumnies of his enemies ; and he calls it ‘*my reproach*,’ either as deserved by himself, or as personally lighted upon him, the reproach which was like to be his lot and portion in the world through the malice of his enemies : ‘The reproach which I fear,’ that is, which I have cause to expect, and am sensible of the sad consequences of.

*Secondly*, For the reason by which this is enforced, ‘For thy judgments are good.’ There are different opinions about the formality of this argument. Some take the reason thus : Let me not suffer reproach for adhering to thy word, thy word which is so good. But David doth not speak here of suffering reproach for righteousness’ sake, but such reproach as was likely to befall him because of his own infirmities and failings. Reproaches for righteousness’ sake are to be rejoiced in. But he saith, ‘I fear ;’ and therefore I suppose this doth not hit the reason, neither the other sense, Why should I be looked upon as an evil-doer as long as I keep thy law and observe thy statutes ? others judge badly of me, but I appeal to thy good judgment. Others, by judgments, understand God’s dealings : Thou dost not deal with men according to their desert ; thy dispensations are kind and gracious. Rather thus : by judgments are meant the ways, statutes, and ordinances of God, called judgments, because all our words, works, thoughts, are to be judged according to the sentence of the word. Now these, it is pity they should suffer in my reproach and ignominy ; this is that I fear more than anything else that can happen to me. I think the reason will better run thus : Lord, there is in thy law, word, covenant, many promises to encourage thy people, and therefore rules to provide for the due honour and credit of thy people. Take it so.

I shall, with respect to the necessities of the people of God, insist a little upon the former clause, and observe this point :—

That reproaches are a usual, but yet a great and grievous, affliction to the children of God. They are usual, for David saith, ‘*my reproach*.’ Even this holy man could not escape the censures of his enemies ; and they are grievous, for he saith, ‘which I fear.’

*First*, That they are usual. David often complains of it in this psalm, and mentions it as one great evil to God, ver. 22, ‘Remove from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept thy testimonies ;’ and again, ver. 42, ‘So shall I have wherewith to answer him that re-



proacheth me, for I trust in thy word ;' and ver. 69, ' The proud have forged a lie against me.' God may let loose a barking Shimei upon a holy David, and therefore doth he so often complain of reproaches. So elsewhere : Ps. xxxi. 13, ' For I have heard the slander of many.' Sundry sorts of persons made him their butt, upon which they spent and let fly the arrows of censure and reproach : Ps. xxxv. 15, ' The abjects gathered themselves together against me, they did tear me, and ceased not.' *Tear* me, meaning in his name ; that was rent and torn pieces with their reproaches ; the *abjects* gathered themselves, &c. Base dust will many times be flying in the faces of the children of God ; and Jeremiah tells us, ' I have heard the defaming of many ;' and Job and other servants of God, yea, our Lord himself was reviled ; he ' endured the contradiction of sinners,' many a bitter reproach, even of the highest crimes against either table. There were objected to him blasphemy and sedition, the highest crime against the first, and the highest crime against the second table. The Son of God, that was so meek, innocent, just, and did so much good in every place, yet he met with odious aspersions ; therefore we cannot say that they are faulty because they are aspersed, since this hath been the portion of the most eminent godly persons. And after that we are told, Ps. lxiv. 3, 4, ' They whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect.' Perfection meets with envy, and envy vents itself by detraction ; and when men cannot reach the height of others by a holy imitation, then by odious imputations they seek to make them as vile, low, and base as themselves. Thus it is a usual affliction.

Secondly, It is a grievous affliction ; for the man of God, that was after God's own heart, he saith, ' The reproach which I so feared.' It is called persecution, Gal. iv. 29 ; compare with Gen. xxi. 9, and you shall see it was mocking and reproach. The scourge of the tongue is one of the basest persecutions that the children of God are tried withal ; and they are called ' cruel mockings,' Heb. xi. 36. There is as much cruelty and as deep a wound many times made by the tongue of reproach as by the fist of wickedness.

To confirm it by reasons. Reproach must needs be grievous, because it is against nature, and against grace.

1. It is against nature. Contempt is a heavy thing to bear, and as honour is more grateful to some persons, so reproach is more grievous than many ordinary crosses. Many would lose their goods cheerfully, yet are grieved with the loss of their names. According to the constitution and frame of men's spirits so they are affected, some with shame more than with fear. There seems to be excellency and gallantry in sufferings which are honourable, and many can bear that ; but the best spirits are deeply affected with shame, and disgraceful punishment is more dreadful than a painful one. Jesus Christ, that had all the innocent affections of human nature, and upon occasion showed them, he took notice of mockings and reproaches : Ps. xxii. 7, ' All they that see me laugh me to scorn ; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head.' A good name is more precious to some than life ; and possibly that may be the reason why these two are coupled together, Eccles. vii. 1, ' A good name is better than precious ointment ; and the day

of death than the day of one's birth.' The coupling of these two sentences together seems to intimate this, that men had rather die than lose their names. If a man die, his memory may be fragrant, he may leave his name behind him; but it is more hateful to have their names and credit mangled than their flesh with sharp swords. Now it is grievous to nature; there is somewhat of corruption in it. Now God knows how to strike in the right vein. The godly are not so mortified to their credit in the world many times, when they are mortified to other interests. And therefore God would try them in this way, and exercise them, that he may humble them, and fit them more for his own use. All that I have spoken is but to show it is a thing grievous to nature.

2. It must needs be grievous because grace concurs; as the flood was the more violent, and did overspread the world, when not only the mouth of the great deep was opened below, but the windows of heaven above; then the floods did swell, and overspread the whole world. I bring it to this purpose; when the windows of heaven are opened above, when grace looks upon it as an affliction as well as nature, then the afflictions must needs be the more grievous. Now certainly grace concurs to the sense of our affliction, for next to a good conscience there is not a greater blessing than a good name holily got. You may observe, usually he that is prodigal of his credit certainly will not be very tender of his conscience. Grace teacheth us to value a good name, partly because it is God's gift, a blessing adopted and taken into the covenant, as other such like blessings are. Promises are frequent, especially in the Old Testament, where heaven is sparingly mentioned. A good name is promised as 'the reward of the righteous, and the name of the wicked shall rot;' it is threatened as a punishment of the wicked; for a good name is a shadow of eternity. When a man dies, his name he leaves behind him, which is a pledge of our living after death. Therefore the Old Testament abounds with promises of this kind: he leaves a good name behind him, as spices when broken and dissolved leave an excellent scent. And partly too because grace gives us a right judgment of all things. Now, it is represented in scripture as better than riches, Prov. xxii. 1. It is better, as in other respects, so in this; it is a motive more pure and sublime than wealth, and in the operations of it it comes next to grace. A dreggy soul is for that which is more base, but grace teacheth us to value things. So Eccles. vii. 1, 'A good name is better than precious ointment.' Aromatical ointments are things of great use and esteem among the Jews; they are counted a chief part of their treasures: and so a good name is better than precious ointment; that is, it is better than other riches, for this was a great part of their riches. And partly too another reason why grace teacheth us to prize it, because of the great inconveniences which attend the loss of a good name, and the misrepresentation of the people of God to the world. The glory of God is much interested in the credit of his servants. When they pollute and shame themselves, the Lord is polluted in them: Ezek. xiii. 19, 'Will they pollute me among my people;' and Jer. xxxiv. 16, 'Ye have polluted my name.' Christ, that will hereafter be admired in his saints, will now be glorified in them. The

shame of our miscarriages, real or supposed, redounds to God and religion itself. And therefore, when people are possessed and filled with prejudices against religious persons, they are possessed and filled with prejudices against the will of God and the unquestionable interests of Christ Jesus; and the world, that hates God, Christ, and religion, will presently say, These are your professors, and this is your profession! Therefore, since the credit of religion lieth much in it, grace teacheth us to value it. Besides, too, their safety lies in it; for by defaming the worshippers of Christ they make way for greater persecutions; and Satan is usually first a liar, and then a murderer, John viii. 44; and when their slanders abound, troubles will not long be kept out. As heretofore they invested the primitive Christians with bears' skins, and then baited them as bears, so they represent them to the world as a vile and infamous sort of men, and then the persecution is the better countenanced. First they smite with the tongue, and then with the fist of wickedness; and therefore their safety lies very much in this. And as their safety, so grace teacheth us to value it upon other accounts—their usefulness. Nature desires a good name, but it is for their own conveniences. But the children of God, if they desire a good name, it is to honour God; and that is the difference between vainglory or a desire of the good opinion of others. If it terminate in self-respects, it is vainglory; but if the heart be pure and right in order to God, then it comes from grace. A blemished instrument will be of little use. Most would refuse to take their meat from a leprous hand. It is Satan's policy, when he cannot discourage instruments from the work of God, then he seeks to blemish them and blast them. The apostle tells us that those which are called to public office, they should be very careful of their credit, that they may promote their work; for he puts down this as one of their qualifications: 1 Tim. iii. 7, 'He must have a good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.' Interpreters differ a little how *διαβόλος*, which we translate *devil*, is to be interpreted. Either it signifies *devil* or *slanderer*; both senses are good; lest he fall into the snare of the devil, or the snare of the slanderer. The devil hath his spies that watch over us, and they have set their snares, and watch for your halting, that so the service may be blemished, and the gospel obstructed and hindered. Well, then, grace prizeth a good name because of the consequences, and because the Lord's honour and our safety and service are concerned in it.

