

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

such straits that nothing but mercy can help them out. All deliverance is the fruit of mercy pitying our misery, but some deliverance especially is the fruit of mercy pardoning our sin. I shall give you some special cases, both as to danger and sin.

[1.] In all cases as to danger, it is mercy which appears, partly because God's great argument to move him is the misery of his people. It is his great argument: Deut. xxxii. 36, 'The Lord will repent for his people;' when he seeth that all their power is gone, and none shut up and left, no manner of defence, but exposed as a prey to those that have a mind to wrong them. It is the only argument: Ps. lxxix. 8, 'Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us, for we are brought very low.' Mercy relents towards a sinful people, when they are a wasted people. Partly because when there are no other means to help, mercy unexpectedly findeth out means for us. We are at an utter loss in ourselves; God finds out means of relief for us: Ps. lvii. 3, 'He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up, Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and truth.' When we want help on earth, faith seeketh for help from heaven, and mercy chooseth means for us when we cannot pitch upon anything that may do us good. In these cases doth mercy discover itself as to danger.

[2.] More eminently in special cases, when their sins have evidently brought them into those straits. Many afflictions are the strokes of God's immediate hand, or the common effects of his providence permitting the malice of men for our trial and exercise; but some are the proper effects of our own sins. We run ourselves into inconveniences by our folly, and even then mercy findeth a way of escape for us. Two ways may our sin be said to bring our trouble upon us—*meritoriè et effectivè*.

(1.) *Meritoriè*, when some judgment treadeth upon the heels of some foregoing sin and provocation: as David, when he had offended in the matter of Uriah, see Ps. iii. title, 'A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son,' and the two first verses, 'Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me; many there be that say of my soul, There is no help for him in God, Selah.' David was deserted of his own subjects, chased from his palace and royal seat by his own son, Absalom. He had defiled Uriah's wife secretly, and his wives were defiled in the face of all Israel, and he driven to wander up and down for safety. God will make all that behold the scandalous sins of his people see what it is to provoke him to wrath. See how he complains, ver. 1, 'Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me.' You shall find in 2 Sam. xv. 12, 'The people increaseth continually with Absalom;' a multitude against him, and the rest durst not be for him, their hearts were hovering. And in another place, 2 Sam. xvii. 11, all Israel gathered to him from Dan to Beersheba. In what a sorry plight was David when all was against him, and the world thought God was against him! for so it followeth, ver. 2, 'Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God, Selah.' The world counted the case desperate, and insulted over him, now God hath left him; but they mistook fatherly correction for

vindicative justice. This was a sad condition ; but David goeth to God to fetch him off ; though he had drawn this judgment upon himself, yet he deals with him for relief : in such cases mercy is seen. That pit must be very deep when the line of grace doth not go to the bottom of it. In the face of the temptation David maintaineth his confidence in God : see ver. 3, 'But thou, O Lord, art my shield, my glory, and the lifter-up of my head.' God is counter-comfort to all his troubles. He was in danger, God was his shield ; his kingdom was at stake, God was his glory : he was under sorrow and shame, God would lift up his head ; to the unarmed a shield, to the disgraced glory, to the dejected an encourager or the lifter-up of his head. Thus when his case was thought desperate doth mercy work for him.

(2.) *Effectivè*, when we ourselves run into the snare, and be holden with the cords of our own vanity : Prov. v. 22, 'His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins ;' when we have been playing about the cockatrice's hole, and have brought mischief upon ourselves. Sometimes God's children have been guilty of this ; they have been the cause of their own troubles ; as David, when his unbelief drove him to Gath, where he was in danger of his life, and escaped by his dissembling : Ps. xxxiv., entitled, 'A Prayer of David when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.' And Josiah put himself on a war against Pharaoh Necho, and other such instances. Then if they be saved, it is certainly mercy.

Again, observe, it is not *mercy*, but *mercies* ; the expression is plural—

[1.] To note the plenty and perfection of this attribute in God. God is very merciful to poor creatures. See in how many notions God's mercy is represented to us. A distinct consideration of them yieldeth an advantage in believing ; for though they express the same thing, yet every notion begetteth a fresh thought, by which mercy is more taken abroad in the view of conscience. This is that pouring out God's name spoken of Cant. i. 3, 'Thy name is as ointment poured forth.' Ointment in the box doth not yield such a fragrancy as when it is poured out. God hath proclaimed his name : Exod. xxxiv. 6, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth.' God hath given this description of himself, and the saints often take notice of it : Ps. ciii. 8, 'The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness ;' Joel ii. 13, 'Turn to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil ;' Jonah iv. 2, 'I knew that thou wert a gracious God, slow to anger, and of great kindness ;' and in divers other places. What doth the Spirit of God aim at in this express enumeration and accumulation of names of mercy, but to give us a help in meditation, and to enlarge our apprehensions of God's mercy ?