Use 1. First, Here is advice to the person reproached. O Christians! acknowledge God in the affliction, if this be your lot and portion. David goes to God to stop it there; it is best stopped with God: 'Turn away my reproach.' It is a great and grievous affliction, but in all things God hath an aim. Look, what is said of afflictions in general may be applied to this particular of reproaches. Now what is God's aim and end in afflictions? In general, 'to try, purge, and make white,' Dan. xi. 35; or, as it is Deut. viii. 16, 'To humble thee, and prove thee, and do thee good at the latter end.' Let us take that method; here is God's end:—

First, To humble thee. Carnal men may shoot at rovers, but many times we find ourselves pricked at heart. Slanders may revive the

sense of guilt. They may intend harm, but you should receive good by this as by every affliction. Plutarch, in his excellent treatise of profiting by a man's enemies, illustrates it by this comparison of Jason, who had an imposthume let out by the dart of his enemy. They may fling darts at random, and intend harm, but you shall get good by it. Surely there is some special cause when the Lord permits this, when volleys of reproaches shall follow one after another; therefore he suffers others to judge you, to awaken you to self-judging. Mind this, and you will be no losers by reproaches. Well, enter into your own hearts, search them thoroughly; see what it is God aims at, whether there be any way of wickedness in you that hitherto you have not discovered; and when you come to see this sink of sin, then your enemies do but help to humble you. Many times the voice of a slanderer may do that which the voice of a preacher cannot do. And the truth is, there is such a wantonness, such a presumptuous headiness in the professors of religion, that the word cannot reclaim them, they are so radicated in certain sins; and therefore God will follow you with sharp reproaches of his enemies, and doth at this time, to call you to a more serious judging yourselves, to see your factious headiness, which certainly doth predominate among God's professing people.

There are many sins to which this sharp kind of affliction is proper, and therefore God gives out this grievous dispensation to lay open his people to bitter reproaches and slanders. I will tell you some of the sins. My business is not now to state what is the great sin that God is judging among his people, but to help every one in particular to look to ourselves, for that I do not conceive to be so fit to be spoken here.

1. Pride. There is a twofold pride—pride in mind, which is called self-conceit, and pride in affections, which is called vainglory. Now there is no such effectual cure as reproaches for either of these.

[1.] To speak of the pride in mind, self-conceit. We are very apt to be puffed up for our doing and suffering for God—poor empty bladders are soon puffed up—and think ourselves somebody, if there be but a little self-denial; as Peter said, 'Master, we have left all and followed thee.' He was conceited of what he had left for Christ. What had he left? A net, a fisher-boat; it was a great *all* indeed! Mat. xix. 27. We are easily puffed up if we suffer a little for God, and the Lord intrencheth us in our worldly conveniences, for self-conceit may grow out of self-denial. Too often we find it so. Pride is a sin that grows out of mortification of other sins; it lives in us while we live in the body; therefore, 1 John ii. 16, it is called 'pride of life.' And some compare it to a shirt; that garment is last put off. It is the most inward and nearest to the soul, and out of the conquest of other sins there ariseth pride. Now, if we have been too self-conceited, the Lord will humble us, either by permitting us to fall into such scandals as may remember us of our frailty, and what unworthy weak creatures we are in ourselves; sometimes by taking off the restraints of his grace and of his Spirit, and permitting us to fall. Austin is bold in saying it is profitable for proud men to fall sometimes into open sin, that they may know and understand themselves.

He speaks it upon the occasion of Peter, when he was boasting of his own strength, 'Though all men leave thee, yet will not I.' How foully did he fall! Ay! but at other times God useth a more merciful dispensation, for he doth not let his people fall into those grievous falls but upon great provocation. But usually at other times he lets loose the tongues of virulent men to lessen us in our own opinion and in the opinion of the world. Now, how innocent soever we be of the crimes charged upon us, yet in all these cases we must look upward and inward. Upward; this is not without God; he is at the end of causes; he could blast these tongues, and stay and stop them at his pleasure; the Lord can 'keep us from the strife of tongues,' Ps. xxxi. 20. But now, when he permits this, his hand must be owned; look upward: Micah vii. 9, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.' At such a time God spits in the faces of his people, and puts us to shame; and therefore we should look upward and see the hand of God in all this. And look inward; there you will see such a sink of sin as deserves this and much more; and therefore a sense of our sinfulness in other things should make us more submissive to the Lord's correcting hand. We must see the hand of God; for if we do not look to that we will be drawn to sin, into reviling for reviling, and exasperation for exasperation. Many times our graces do us as much hurt as our sins. Self-conceit the Lord will mortify one way or other.

[2.] For vainglory, the other sort of pride, valuing esteem too much, and our credit in the world, and pleasing ourselves in the opinion others have of us. We would usurp God's throne and reign in the hearts of men, therefore we are so touchy. Having set a high value upon ourselves, we are troubled when others will not come up to our price. Pride is one of the oldest enemies that ever God had; it was born in heaven in the breasts of the fallen angels, but God tumbled them presently out of heaven, as soon as pride got into the heart. Now, when his children harbour it, the Lord hath a quarrel with them; and therefore, for giving entertainment to pride, he will lay us low enough: 2 Cor. xii. 7, 'Lest I should be exalted above measure, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me.' There is a great deal of do what this thorn in the flesh is. Some will have it to be some trouble or sickness. Most probably so, but it takes in many afflictive evils; for, ver. 10, he mentioneth reproaches. Paul was too apt to be proud. The Lord made him an eminent instrument; by his faith he had abundance of revelations. But God will prick the bladder; he doth it with thorns; and he calls it his infirmity, necessity, reproach. Infirmity, by that I mean some reigning sickness. But reproach was one ingredient. Now, lest we should be puffed up by vain conceit, the Lord humbles us with infirmities, necessities, reproaches.

2. Another sin for which God humbles us is careless walking. When we are negligent, and do not take notice of the carnality that grows upon us, and the fleshly frame and temper of heart which breaks out into our lives, the Lord suffers others to reproach; then they gather up our filth, that we may see what cause we have to take our ways to heart. Every man that would live strictly had need either of faithful

friends or watchful enemies ; either faithful friends to admonish him, or watchful enemies to censure him ; they show us the spots in our garments that are to be washed off. Many times a friend is blinded with love, and grows as partial to us as we are to ourselves, will suffer sin upon us and not tell us of it ; then the Lord sets spies upon us to watch for our halting, Jer. xx. 10 ; and therefore we need go to God and pray : Ps. xxvii. 11, ‘ Lord, lead me in a plain path because of my observers.’ They lie in wait and seek to take us tripping in aught they can. We can no more be without watchful enemies than without faithful friends. How ignorant should a man be of himself if others did not put him in mind sometimes of his failings ! Therefore God makes use of virulent persons in the world as a rod to thrash the dust out of our garments.

3. To humble us for our censuring. For if we have not been so tender of others’ credit, the Lord makes us see the bitterness of the affliction in our own case, by giving us the like measure that we have meted unto others, Mat. vii. 1, 2, that is, we shall find others as hardly think of us as we have of them. Good thoughts and speeches of other men are the best preservative of our own good names. God will take care of them that are careful not to judge and censure. And therefore it is no great matter whether the report be true or false ; but a Christian is to examine, Have not we drawn it upon ourselves by slanderous others ? for God usually payeth us home in our own coin. He that is much given to censuring seldom or never escapes great censures himself. It is said in the Psalms, ‘ Let his own words grieve him,’ that is, fall upon him. How do our own words fall upon us ? Why, the Lord punisheth us for our censuring of others. Oh ! then, humble thyself before God for the reproaches thou hast cast upon others : Eccles. vii. 21, ‘ Take no heed to all the words spoken against thee, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee,’ that is, speaking evil against thee. Hard sayings and speeches of others against us may put us in mind of God’s just hand, of measuring to us as we have measured unto others ; and therefore we should be the more patient if they wrong us ; it is but in the like kind that we have wronged others. God will humble us for our censuring, which is so natural and rife, especially with younger, weak, and more unmortified persons.

Secondly, The Lord doth it, as to humble us, so to try us.

1. The first thing he will try in you by such a grievous affliction and such volleys of reproaches is your faith, when all the world is set to condemn you. What faith ?

[1.] Our faith in the great day of accounts, that is one great object of faith ; and when the world is set to condemn us, our faith is tried, to see if we can rest with the vindication we shall have in the day of our Lord. So much you may see, 1 Cor. iv. 3-5, ‘ But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness ; and then shall every man have praise of God.’ Every man that deserves it, and is qualified for it, shall have praise with God. *Ἐλάχιστον*, it was a very small thing to be judged of man’s day, because he expected God’s day for the clearing of all things here in the world. Sin and error often

get the major vote. *Tollite impios* was the cry of the rabble against Christians. If there was any trouble it was for the Christians' sake. Take away the ungodly, meaning the Christians, because they denied the heathen gods. Now, what was their comfort? The day of the manifestation of all things. So when we are looked upon as the pests of mankind, yet when we can comfort ourselves, there will come a day of the manifestation of the sons of God, that is enough, the great day of judgment is at hand, so this will set all things right again.

[2.] To try our faith in more particular promises. The Lord hath promised to provide for the health and credit of his people; so far he hath promised for their safety, and their daily bread for their maintenance, and any earthly blessing that is good for us. Now the Lord will see if we can trust him with our credit as well as for other things: Ps. cxix. 42, 'So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me; for I trust in thy word.' I say, the Lord hath in his covenant undertaken to preserve a Christian in all his interests and concerns, so far as shall be for his glory and our good, and so far we receive it. And a Christian, when he gives up himself to God, gives up everything he hath to God in a way of consecration to God's use. God is the guardian of my body and soul; I give up my estate and life that he may watch over me night and day, and I give up my name and credit: Ps. xxxi. 20, 'Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues;' that the Lord may take a charge of our names as well as our persons and estates. Now, the Lord requires a trust in us according to the extent of the covenant, that is to say, a waiting, a confidence, that our lives are not in man's power, that he can turn the hearts of men, and give you favour in their eyes, when it is for his glory and your good: Ps. xxxvii. 5-7, 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.' There is the trust that is required. Oh! many times we seem to lose our estimation amongst men, and to be buried under calumnies and reproaches; but it will not be long. Your person and cause may be obscured, it may have a winter night of trouble; but a morning of resurrection, both of persons and names, will come; it will be brought forth as the noon-day. The Lord is able to do this; the integrity of your hearts will be made known, and you will be absolved by God. Our Lord Jesus was a pattern to us of this. Christ, when foul crimes were laid to his charge by his slanderers—they had charged him with compliance with Satan, with blasphemy and sedition—what doth he do? The apostle will tell you: 1 Peter ii. 23, 'He committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.' There is the faith of Christ; and therefore God will try this faith, whether we can with confidence and willingness deliver ourselves to the will of our heavenly Father and righteous Judge; whether we can resign up ourselves to him, to be disgraced or honoured as he shall think fit. When we commit and submit, perfectly resign up ourselves to the will of God, in confidence of his righteousness and faithfulness in Christ, then we behave ourselves as Christians.

[3.] God will try our faith in the eternal recompenses, whether we do so believe the glory of heaven, the glory which shall be revealed in us in the other world, that we can be contented to be humbled and

prepared for it by the reproaches of the present world: Mat. v. 11, 12, 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.' Why? 'Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' Oh! it is enough we shall have glory hereafter. Your time is now to be tried with dishonour, reproach, contempt, but hereafter to be honoured. And the heirs of promise are described to be those who, 'by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.' A Christian is not destitute of natural affections; he prizeth honour, but he prizeth it at the lowest rate; he looks for the glory, honour, and immortality that is in the other world, not in the fleshly vain respects of this world; and therefore now we are tried whether it be enough to us that we shall have glory hereafter, and here we are willing to take what the world will afford us. Thus God will try our faith.

2. God will try our mortification and deadness to worldly credit. The heart is never sincere with God until it be so. Hypocrites are proud, self-conceited, they must be honoured among men. Now this is such an evil spirit, that Christ makes it incapable of faith; for, John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, that seek for glory one of another?' when we must have glory one from another, else our hearts are exceedingly troubled. Oh! it shows we are not so dead, at least as we ought to be, to credit in the world, to have the glory that comes from God only, his image implanted in us, the testimony of his love to our souls all clear between God and our souls; and he is not upright whose peace and tranquillity of spirit doth depend upon man's speeches and judgment rather than God's, 'For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth,' 2 Cor. x. 18. Men cannot defend thee if God will condemn thee; they cannot condemn thee if God acquits thee. They that run a race regard not what the standers-by say, but the *agonothetes*, the great judge of the sports, he that was to give them the garland, what he would determine and decide in the case. So it is in your running, working, and striving; no matter what the world saith; their applause will not shelter you from God's judgment, nor will their condemnations or reproach expose you to God's wrath. Look to the Judge of all things; and we should be content with that, 'He is approved whom the Lord approves;' 2 Cor. i. 12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.' What is the great matter of joy to him? The good word of men? No; he hath studied to approve himself to God, therefore should not be troubled overmuch. Peace of conscience is better than the applause of the world; certainly a man is not fit to have so divine a plant grow in his soul till he come to live in his privilege. He lives not to opinion, but lives to God's approbation.

3. Another thing God will try is our patience. We should prevent reproaches as much as we can, but by a holy conversation may bear them when we cannot avoid them: Ps. cix. 4, 'For my love they are my adversaries, but I give myself unto prayer.' That was David's exercise, the revenge he took upon them, to pray to God for them. The Lord will try whether we have this meek humble patience, 2 Sam. xvi. 7. When Shimei went about railing to the peril of his



life, 'Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial,' and reproached him for being treacherous to the house of Saul, and Abishai would have taken away his head; 'No,' saith David, 'let him alone; God hath bid him curse.' A mad dog that biteth another makes him as mad as himself. Now it should not be so with Christians; if they bark or bite at us, yet we should possess our souls with patience. It is a time of reproach and rebuke, a time wherein God will humble his people; therefore we should expostulate the case with the Lord, and humble ourselves before him, and see what is the matter; God hath disposed this by his providence. We would revenge ourselves of those that reproach us if it were in our power; but David had meekness and patience that would not permit it. God will discover the patience of his servants, say the apostles: 1 Cor. iv. 13, 'Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; though we are set forth as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day;' the word is, the sweepings of the city, that are fit to be carried out of the city, to be swept away, unfit to live among men in civil societies. Christians, there must be a season for the trial of our graces. Now God makes this season for the trial of patience. Such a time as this discovers the strength of grace.

4. Another thing God would have to be tried is our uprightness, whether we can hold on our way, 'through good report and bad report, in honour and dishonour,' as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. vi. 8; still approve ourselves faithful servants of Christ. If you search into the records of time, you shall find many have been discouraged in Christianity because of reproaches that have been cast upon them, for the devil works much upon stomach and spleen. When Tertullian was reproached by certain priests at Rome, he turned Montanist. Now God will try our uprightness. Look, as the moon shines and holds on her course though the dogs bark, so we should hold on our course. Let men talk their pleasure, yet we should abide faithful with God: Ps. cxix. 22, 'Remove from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept thy testimonies.' David was not unsettled by contempt and reproach, but still kept God's testimonies and adhered to his ways. Some can be religious no longer than they can be so with honour. When reproaches come, when their secular interests are in danger, then they fall off, questioning the ways of God, and unsettling their hearts; that is, to take a revenge upon God himself. Hypocrites take pet, like servants that run away when their master strikes them; but a good servant will take a buffet patiently, and go about his work still. So when the Lord buffets us by wicked men, still we must follow our work, and go on with God.

Thirdly, The Lord doth it to do you good, to make you better. Reproaches are like soap, that seems to defile the linen, it cleanseth. There is nothing so bad but we may make a good use of it, and a Christian may gain some advantage by it. Or as dung, which seems to stain the grass, but it makes the ground fruitful, and the grass spring up with a fresher verdure. So reproaches are a necessary help to make us more humble, heavenly—to make us walk with a holy awe. This holy revenge we should take upon our enemies, to make us more strict and watchful. The way is, not to contend for esteem, but

to grow better, more serious, more faithful in our lives; for this is the way, *φίμωδν*, to muzzle the mouths of adversaries, as the mouth of a dog or wild beast is, 1 Peter ii. 15. Passionate returns do but increase sin, but a holy conversation will silence all; and therefore you should confute calumnies, you bind up their mouths thereby. In short, an innocent, meek, unblamable, profitable life will certainly have its due esteem in the consciences of men, do what men can. Therefore, do you go on, and be you the more strict, and then these reproaches will do you good. This is the first use: advice to us what to do in case we be reproached.

*Use 2.* To those that either devise or receive the reproach: both are very faulty and sinful.

1. First, You that devise reproaches.

[1.] You hazard the repute of your own sincerity: James i. 16, 'If a man seems to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, that man's religion is in vain.' Such men, that are seldom at home, seldom look to the state of their own hearts. Alas! if they were acquainted with themselves, or their own failings, they would see themselves the worst people in the world. Paul can see himself worse than Judas—I am 'the chief of sinners'—because he hath a greater feeling of his own case. Now, he that is much in judging is seldom within. If a man had a catalogue of his own faults, he would not be so ready to blast others, but say, 'I am the chief of sinners.' Hypocrites have nothing in them but empty shows and appearances. It is a cheap zeal to let fly (and yet this is the religion of a great many) at the miscarriages and faults of others. No; you should rather study your own.

[2.] You rob them of a most precious treasure; for if that of Solomon be true, Prov. xxii. 1, 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches;' they are the worst thieves that rob a man of his good name. A thief that pilfers and steals anything from you, he is ashamed when found; and should not you be ashamed, that rob a man of a more excellent treasure?

[3.] You offend God, and draw public hatred upon yourselves; for censurers are always looked upon as the pests of the world. It is the devil's business, his proper work; he is called 'the accuser of the brethren,' Rev. xii. 10. The devil doth not commit adultery, break the Sabbath, dishonour parents; but he will slander, and accuse, and speak evil. The other are not commandments suited to his nature, but this is a commandment that may suit with angelical nature. We are not to accuse another wrongfully.

*Object.* But must we in no case, you will say, speak evil of others? I answer—

*Sol.* 1. Be sure that it be not a downright slander. Now, it is hard to avoid that. If the evil you speak be without cause, then it is against truth; if it be for a light and slender cause, then it is against charity; if it be for things indifferent, or for lesser failings, the indiscretions and weaknesses of Christians, all this is against that charity that should pass especially between the disciples of Christ: James iv. 11, 'Speak not evil of one another, brethren.' It is worse in Christians always to be whispering and speaking evil one of another; you gratify the triumphs of hell. In things doubtful, you should judge the best:

in things hidden and secret, we cannot take cognisance of them, and we know not the aims and intents of the heart; that is God's work, 1 Cor. iv. 5; and it is the devil's work, when the practice be good and fair, to suspect them of hypocrisy. Besides, too, if there be some grievous fault, you do not know what were their temptations, how it may be alleviated by the temptation; still you must 'consider yourselves, lest you also be tempted,' Gal. vi. 1; and you do not know whether they have repented of it. The devil is a slanderer. Why? He doth accuse the children of God of what they are guilty of, and they give him too much cause to accuse them. Ay! but after repentance, after they are justified by God, and quitted by the grace of God; so he is a slanderer. So after they have repented, you are insisting on those faults; it is a great evil.