(1.) The first notion is mercy, which is an attribute whereby God inclineth to favour them that are in misery : it is a name God hath taken with respect to us ; the love of God first falleth upon himself. God loveth himself, but he is not merciful to himself ; mercy respects creatures in misery. Justice seeks a fit object ; mercy, a fit occasion. Justice looketh to what is deserved ; mercy, to what is wanted and needed.

(2.) The next notion is grace, which noteth the free bounty of God, and excludeth all means on the creature's part. Grace doth all gratis, freely, though there be no precedent debt or obligation, or hope of recompense, whereby anything can accrue to God. His external motive is our misery, his internal motive his own grace. Angels, that never sinned, are saved merely out of grace. Men, that were once miserable, are saved, not only out of grace, but out of mercy.

(3.) The next notion is long-suffering or slowness to anger. The Lord is not easily overcome by the wrongs or sins of the creature. He doth not only pity our misery—that is mercy, and do us good for nothing—that is grace, but beareth long with our infirmities—that is slowness to anger. Certainly he is easily appeased, and is hardly drawn to punish. Men are ready to anger, slow to mercy, quickly inflamed, and hardly appeased; but it is quite the contrary with God. It is good to observe the difference between God and man. Man cannot make anything of a sudden, but destroyeth it in an instant. When men are to make anything, they are long about it, as building a house is a long work; but plucking it down and undermining it is done in a short time. But God is quick in making, slow in destroying; he made the world in six days. He could have done it in a moment, were it not that he would give us a pattern of labour and order in all things. Now it hath continued for six thousand years, and upwards, as some account. Such is his long-suffering. How many of us has God borne with for ten, twenty, thirty years, from childhood to grey hairs, from the cradle to the grave! The angels were not endured in their sinful state, but immediately cast into hell.

(4.) Kindness and bounty; he is plenteous in goodness. God is good and doth good; his communications to the creature are free and full, as the sun giveth out light and the fountain water. Thus you see reason why mercies are plurally expressed.

[2.] The frequency of it: Lam. iii. 23, 'His mercies are new every morning;' that is, renewed; those that concern the body and soul: not only merciful in saving once or twice, but every day pardoneth our new sins, and giveth to his repenting children new comforts. There is a throne of grace open every day, not once a year, Heb. iv. 16, as it was to the high priest under the law. The golden sceptre is daily held out, the fountain is ever open, not stopped up nor drawn dry. God keepeth not terms, but keepeth a court of audience; and every day we may come and sue out our pardon, and take out the comforts we stand in need of.

[3.] The variety of our necessities, both by reason of misery and sin; so that not mercy, but mercies, will do us good. We have not one sin, but many; not one misery, but many; therefore mercies are needful to us.

(1.) Our miseries are many, danger waylayeth us on every side; therefore the mercy of God is said to compass us about: Ps. xxxii. 10, 'He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.' On which side soever temptation and trouble maketh the assault, mercy is ready to make the defence: 'Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all,' Ps. xxxiv. 19. Their troubles are many, from God's own hand, Satan's temptations, malice of the wicked world; therefore 'Let thy mercies come to me.'

(2.) Our sins, so many provocations, transgressions from the womb, Isa. xlviii. 8. After grace received we have our failings; there remains much venom and evil of sin: Ps. li. 1, 'Have mercy upon me according to the greatness of thy mercy; according to the multitude of thy tender mercy blot out my transgressions;' where great sins, great mercies; many sins, many mercies. In that one fact how many ways did he sin? No great sin can be committed alone, but one evil act draweth on another, as links in a chain: adultery, blood; and this by a king, whose duty it was to punish it in others. The more above the stroke of man's justice, the more liable to God's. This when he had many wives of his own. A crime committed out of want is not so heinous as that committed out of wantonness: He took the poor man's one ewe lamb, when he had many flocks and herds. This was done not suddenly and in the heat of passion, but in cool blood, plotting his opportunities, abusing Uriah, his simplicity and sincerity, to his own destruction. His honesty in not returning to his house should have been a check upon David. He maketh him drunk; drew Joab into the conspiracy and confederacy of his guilt; many perished with Uriah in the attempt upon Rabbah.

[4.] The many favours to be bestowed upon us, as food, clothing, protection, liberty in our service, and after all eternal life; therefore mercies, which giveth us 'all things necessary to life and godliness,' 2 Peter i. 3.

2. The effect, 'thy salvation,' brought about in God's way, and upon God's terms. In temporal safety we must wait for God's salvation, such as God giveth, God alloweth. Better be miserable than be saved upon other terms. Many would be safe from troubles, but they would take their own way, and so turn aside to crooked paths. Those martyrs spoken of in the Hebrews, chap. xi. 35, 'would not accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection;' to wince under trouble, and fling off the burden ere it be taken off by God without any sin of ours; otherwise we break prison, get out by the window, not by the door. We must take up our cross as long as God will please to have us bear it. David saith, 'Thy salvation.'