*Sol. 2.* Speak not *of* him, but *to* him. When men are absent it is not fit they should be judged, for then they are not able to make a defence; then it is backbiting. When you thus speak of them, you exchange a duty for a sin, admonition for reproach. It is an unquestionable duty to admonish one another, but it is an unquestionable sin to speak evil one of another.

*Sol. 3.* If of him, it should be done with tenderness and grief; when they are incorrigible, when they are like to pervert others and dishonour the gospel, or for the manifest glory of God. Oh! if we would but lay restraints upon ourselves in this kind, and never speak of others, but when manifestly the glory of God calls for it. And then it should be with grief: Phil. iii. 19, 'Of whom I have told you often, and now weeping,' saith the apostle. There are a crew of heretics—it is supposed he means the Gnostics—filthy and impure persons, that had debauched the gospel to a licentious life; yet the apostle speaks of them weeping; and therefore we should be very tender of speaking of them. Not out of idleness and for want of other talk; that is tattle, forbidden in many places of scripture; not out of hatred and revenge, for that is malice; there may be malice where the thing you speak is truth; not to please others, that is flattery. But if ever you speak of them (and it should be with these cautions), out of zeal for the glory of God and the good of the church. If men did consider what restraints are laid upon them, they would not so easily fall upon censuring, reproaching, and speaking evil of others. This to those that devise slanders and reproaches.

2. Secondly, To those that receive them. He is a slanderer that wrongs his neighbour's credit, by upholding an evil report against a man. It is hard to say which is worse, railing or receiving: Ps. xv. 3, a citizen of Sion is described to be one 'that taketh not up a reproach against his neighbour;' and you shall see, on the contrary, Prov. xvii. 4, 'A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips, and a liar giveth heed to a naughty tongue.' He is a liar that receives a lie when brought to him, as well as he that brought it; if you love the lie, though you do not devise it. The Lord will curse all them that love lies, as if you did imagine them. All that are acquainted with the matter are accountable to God; you are responsible for your ear, as they for their tongue. It is good to have a healing tongue, to heal that which others wound: Prov. xii. 18, 'The tongue of the wise is health,' it is healing;

and therefore we should labour to show forth this Christian meekness ; as not to devise slanders against others, so not to cherish them, and uphold them against others.

*Use 3.* If this be a usual and grievous evil, it puts us upon seeking comforts against reproaches. Now, what are the comforts we should seek against reproaches ?

1. The witness of a good conscience, for then this will be matter of great joy and great peace to you : 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is my rejoicing, the testimony of my conscience,' &c. If men reproach you, yet let not your hearts reproach you, Job xxvii. 6. The heart hath a reproaching, condemning power. Conscience is register, witness, and judge ; and that which troubles our quiet are these heart-smittings and heart-reproaches. Let any other man in the world be your enemy rather than your own conscience be an enemy. Certainly, where conscience is a friend, if you be innocent, you need not care for the reproaches of others. If they speak against you as faulty, they do but speak against another, whom the slanderer takes to be thee, and in time you will out-wrestle the reproach. Look, as the hair will grow again as long as the roots remain, so though the razor of censure and reproach brings on baldness, the hair will grow again.

2. Another comfort against reproaches is the approbation of God ; that should satisfy against all the censures of the world. You have the greatest, best, and wisest on your side, if you have God on your side. The world decries those that profess strictness to God's ways as hypocrites ; but you are hypocrites indeed that are troubled at this, if you value man's approbation rather than God's. No ; you should be of that temper : Rom. viii. 33, 34, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth.' If the Lord will acquit you, no matter what men say. The world's filth may be God's jewels. Many times a contempt doth but manifest God's esteem, and give us a further sense of it. They cannot impose upon God ; they cannot burden their cause before the Lord ; and therefore, if the Lord hath covered your filth, it is no matter though they rake in it : Ps. xxxii. 1, 'Blessed is the man whose sin is covered,' &c. The Lord will not ask their opinion, their vote and suffrage, whether he shall condemn or acquit you ; but he will go according to the laws of his own covenant, and therefore the approbation of God should be enough to you.

3. The consideration of those promises that concern the vindicating our name from contempt. God is wont to scatter the reproaches of his servants as the sun gets from within the cloud, to bring forth their righteousness as the noon-day.

4. Heaven will make amends for all the dishonour that men put upon you. Though the proud scorn you, yet if you keep God's statutes, and go on waiting upon him for eternal life, great will be your glory in heaven.

## SERMON XLV.

*Behold, I have longed after thy precepts ; quicken me in thy righteousness.—VER. 40.*

IN the close of the former verse David had given this commendation of the statutes of God, that they were good. Now, to show that he did indeed account them so, he allegeth his desires after them, ‘ Behold I have longed,’ &c. In the words you have—(1.) A narrative ; (2.) A request. The one is used as the reason of the other.

First, In the narrative he expresseth his sincere desire of conforming his heart and ways to the laws of God. Where—(1.) The matter of his plea, ‘ I have longed after thy precepts.’ Not to know them only, but to do them ; not to satisfy curiosity, but to understand and obey the will of God, and to make it the rule of his life and actions. Then (2.) The sincerity of it ; that is intimated in the word *behold*. There is *ecce admirantis*, the *behold* of admiration, and *ecce demonstrantis*, the *behold* of demonstration. This last is here to be understood. We must look upon David as appealing to God, as offering himself unto his trial and approbation, who is the best witness and judge of the hearts of men, who knows all things, and cannot be put off with shows, O Lord, he speaks thus to God, ‘ Behold I have longed after thy precepts.’ Now this is spoken here, either as a reason of his own asking, Behold, I seek it not out of custom, or to speak words of course, my soul is in this matter ; or as a reason of God’s granting ; he urgeth his sincere affection to obedience as an argument likely to prevail with God : Lord, I have an ardent desire to serve thee ; and certainly this is a great argument with God, for he delights to crown his own work ; when he hath given the affection, he will give the deed, and give the performance. Look, as Paul urgeth others to pray for him, ‘ Pray for me, for I have a good conscience, willing to live honestly,’ Heb. xiii. 18, so David here speaks of himself to God, ‘ Lord, I have longed after thy precepts ;’ it is my desire that I may be put into the readiest, fullest way of compliance with thy will.

Secondly, Here is his request. There we have—(1.) The thing prayed for, *quicken me* ; he prays for renewing, exciting grace. (2.) The ground of confidence, *In thy righteousness*. He had argued before from the disposition of the subject, now he argues from the quality of the donor, ‘ In thy righteousness.’ The law of God is sometimes called righteousness, and so some expound it in that sense, ‘ Quicken me in thy righteousness ;’ that is, in the way wherein thou wouldest have me to walk. I think rather it is to be applied not to the righteousness he hath required, but the righteousness that is in God himself. So Ps. v. 8, ‘ Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness.’ Now the righteousness of God is put for the whole perfection of the divine essence ; for his justice, in rendering every one their due, according to his covenant ; or for his holiness, for his requiring, approving, delighting in the obedience of the creature ; and for his mercy, for giving out grace to men ; and for his veracity and faithfulness, in making good his promise, which is a branch of his gospel justice or righteousness ; as thou

art faithful in making good thy promises, and never wanting to those that make use of thy word, so, Lord, quicken me.

Three points:—

1. To love and long for a holy and perfect and entire subjection to the will of God is a good frame of heart.

2. Those that do indeed long for holiness will see a need of new quickening.

3. Those that would have quickening must seek to God, who hath promised to satisfy them that desire grace to walk with him.

*Doct.* 1. To love and long for a holy and perfect and entire subjection to the will of God is a good frame of heart.

This may be confirmed by these considerations:—

1. All natures have a propension unto their perfect estate; as fire to go upward, where its place is; and heavy bodies to move downward, where is their seat and rest. Plants have a virtue in their seed which is ever working to produce their flower; beasts have an appetite by which their nature is nourished and preserved; and man hath a desire to prepare and fit him for that which is good and proper for him. The Psalmist tells us that God ‘openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing,’ Ps. cxlv. 16. There is an instinct in every living thing which leads them towards the sustaining and perfecting of that nature which they have. That which is called inclination in the creatures without life, attraction of nourishment in plants, and appetite in the beasts, is in man desire. And so now proportionably the new creature, the saints, they have an appetite suitable to their nature: 1 Peter ii. 2, ‘As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.’ Appetite still followeth life, and prepares men for receiving things good for them: Ps. x. 17, ‘Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou hast prepared their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.’ A desire of relief vented in prayer prepares and fits us to receive those blessings which are good for us. And therefore, as all natures have a propension to their perfect estate, so those that are new creatures long and vehemently tend towards holiness.

2. Desires set upon holiness are an affection properly exercised, and upon its due object. Desire it is an earnest reaching forth of the soul after good absent and not yet attained. The object of it is something good, and the more truly good it is the more is our desire justified. There are certain bastard goods of a base and transitory nature, as pleasure, profit: we may easily overlash and exceed in these things. But on holiness, which is more high and noble, and is truly good, and of greater vicinity and nearness to our chiefest good than those other things are, we cannot exceed; there the faculty is rightly placed. When we are hasty and passionate for these other things, the heart is corrupted, it is hard to escape sin: Prov. xxviii. 20, ‘He that makes haste to be rich cannot be innocent;’ and he that loves pleasure is in danger of not loving God, or loving it more than God, 2 Tim. iii. 4. But now in holiness there is no such snare: a man cannot be holy enough, nor like enough to God; and therefore here we may freely let out our affections to the full. When our desires are freely let out to other things, they are like a member out of joint, as when the arms

hang backward; but here they are in their proper place; this is that which cannot be loved beyond what it doth deserve. A Christian should set no manner of bounds to himself in holiness, for he is to be 'holy in all manner of conversation,' 1 Peter i. 15, and to be 'perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect,' Mat. v. 48. And then desire is not only after that which is good, but after a good absent. Desire ariseth from a sense of vacuity and emptiness. Emptiness is the cause of appetite, and therefore it is compared to hunger and thirst: Mat. v. 6, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.' So it is in desiring holiness we have not yet attained, Phil. iii. 13. There is an indigence and emptiness; we are not already perfect; we want more than we have, and our enjoyments are little in comparison of our expectations; and therefore we should make a swifter progress towards the mark, and with more earnestness of soul should press after that sinless estate we expect. That little we have doth but quicken us to inquire after more, not cloy but provoke the appetite. As a man hath a better stomach sometimes when he doth begin to eat, so when we begin with God, and have tasted of holiness, and tasted of comfort, being brought into a sense of obedience and subjection to God, we should desire more; for certainly he is not good that doth not desire to be better. So that David might well say, 'I have longed after thy precepts.'

3. Consider the nature of these desires; they are the genuine birth and offspring of the soul, motions of the heart, freest from constraint, and so do best discover the temper of it, and show that it is not tainted and biassed with secular and worldly delights. No man can be constrained to will that which he doth not love. Practices may be overruled. Ill men dare not act so much evil as they desire, for fear of shame, punishment, and other by-ends; and good men do not act so much good as they do desire, because of that weak and imperfect state wherein they are. Paul was better at willing than at doing: Rom. vii. 18, 'To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.' And other of the saints of God, though they could not plead their exact performance, and their full and effectual compliance with the will of God, yet have pleaded their desires: Isa. xxvi. 8, 'The desire of our soul is to thy name;' Neh. i. 11, 'We desire to fear thy name.' And Peter appeals to Christ's omniscieny, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,' John xxi. 17. The temper and constitution of their hearts, and the strength of grace, is seen more in desiring many times than in doing. These are the pulses by which you may feel the state of your souls, when there are longing and vehement desires of your souls after God's precepts.

4. Consider the use and necessity of these desires, still the point will be justified. The natural use of desire is to engage us to act, and to keep us up in an earnest prosecution of that which is good for us, notwithstanding the oppositions and discouragements which come between desire and fruition. For all good being hard to come by, unless desires be strongly fixed, men are soon put out of the humour, and so nothing would be done to any purpose in the world. Surely holiness, that is so difficult and distasteful to flesh and blood, would be but little looked after, if there were not strength of desires to keep it up. Therefore is this affection, that we may encounter difficulties and

oppositions. As Neh. iv. 6, when there were difficulties and straits, it is said, 'They built the wall, for the people had a mind to work;' that is, their hearts were set upon it. So if we had a mind to any excellent thing, it is this mind that keeps us up in the midst of all difficulties and labours. All excellent things are hard to come by; it is so in earthly matters, much more in spiritual. The Lord will have it so, to make us prize them more, for things soon got are little esteemed; as riotous heirs, which know not how to get an estate, lavishly spend it. A man is chary of what is hardly gotten. Jacob prized Rachel the more because he was forced to serve for her so long. So we shall prize heavenly things the more when they cost us a great deal of diligence and labour to get them. Now, sluggish desires soon fail, but vehement longings keep the heart awork.

5. Consider the issue of these desires. As they come from a good cause, which is the new nature and a new life, for appetite follows life, so they tend to a good effect, are sure of a good accomplishment and satisfaction. God is wont to give spiritual things to those that desire them; there the rule is, 'Ask and have.' It is not so in carnal things: many that seek and hunt after them with all the strength and labour of their souls, at length are miserably disappointed; but all the promises run for satisfaction to a hungry, thirsty, earnest and longing soul, Mat. v. 6. Those that are hungry, and have a strong desire upon them, he will fill, Luke i. 51; and 'open thy mouth wide and I will fill it,' Ps. lxxxi. 10; they that open unto him as the thirsty land for the rain. God, that gives *velle*, to will, will give *posse*, to do; first the desire, and then the satisfaction; and therefore, where there is this strength of desire, though there may be some failing in other things in our endeavours and performances, yet the Lord will accept it.

6. It argues some nearness to complete fruition, or to full satisfaction in heaven, when we begin to be more earnest after holiness than we were before, and after more of God and his grace and image to be set up in our souls. The more we desire holiness, the more ripe for heaven. This is a rule. The nearer we are to any good thing our hearts are set upon, the more impatient in the want of it; as natural motions are swifter in the end than in the beginning, though violent motions are swifter in the beginning; while the impression of the stone lasts it is swift, but afterwards it abates. So when the soul beats so strongly after God and holiness and larger measures of grace, it is a sign we are ripening apace for heaven. Paul, when he was grown aged in Christianity, then he saith, Rom. vii. 24, 'Who shall deliver me from this body of death?' As what we translate in the Psalms, 'Oh that salvation were come out of Sion!' It is in the Hebrew, 'Who shall give salvation?' So here; it is an Hebraism, Who shall? that is, Oh, that I were delivered! He had many afflictions; he was in perils often, scourged, whipped, persecuted; but he doth not say, Oh, that I could get rid of this troublesome life of affliction! but it was the body of death, the remainders of corruption, was most burdensome to him. The children of God their pulses beat strongly when they are upon the confines of eternity and their full and final consummation. These men begin to ripen for their heavenly state into which God will translate them.



*Use 1.* For conviction of several sorts of persons that are far from this temper and frame of heart. To begin with the most notorious.

1. Some desire sin with a passionate earnestness: Job xv. 16, 'He drinketh iniquity like water.' As a thirsty beast in those hot countries would drink in water, so did they drink in sin. Most wicked men are mad when their lusts are set a-working; and there are some whose constant frame of heart it is, who make haste, who march furiously, as if they were afraid of coming to hell too late; bear down conscience, word, and all before them; that set themselves to do evil with both hands earnestly; that have a strong desire after sin, and are carried out with as impatient longing after sin as the children of God, such eminent ones of God, after holiness.

2. Some have no desire to the ways of God at all: Job xxi. 14, 'They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' The hearts of many say so, though their tongues do not. They are those which shut out the light, that cannot endure a searching ministry, lest it should trouble their lusts, disturb the devil's kingdom; that banish the thoughts of God out of their hearts, lest it revive the sense of their obligation to duty; that set conscience a-challenging God's right in their souls; that keep off from the light.

3. There are some that are insatiable in worldly things, but have no savour of these heavenly and holy things; they are thirsty for the earth, but 'God is not in all their thoughts,' Ps. x. 4; a little grace will serve their turn, and think there is more ado than needs about heaven and heavenly things. Alas! the very contrary is true; a little of the world will serve their turn here below. If men had not a mind to increase their temptations and snares about a frail and temporal life, why do they make so much ado, when many times they are taken away before they have roasted what they have got in hunting? God takes them away, but their eternal estate is little looked after. Riches qualify us not, but holiness doth qualify us for heaven, and it is our ornament before God and his holy angels. And woe be to us if our poor souls be thrust out naked and unclothed in the other world! Can we hunger and hanker after these lying vanities, and have no hungering and thirsting after grace? A little time will wear out the distinction of rich and poor, high and low; but the distinction of holy and good will continue to eternity. Think of that time when not only the world, but the lust, will pass away. The lust of the world may be gone before we are out of the world, as in sickness and pains; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever. When we are sick and dying we have some kind of notions and apprehensions of these things; then we can long and wish we had served God more strictly, loved him more strongly, obeyed him more faithfully. We must have these thoughts while we are living.

4. Many desire happiness, but not holiness; comfort, without grace; they would be eased of their present smart, and freed from sin, but not subdued to God. David saith, 'Behold I have longed after thy precepts;' not merely after the comfort of the promises, without regard to duty. The prophet tells us, Hosea x. 11, that 'Ephraim was like a heifer that was taught, that would tread out the corn, but would not endure the yoke, and break the clods.' In ploughing and

harrowing there was very hard work, but no profit; but in treading out the corn (for as we thresh out our corn, so they trode it out by the feet of oxen), the mouth of the ox was not to be muzzled, that there might be a great deal of privilege and profit with it. So Ephraim is like a heifer that is taught. They taught the oxen to tread out the corn; but we will not endure the yoke; that is, we are all for privileges, but neglect obedience. There is so such great difficulty about the end; indeed, we are careless about it; all the business is, we stick at the means: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.' By 'the kingdom of God' is meant, the royal privileges and immunities of the gospel state; and by his 'righteousness' is meant the subjection, the service God requires of us. Now it is good when we seek both, but we must not seek one without the other; God and the world would sooner agree. If God would bestow the privileges of his kingdom, and dispense with the duties, God might have customers enough for comfort, pardon, heaven, happiness. No man is so senseless as not to desire these things in some measure; but they will not come to God's price, they do not desire these things upon God's terms. The hearts of the saints are as earnestly after sanctification when they are acquainted with God, and brought under the power of grace, that holiness may be increased in them; as Rom. vii. 24, Oh, that I were delivered from sin! Ps. cxix. 5, 'Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!' Not only for the happy part of religion, but they are longing how they may please God, and comply with their manifold obligations to God, and brought to a more perfect conformity to God. Thus the hearts of the saints work.

5. There are many pretenders to a fair respect to God's precepts; they are as much for holiness as for pardon and grace, when it is nothing so.

[1.] They say they desire to obey God in all things; but can they seriously and sincerely appeal to God for the sincerity and truth of what they say; for so doth David here when he comes to God, 'Behold, I have longed for thy precepts;' or as Peter appeals to Christ, John xxi. 17, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;' that is to say, when they have revived the sense of the nature of God, and of his all-seeing eye upon their hearts, when they have a due sense of God upon their souls; otherwise they deal deceitfully. Alas! an evil conscience is afraid; it cannot offer itself thus to God when they are serious and think of what they say; they cannot endure to think of his trial, as an eye hurt seeks for a cover to hide it from the light. So when a sense of God is lessened; they may talk presumptuous expressions of their own sincerity; but when they are most serious, and have revived the sense of God upon their hearts, and look upon him as an all-seeing God that searcheth the heart, they cannot say then, 'I have longed after thy precepts.'