3. The warrant and ground of his expectation, 'According to thy word.' God's mercy is to be expected according to the tenor of the promise. How is that?

[1.] No temporal blessing is absolutely to be expected, for God hath reserved the liberty of trying and chastising his children in outward things. The covenant is to be understood with the exception of the cross, and we can have no temporal benefit by it but as it is useful for us: Ps. lxxxix. 32, 33, 'I will visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes: nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.' God will use medicinal discipline, though not satisfy his justice upon them.

[2.] The qualification of the promise must be regarded by those that would have benefit by it. God's covenant is made with his people; it is a mutual stipulation. Many would have comfort; we plead promises of safety with God, but forget promises of obedience to him; as Ephraim would tread out the corn, but not break the clods, Hosea x. 11.

There was food: Deut. xxv. 4, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox which treadeth out the corn.' We mind our own interest more than God's honour.

[3.] A word of promise calleth for faith and trust. Whatever contrariety appeareth in God's providence, God's word must bear up our hearts; it is as a pawn till the deliverance come. God's mercy is the same still; his word calleth for trust. The more we trust and hope in his mercy the better for us: Ps. xiii. 5, 'I have trusted in thy mercy; my soul shall rejoice in thy salvation;' Ps. xxxiii. 22, 'Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we hope in thee;' and Ps. xxxii. 10, 'He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.' The more clear is your claim when you trust yourselves with him. He is a merciful God, and his word saith he will take care for them that fear him.

[4.] All this trust must be set awork in prayer; so doth David, and so saith the word: Ps. l. 15, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify my name;' Jer. xxix. 11, 12, 'I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord; thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you;' Ezek. xxxvi. 37, 'Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.'

4. The effectual application, 'Let thy mercies come also unto me.'

[1.] He beggeth application: 'unto me also.' God is every day scattering his mercies abroad in the world, and David would not be left out of God's care and blessed provision, but have his share also. Esau's words are applicable upon this occasion: Gen. xxvii. 38, 'Hast thou but one blessing, O my Father? Bless me, even me also.' When the earth is full of his goodness, beg your share. God is the Father of mercies; he hath not the less for bestowing, as the sun hath not less light for us because others enjoy it with us. God doth not waste by giving.

[2.] He beggeth an effectual application, 'Let thy mercies come unto me.' The way was blocked up with sins and difficulties, yet mercy could clear all, and find access to him, or make out its way. Let it come to me, that is, let it be performed or come to pass, as it is rendered, Judges xiii. 12, 'Now let thy words come to pass to us;' *Heb.*—Let it come; here let it come home to me, for my comfort and deliverance. David elsewhere saith, Ps. xxiii. 6, 'Mercy and goodness shall follow me all my days;' go after him, find him out in his wanderings. So Ps. cxvi. 12, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?' They found their way to him though shut up with sins and dangers. Thus we see how to plead with God for temporal salvation; we must make grace, and nothing but grace, the ground of our hope, and this according to the tenor of the word.

Secondly, As it is applicable to eternal salvation; and then—

1. The ground of all is mercy, or pity of the creatures' misery. The Lord is not moved to bestow grace upon sinners for any goodness that he findeth in them, or could foresee in them, for he findeth none, and could foresee nothing but what was the fruit of his own grace: Rom. xi. 35, 'Who hath given him first, and it shall be recompensed unto

him again ?' It is the honour of God to begin all things, as the river oweth all to the fountain, the fountain nothing to the river ; as none can give him first, so none can be profitable unto him, for he needeth nothing : Acts xvii. 25, ' Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.' Nay, we deserve the contrary, to be cast into utter darkness : Ezek. xxxvi. 21, 22, ' I do not this for your sakes : I had pity for my name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen ;' 1 Peter i. 3, ' Of his abundant goodness he hath begotten us to a lively hope.' We have not a right notion of mercy unless we admire the plenty of it : Eph. ii. 4, ' God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, hath quickened us with Christ.' There need many mercies from first to last for the saving of a poor sinner ; their natural misery is great : Ezek. xvi. 6, ' When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live ; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live.' Their actual sins many : Jer. xiv. 7, ' Our iniquities testify against us.' The way of their recovery by Christ is mysterious : 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.' The course taken for satisfying wronged justice ; the application involveth many mercies. The renewing of their natures : Titus iii. 5, ' According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' The preserving of inherent grace against temptations, forgiving many sins after conversion : Isa. lv. 7, ' Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon ;' Prov. xxiv. 16, ' The righteous fall seven times a day, and riseth up again.' The great eternal good things to be bestowed on them : Jude 21, ' Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.' So that from first to last there is nothing but a concatenation of mercies.