[2.] They not only say so, but they think so, that they desire holiness as much as others, when indeed it is no such matter. The deceit lies in this, because they take a wish for a desire, a velleity for a volition.

*Quest.* What is the difference between a wish and a desire?

*Ans.* Very great.

1. They that have only a wish for holiness, they love holiness in the abstract and in the general notion, which they hate in the effect; they do not know what is included in holiness and close-walking with God; as John vi. 34, 'Evermore give us of this bread of life.' But when Christ told them what it was to have this bread of life, then they were offended. So the Israelites, when they considered holiness and the service of God in the abstract, Oh! we will serve the Lord, say they, saith Joshua, 'You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a jealous God,' Josh. xxiv. 18, 19. Holiness in the abstract and notion is amiable, and is apprehended as a necessary thing; but now, when it comes to the point of entering in at the strait gate, walking in the narrow way of watching and striving against sin, of rowing against the stream of flesh and blood, of constant communion with God, and diligent attendance upon his holy worship, then they will do nothing. When they take up their duty by the lump, they are well pleased with it, and it is easy to give up to God in the general, but particulars we stick at. Therefore here is the fault in these wishes and velleities, that they do not sufficiently poise their duty.

2. These wishes are hasty and not serious. The commendation of spiritual things, and the representation of their absolute necessity, may produce strange motions for the present; but there is a ground of suspicion, because people all of a sudden become so vehement. The seed that fell into the stony ground forthwith sprang up, Mat. xiii. 5. Oh! but it needs much wrestling and care to cherish and raise up these serious and fixed desires, and this constant bent of heart towards God. Free-will pangs of natural devotion are soon spent; they are like the morning dew, it suddenly falls, and suddenly dries up. Deut. v. 29, when the people were frightened into a sense of religion, say they, 'All that the Lord hath spoken will we do.' 'They have well said,' saith God, it is a good resolution; 'But oh! that there were such a heart in them that they would fear me always.' Many times there are certain desires and resolutions that have a mortal sincerity in them—that is, we do not dissemble for the present—but they have not a bottom of grace, supernatural sincerity to bear them up.

3. They are not constant desires, but as they are soon up, so soon down. Our Lord Jesus saith, Mat. v. 6, 'Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness;' not only *shall be*, but *are* blessed for the present. Mark, it is in the Greek, They that 'are hungering and thirsting;' these participles, as all grammarians know, note a continued act. The fire on the altar was never to go out, Lev. vi. 12. There are certain unfixed desires and inconstant motions which for a time are very passionate; as water, seething hot over the fire; take it off, it returns to its natural temper, and it is colder afterwards; so the soul returns to its bias and old bent again towards worldly things. Therefore there must be a constant desire kept up. Such as enjoy the grace of God will still need and desire more. This is the constant temper of their souls; they are always desiring and longing after God's precepts, and more grace to keep his will.

4. In those desires which they seem to have after holiness, here is the defect, they are not laborious. He that longs for God's precepts

will do his utmost endeavour that he may yield uniform obedience to God. The scripture placeth much upon the will. Macarius, an ancient practical writer, puts this question, Who are those that have a will to God and heavenly things, and a will to the waters of life? What demonstrations can there be of a will? Nothing but constant labour. If there be such a will as to set you awork, and a desire which makes you diligent. Lazy prayers and feeble endeavours, they do not argue any great strength of desire. Alas! when a man asketh grace indifferently and coldly, and is almost at an even point whether God hears him or no, and doth not seek after that grace, and excite his soul, this man hath not a desire, because it is not laborious. If it be not an operative desire, it is but a velleity; a will it is not. All their prayers are but the ejaculations of speculative fancy, not the products of true affection, for that would be industrious: Prov. xxi. 25, 'The desire of the slothful killeth, for his hands refuse to labour.' They do not manifest the life and strength of love in their endeavours that they seem to have in their prayers. Cold prayer they may put up for grace that God may make them better; and they wish it were better with them, and that the Lord would bring them to a greater conformity; but these are not laborious desires. *Volens sed nolens*, they would, but they will not; that is to say, Oh, that I were at such a place! and never travel the way to get there. So, Would I had learned such a lesson! yet like a lazy boy they set not themselves in good earnest to do it. They seem to will or wish; therefore they are but wouldings, not willings. They do not in good earnest set themselves to get that grace. There is not such an invincible resolution to get through, and a serious industry that they may attain those things they seem to long for.

5. These wishes and desires which are in carnal men are not permanent, that overcome the desire of other things; they will not absolutely set about it to be done whatever it cost them: but such desires as are sincere overcome all earthly desires and delights whatever. They would have grace, but yet would live as they do. It is not such a desire as to control other things, but is controlled by them. The desire of grace is an underling, and mastered by the desire of pleasures or profits of the world, and other delights. Many have a desire, but it is easily subdued, it is not prevalent. Alas! there may a faint desire be stirred up by enlightened conscience, and not by a fruit of a renewed will. A dictate of conscience must be distinguished from a desire of the heart. Illuminated conscience tells them they must grow more holy and heavenly, and wish they were so; but the heart is not perfectly subdued to God. They are directed by their interest; they make not this the main and great interest of their lives. David, when he expresseth his desires, mentions it thus: Ps. xxvii. 4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life;' that is, I will make this my business, the chiefest matter of my care. But now, they that care not whether they have it, yea or nay, this cannot be a desire: Phil. ii. 12, we are bid to 'work out our salvation with fear and trembling.' We must carry on the business of godliness with a great deal of solicitude; but their affections sway them more to other things.

## SERMON XLVI.

*Behold I have longed after thy precepts, &c.—VER. 40.*

I COME now to a second use, and that is—

*Use 2.* To press us to long after holiness and subjection to God.

Two motives :—

First, You shall have these desires granted. For a man to have his will, and whatsoever he desires, what a happiness is that! If his soul be set upon holy things, he shall have what he desires, the Lord will not be wanting: Prov. x. 24, 'The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him; but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.' The desires of the righteous are suitable to the constitution and frame of their heart. He will grant the desires of their souls, Ps. x. 17. A man that makes God his heart's delight shall have his heart's desire: Ps. xxxvii. 4, 'Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart;' his business is to maintain communion with God, and his desires will not miscarry.

Secondly, When they are granted it shall do you no hurt: Prov. xi. 23, 'The desire of the righteous is only good, but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.' It is the greatest judgment to wicked men when God gives them a heart to desire a full affluence of earthly comforts. Better to be denied in mercy, than to have our requests granted in anger. But grace will do us no hurt; it will not increase our snares and temptations, as other things do; and therefore can never be given in anger, but always in love. Well, then—(1.) Fix your desires; (2.) See they do not abate in you.

1. Fix your desires and enlarge them to the full. A carnal man may be a shame to a godly man, because he is carried out so earnestly, and with such uniform respect to earthly things: 1 Cor. xii. 31, 'Covet earnestly the best gifts;' this is a holy covetousness, and a good diversion from that great sin. As the covetous learn all the arts of thriving, are always 'joining house to house, and field to field,' Isa. v. 8, so should we add faith to faith, and obedience to obedience. Our enjoyments are better, and therefore it should not be followed with a slacker hand. The more a covetous man hath in the world, the more he desires still. Should not we 'forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to the things that are before us'? Still here the taste increaseth the appetite, like sea-water, that wets the palate, but inflames the appetite. Now, shall not we be carried out with a holy covetousness thus to God? See what help and methods of increase they use, how their desire carrieth them on in unwearied diligence: 'They rise early, sit up late, eat the bread of sorrows,' Ps. cxxvii. 2; and all to heap up a little pelf to themselves; neglect no occasion of gain: and shall not we make it the business of our lives, and be projecting still how we may grow in grace, and increase in the love of God, and ripen for the heavenly state, and grow more like God every day? You know how sparing they are, and how apprehensive of their losses. Oh! should not the decays of religion go as near us? and should not we be careful that we do not waste that grace we have received, and that we increase it more and more, and that it thrive upon our hands?

2. Watch against the abatement of your desires, for they are of great use to you in the spiritual life. If a man lose his appetite, the body pineth and languisheth, and strength decayeth. What appetite is to the body, that desire is to the soul; it fitteth us to take in our supplies, and putteth us upon action and diligence; it is the vigorous bent of the soul. Therefore see that it doth not decay. It is said, Rev. ii. 4, of the church of Ephesus, that she had 'lost her first love,' and then presently 'left her first works.' Now your desire decayeth when your prayers are less fervent, for prayer is the presenting our desires to God, or vent given to spiritual groans. Therefore keep up your desires: Ps. xxvii. 4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that I will seek after.' When the desires are fixed, endeavours are engaged; our desires must be pursued resolutely. But what shall we do to awaken these earnest longings in our souls, and those desires after holiness?

[1.] Go to God, for he giveth both to will and to do, Phil. ii. 13. All is from God; the will is from God, and the deed from God. The will; I bring that to show how you should beg that he would stir up those earnest desires in you, because all affections are but the vigorous motions of the will. Desire is but passionate will, or the will effectually and powerfully excited or stirred up to some absent good. Now the appetite is from God as well as the meat. Desire of grace is an affection above nature, and must be planted in us by the Spirit of God. God gives the desire, and he satisfies it. He 'draws,' then we 'run after him,' Cant. i. 4. He puts this desire in our hearts, then we are carried on with an earnest pursuit after grace.

[2.] Would you have and keep up ardent desires? Do as they do that would keep in the fire, cherish the sparks and blow them up to a flame. There is no man that lives under the means of grace, and under the discoveries of God and religion, but hath his good moods and very lively motions; the waters are stirred many times. Take hold of this advantage, 'Strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die,' Rev. iii. 2, and blow up these sparks into a flame. God hath left us enkindling means—prayer, meditation, and the word. Observe where the bellows blows hardest, and ply that course. The more supernatural things are, there needs more diligence to preserve them. A strange plant needs more care than a native of the soil. Worldly desires, like a nettle, breed of their own accord, but spiritual desires need a great deal of cultivating.

[3.] Improve your tastes: 1 Peter ii. 3, 'If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious;' and Col. i. 6, 'Since ye knew the grace of God in truth.' When you have got any taste of the worth of these spiritual things, they do not cloy but awaken appetite. Fancy and imagination cannot awaken it so much as this taste. When you have tasted how good and sweet it is to live in a state of conformity, this will make you long for more: Ps. lxiii. 1, 'My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee.' David had been acquainted with the pleasures of the sanctuary, therefore longs for them more. He that hath tasted honey is more affected with it than he that hath only read of it. The Gauls, when they had tasted of the wine of Italy, nothing would keep them from pressing into the country. So when we have tasted of the

clusters of Canaan, the first-fruits of the Spirit, this should encourage and whet our appetite.

[4.] Watch over other desires, such as would dull and blunt the edge of the spirit. As iron drives out iron, so one desire drives out another. If we are taken with other things, Christ loseth his sweetness and relish. Vain worldly desires extinguish those that are spiritual and heavenly: they lose their fervour when prostituted to base objects; your prayers are more flat and cold, for your desires are manifested by prayer and industry. Now your desires will flag and abate when you let out your hearts to the world; therefore you must watch lest the carnal savour and carnal minding increaseth upon you, for then the spiritual minding is quite hindered, impeached,<sup>1</sup> and interrupted: Rom. viii. 5, 'For they that after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit.' When outward things would steal away your hearts and affections from God, remember your first choice: 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' &c., Ps. lxxiii. 25.

[5.] Renew your desires every time you come to God. When you come to the word, come with an appetite; prepare your stomachs always for God's food. They see more of Christ in an ordinance that come most unworthy in their own sense. John vii. 37, saith Christ, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' You shall have Benjamin's portion, and more plentifully filled, when you come with a strong appetite and a holy longing after God and his grace. Christ takes it best when you come with most enlarged desires and raised expectations. Did God ever fail a thirsty soul? Luke xxii. 15, 'With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I die.' Christ himself hungered and thirsted for us, he longed to give us pledges of his love; and shall not we say, With desire have I desired to taste of thy feast and eat of thy supper? Christ longs to give, and shall not we long to take? Certainly where there is this earnest working of heart towards God, and this desire, the Lord will fill it. The gaping of young ravens, God satisfies it; the Psalmist concludes from thence, Ps. cxlv. 19, 'He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry and will save them.' Naturalists observe the raven exposeth her young ones, and they are merely fed by providence; but when they gape, the Lord satisfieth them with that food which is convenient for them: much more will he fulfil the desires of the humble.

[6.] Consider your wants, and the fulness that is in Christ, and his readiness to impart unto you.

(1.) Your wants. I speak not now of a total want. Indeed, if those that are under a total want of soul could be brought to consider their condition, the work of conversion would not stick so long as it doth. But I speak now of such a want as remains in the saints after they have begun with God, and been put in a way of obedience. It is not enough that the soul is once come to Christ, but it is the business of our lives; we must be always coming: 1 Peter ii. 4, 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to whom coming as unto a living stone.' If you have tasted, then come to him for more. They

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'impeded'?—Ed.

must be frequently renewing the acts of their faith, and stirring up their desires, else there will be no growth of grace, no opposing corruption; for all our strength is in him; there is still something lacking to our faith, and all the graces of the Spirit that are in us.

(2.) Consider what a fulness there is in Christ. This encouraged the prodigal, that in his father's house there is bread enough. So should this encourage us, and awaken our desires; there is enough in Christ if I will but go and take it, and receive from this ever-flowing fountain of grace that God hath set up in our nature: John i. 16, 'Of his fulness have we all received.' Christ hath not only *plenitudinem vasis*, the fulness of a vessel, but *fontis*, the fulness of a fountain. The fulness of a vessel, that may be lessened; the more we take from it the less liquor is in it; but the more we take from a fountain, still there is the same overflowing fulness. Such a fulness is in Christ; therefore it is an encouragement to us to repair to him and enlarge our desires. Look, as it is with beggars in the streets, if they see a poor man meanly clad, they let him alone, but when they see a man of quality and fashion they rouse up themselves and besiege him with importunate entreaties and clamours, and will not let him go until he hath left something with them. Thus should we do. Christ hath enough and to spare; he hath the Spirit without measure; therefore give him not over until he bestow something upon you. He containeth more than we can receive; whatever we get he is not lessened; but, as the sea, though we take never so much water out of it, it remains in the same fulness, so all the saints may have supply for their wants without any deficiency in Christ. The sun hath not less light, though it communicate it freely to the inferior world. Christ is not spent for giving; he hath enough to comfort and quicken us; he needs not our fulness, but emptiness. The prophet provided oil enough to help the widow; she only provided empty vessels. We may be too full for Christ, but cannot be too empty. We may be too full of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency. Christ brings all-sufficiency to the covenant, and we bring all-necessity. Therefore, since there is such an overflowing fulness in him, we must still repair to him that we may receive more.

(3.) Consider his readiness to give it you, therefore come with hungering and thirsting after him: John vi. 27, 'Labour for the meat that endureth for ever.' Mind the graces of the Spirit, come to Christ for these things. He was sent into the world, and commissioned for this end and purpose. All the fulness in Christ is for our use. As the sun hath light not for itself but for the comfort of the world, and a fountain hath water not for itself, but for the use of man; so Christ the head is the seat of sense and motion, not for himself, but for his whole body; he is our storehouse for the supply of our wants; and he is clothed, empowered, and invested with offices to do us good. Oh, therefore enlarge your desires! In other things you desire to be full, why not of grace? Hypocrites are satisfied with a taste; they may taste the good word. Temporaries are contented with a taste; a little religion they must have. Ay! but it is for the honour of Christ that we should be complete in him, and filled with all the fulness of God; and this is his grief when his grace runs waste. Look, as when breasts are full,



there is a great pleasure in having them drawn, or children to have them sucking; and the Lord hath as great a desire to impart his holiness as we to receive it. Therefore come to him that we may have grace for grace, that is, for grace's sake. Thus much for the first point, David's appeal to God, 'Lord, I have longed after thy precepts.'

*Doct. 2.* Those that indeed long for holiness will see a need of new quickening.

So David, 'Quicken me in thy righteousness.' A man would have thought he had been in a lively frame then; yet 'Quicken me in thy righteousness;' excite and enliven me to all acts of obedience.

Here I shall inquire—

1. What is this quickening.

2. Why they that long for God's precepts, and a more perfect and ready subjection to God, are thus earnest for quickening.

First, What is this quickening? I shall not speak at large, for it often occurs in this psalm. It is used in scripture for two things:—

1. For regeneration, or the first infusion of the life of grace, Eph. ii. 1, 5. Then we have divine qualities put into us, that do incline and enable us to live unto God.

2. It is put for the vitality and the vigour of grace, when the spiritual life is in good plight. Deadness of heart is apt to creep upon us, therefore we need renewed excitations and quickenings, that we may serve our God with cheerfulness, liveliness, and zeal. Christians should not only be *living* but *lively*: 1 Peter ii. 5, 'Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house. And we read of living grace and lively grace, 1 Peter i. 3. And Christ came into the world that we might not only 'have life,' but 'have it more abundantly,' John x. 10; that is, that we might not only be living, but lively. So that quickening is the actuation of the spiritual life, either in a way of comfort or grace. There may be life where there is not this vigour and this vitality. This quickening is mainly seen in the most operative, and the two necessary graces of the soul to which the gospel is sometimes reduced, and they are faith and love. These are the graces wherein life consists; and as these are acted and excited to God, so we are lively, and when these decay we are dead. When faith is dead all spiritual activity is lost: James ii. 26, 'For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.' If men want faith they cannot do anything with any life. So when love is dead, or love grows cold, Mat. xxiv. 12, or when men have any abatement in their love, all languisheth and grows dead in the soul, Rev. ii. 4, 5. But on the contrary, it is said we live by faith, Gal. ii. 20. Grace is kept in good plight when faith is strong and kept up in any vigour; and Gal. v. 6, 'Faith, which worketh by love.'

Well, this quickening (that I may most sensibly demonstrate it) depends upon these two things:—

[1.] The vitality of grace; that depends upon the degree and measure of our faith. For to speak nothing as to the mystical use, as it is a means of our function of life, but to speak only now as to its moral use, as it acts by the sight of invisible things, keep faith alive, and all is alive in the soul: Heb. xi. 1. 'Faith is the evidence of

things not seen ;' it doth make things absent and things not seen to act as if they were present, therefore it must needs be a very enlivening thing. Without faith our notions of God, Christ, heaven, and hell are never practical and lively in operation ; for this is the evidence of things not seen, and this convinceth us of all spiritual and unseen things, to make them have a force and operation upon the soul. We do but hear, read, and discourse literally until faith puts life into our apprehensions and thoughts of them ; for faith will affect us as if we did see the invisible God, and will put the same affections into us as if Christ were crucified before our eyes, Gal. iii. 1. What is the reason the mystery of redemption is a wild story to some, lively to others ? Faith affects the heart as if he were crucified before our eyes, and his life dropped out from him by degrees. So faith makes us hug and embrace them as if we were in the midst of the glory of the blessed ones. Take it only in its moral use, it is an enlivening thing ; and as faith is kept up in any vigour, so the spiritual life is kept up.

[2.] For love. When we have a fresh and warm sense of the love of God upon our souls, we are quickened to do for him answerably to such a love ; and our souls reason, What, hath God done so great things for us in Christ, and we do nothing for God again ? Then we see we cannot do anything too much. Love hath a law upon the soul that stirs up lively and zealous motions towards God : 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us ;' 1 John v. 3, 'His commandments are not grievous.' Then everything goes on pleasantly, and runs upon its wheels.

Secondly, Why will they that long after God's precepts see a need of quickening ?

1. Because of the diseases incident to the renewed estate. There is a constant weakness by reason of indwelling corruption : 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit,' Gal. v. 17 ; they cannot serve God with that purity and liberty they desire. Then there are frequent indispositions of soul ; sometimes they feel a slowness and loathsomeness and dulness in their souls. Good men may yet be 'slow of heart' to heavenly things, Luke xxiv. 25. Look, as the physician saith weariness that comes of its own accord is a sign of some disease upon us, laziness in duty comes from a remiss will. Sometimes too they find great deadness, that they cannot follow their work so closely, and with that life and earnestness. And sometimes they are in bonds, sometimes in straits, that they cannot enlarge and dilate themselves towards God : Ps. cxix. 32, 'When thou shalt enlarge my heart, I will run the ways of thy commandments.' Now they that mind their work, they will be sensible of this, and call upon God to quicken them. David complains of the dulness and deadness of his spirit ; but many do not, but go on in a cold track of duties, and never regard the frame of their hearts. But now a good man observes the temper of his soul. Most observe their bodies, but few their souls. If their body be ill at ease and out of order, they complain presently ; but love waxeth cold, zeal for God and delight in God abateth, men grow weary in well-doing, grow flat, have this remiss will, this deadness and slowness of soul in the love of God, they can satisfy themselves in this frame and temper.

2. Because, too, without this supervening and quickening grace, they can never serve God cheerfully, nor do anything to purpose in the heavenly life; our general work of obedience goes on slowly: Ps. cxix. 88, 'Quicken me, so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth,' then I shall do good to purpose. But religion is an irksome thing when we are dead-hearted. For particular duties, it is not enough to pray, but it must be with life: Ps. lxxx. 18, 'Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.' It is not enough to hear, but to hear with life, Mat. xiii. 15. It is a judgment to be dull of hearing.

3. As it is uncomfortable to themselves to act without quickening grace, so it is a thing very hateful with God, a cold lukewarm temper: Rev. iii. 16, 'I will spew thee out of my mouth.' This dull and stupid profession is contrary to God and hateful to God, and such as content themselves with this dead profession, God will spew them out of his mouth. And it is contrary to all the provision God hath made for us. Christ is set up as a fountain of grace in our nature: John x. 10, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' The Lord hath justified us by his grace, sprinkled our hearts that we might serve the living God, serve him in a living manner; for titles given to God imply the qualification in hand, Heb. ix. 14; and he hath sanctified us, planted grace in our hearts on purpose to maintain the life given us, that there might be a lively hope. And all hearing is for life, Isa. lv. 3; we come to lively oracles that we may be quickened. The joys of heaven, redemption by Christ, hell's torments, these doctrines are all quickening truths. And the Lord hath given his flesh, not only to God for a sacrifice, but to us for food that we may live, John vi. 51. Therefore to be cold is odious to God.

*Use 1. For caution.*

1. Let us take heed we lose not quickening through our own default, that we lose not this enlivening grace. We may lose it by any heinous sin of ours, for by grieving the Spirit we bring on deadness upon the heart, Ps. li. 10-12. When David sinned heinously, he begs the Lord to quicken him, and restore his free spirit and the joy of his salvation. The spirit is a tender thing. Every heinous sin is as a wound in the body, which lets out the life-blood, and so we contract a deadness upon ourselves.

2. Take heed of immoderate liberty, or vanities of the world, or pleasures of the flesh, if you would not lose this quickening. The apostle tells us, 1 Tim. v. 6, 'The woman that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' Pleasures have a strange infatuation; they bring a brawn and deadness upon the heart, and hinder the sprightliness of spiritual and heavenly affections: Ps. cxix. 37, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.' These two prayers joined together speak thus much: if you be too busy about vanity, it will bring on a brawn and deadness, and so you need to go to God for quickening. And Christ tells his disciples, Luke xxi. 34, 'Take heed of being overcharged,' &c. The soul is mightily distempered by too free a liberty of the delights of the flesh; for satefiting and drunkenness must not be taken there in the gross notion.

3. Let us take heed that we do not lose it by our slothfulness and

negligence in the spiritual life: Isa. lxiv. 7, 'There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' As in a watch one wheel protrudes and thrusts forward another, so when we are diligent all is lively in the soul, but when we are not active and serious in a godly course all goes to rack. An instrument, though it be never so much in tune, yet laid by and hung up, it grows out of order. Wells are sweeter for draining; our graces, if we keep them not awork, lose their vitality; if we do not stir up the grace of God, 2 Tim. i. 6, they are quite quenched; when we grow careless, and neglectful of our souls, we lose this activity of grace.

4. Vain and dead-hearted company and converse are a very great means to damp the spirit and quench the motions of the heavenly life. We should 'provoke one another to good works,' Heb. x. 24. There is great provocation in good examples; but we grow lazy, formal, slight by imitation. Others profess knowledge, yet are vain, dead-hearted; so are we, we have adopted it into our manners, and leaven one another by this means. There should be a holy contention who should be most forward in the ways of godliness, and excel in our heavenly calling; this keeps Christians lively. Saul, when he was among the prophets, he prophesied; but when we converse with dead-hearted company, it breeds a great damp. You read in Isa. xli. 6, 7, how the idolaters encouraged one another—it was when the isles were to wait for the Messiah—that they should not faint, but get up their idols again, after Christ had got a little footing among them; and shall not the children of God encourage, and keep up the life of zeal one in another?

Use 2. Exhortation. It presseth you to divers duties.

1. To see a need of quickening. Though life received gives power to act, yet that power must be excited by God. No creature doth subsist and act of itself. All things live, move, and have their being in God. There is a concurrence necessary to all created things, much more to the new creature: partly because of the internal indisposition of the subject in which it is—alas! grace in the heart is but like fire in wet wood—partly by reason of external impediments; Satan is ready to cast a damp upon the soul, so that the Lord's grace is still necessary for us.

2. Ask it of God. All life was at first in him originally, and it is an emanation from him. The apostle proves Christ's Godhead from this, because 'in him was life,' John i. 4. But is this a good argument? Doth that prove therefore he was God? May we not say of the meanest worm, in it is life? But he means *originally*; he was the fountain of life, and still he keeps it in his own hands, and conveys it to all creatures every moment, even to the lowest worm: John v. 26, 'For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.' The power of quickening and keeping of life belongs to God. He hath it originally from himself, he gives it to others, 1 Tim. vi. 13. He that quickeneth all things, worms, men, that gives life to them, is God.

3. Accept this grace in and through Jesus Christ, who hath purchased it for us, who, gave his 'flesh to be meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed,' John vi. 55; who rose again that we should 'walk in newness of life,' Rom. vi. 4; who ascended to pour out the spirit upon

us, John vii. 38, 39, Therefore, when we find deadness spiritually, look to receive this life from Christ.

4. Rouse up yourselves. There are considerations and arguments to quicken us. Certainly a man hath power and faculty to work truths upon himself, to stir up the gift and grace that is in us, 2 Tim. i. 6. We must not think grace works necessarily as fire burns, whether we will or not that this will enliven us; but we must rouse and stir up ourselves, as Ps. xlii. 5. There are many considerations by which we may awaken our own soul; from the love of God, from the hopes of glory; by which Christians should stir and keep their spirits awake and alive towards God and heavenly things.

Use 3. If quickening be so necessary, it presseth us to see whenever we have received anything of the vitality of grace. Sense, appetite, and activity, we may know it by these things: When there is a sense of sin indwelling as a burden—life is strong then when it would expel its enemy, Rom. vii. 24—when there is an appetite after Christ and his graces and comforts. When there is a greater activity, a bursting and breaking forth towards religious duties, it is a sign grace is strong in the heart; for the Spirit is to be a fountain of living waters always breaking out, John vii. 38. When we are more fruitful towards God, when it is ready to discover itself for the glory of God, then the heavenly life is kept in good plight. For these things we should be thankful to God, for he it is that awakeneth you.

## SERMON XLVII.

*Let thy mercies come also to me, O Lord, even thy salvation,  
according to thy word.*—VER. 41.

IN this verse you have the man of God in straits, and begging for deliverance. In this prayer and address to God you may observe—

1. The cause and fountain of all, *thy mercies*.
2. The effect or thing asked, *salvation*.
3. The warrant or ground of his expectation, *according to thy word*.
4. The effectual application of the benefit asked, *come also unto me*.

The sum of the verse may be given you in this point.

*Doct.* That the salvation of God is the fruit of his mercy, and effectually dispensed and applied to his people according to his word. There is a twofold salvation—temporal and eternal.

1. Temporal salvation is deliverance from temporal dangers: Exod. xiv. 13, 'Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.'

2. Eternal deliverance from hell and wrath, together with that positive blessedness which is called eternal life: Heb. v. 9, 'And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.' The text is applicable to both, though possibly the former principally intended.

*First*, I shall apply it to salvation temporal, or deliverance out of trouble. There observe—

1. The cause of it, 'Thy mercies.' God's children often fail into