2. The effect, salvation. This properly deserveth to be called so. We are saved but in part before, then from all evils, from the greatest evil, hell. Before we are saved, but we may be troubled again. Now no more sorrow, when all opposition is broken, and God is all in all, and the church presented as a prey snatched out of the teeth of lions ; all former things are done away.

3. This dispensed according to the word. Now what doth the word say ? When a sinner repenteth, all the iniquities which he hath committed shall be forgotten. There is abuse of mercy noted : Deut. xxix. 19, ' If he shall bless himself and say, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart ;' I may go on in sin and cry God a mercy, and there is an end. No ; mercy issueth out itself for salvation of men according to the word ; these are conclusions contrary to grace : Jude 4, ' There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness.' The principle is true, but the conclusion is false. Certainly God is merciful, there is no end nor measure nor bank nor bottom in his mercy ; but throughout the whole

scriptures mercy is only promised to the penitent, and those that come to God by Christ. Take mercy according to the word, according to the analogy of faith, and there is not a more powerful incentive of duty: Ps. cxxx. 5, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;' Titus ii. 11, 12, 'The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;' Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.' This is true divinity. The flesh deviseth another doctrine. Let us sin that grace may abound, to make a carnal pillow of God's mercy, that they may sleep securely in sin, yea, a dunce to carry away their filth. God is merciful, but to those that count sin a burden and misery; God is slow to anger, but yet angry when provoked: abused patience kindleth into fury, as water, when the mouth of the fountain or course of the river is stopped, breaketh out with more violence. God hath his arrows of displeasure to shoot at the wicked. You must not fancy a God all honey, all sweetness; he is 'the father of mercies,' but so that he is also 'a God of vengeance:' Ps. lxxviii. 19-21, 'Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation, Selah. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. But God shall wound the hairy scalp of his enemies.' The mercy of God is large and free, if men do not make themselves incapable by their impenitency.

4. We must beg—(1.) The application of these: 'to me also:' 'We have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful kings,' 1 Kings xx. 31. Now we would feel it: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' Wind in ourselves within the covert of a promise, enter at the back-door of a promise; there comes virtue from Christ if but touched. The woman came behind him and touched the hem of his garment; so we must seek the application of this virtue. (2.) Effectual application, 'Let it come unto me.' Mercy cometh unto us, or we shall never come unto it, 1 Peter i. 10. The grace that cometh to us, *χάρις ἐρχομένην*, the grace which is brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, God's grace, is brought home to our doors; we seek not after it, but it seeketh after us. Salvation has gone forth, saith the prophet, to find out lost sinners: 'Wisdom hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the high places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither,' Prov. ix. 3, 4. God sends the gospel up and down the world to offer his grace to men; it worketh out its way.

Use. Here is encouragement and direction to poor creatures how to obtain God's mercy for their comfort.

1. Encouragement. Mercy doth all with God; it is the first cause, that setteth every thing awork.

[1.] Mercy is natural to God: 2 Cor. i. 3, 'Father of mercies.' God is not merciful by accident, but by nature; the sun doth not more naturally shine, nor fire more naturally burn, nor water more naturally flow, than God doth naturally show mercy.

[2.] It is pleasing to him: Micah vii. 18, 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.' Judgment is called 'his strange work,' Isa. xxviii. 21, 'That he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act.' Primitive¹ acts he is forced to, but he rejoiceth to do good, as live honey droppeth of its own accord.

[3.] It is plentiful in God; he is rich in mercy, abundant in goodness and truth. Thy sins are like a spark of fire that falleth into the ocean; it is quenched presently. So are all thy sins in the ocean of God's mercy; there is not more water in the sea than there is mercy in God.

[4.] It is the great wonder of the divine nature. Everything in God is wonderful, especially his pardoning mercy. It is no such great wonder in God that he stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain, since he is omnipotent; that he formed the earth or the waters, since he is strong; that he distinguished times, adorned the heavens with so many stars, decked the earth with such variety of plants and herbs, since he is wise; that he hath set bounds to the sea, governeth the waters, since he is Lord of all; that he made man a living creature, since he is the fountain of life; but that he can be merciful to sinners, infinitely merciful when infinitely just. There is a conflict in the attributes about us, but 'mercy rejoiceth over judgment,' James ii. 13; that he is so gracious and condescending, when his first covenant seemed to bind him to destroy us; that he that hateth sin is so ready to forgive it, pardoneth it so often, and punisheth it so seldom.

[5.] He is communicative; it is 'over all his works,' Ps. cxlv. 9. Not a creature but subsisteth by God's mercy; he loveth man and beast, Ps. xxxvi. 6; and 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'He is the saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.' The whole earth is full of his goodness: Lord, show it to me also. 'He heareth the cry of the ravens.'

2. To direct us how to sue for it in a broken-hearted manner. There are two extremes—self-confidence and desperation. Self-confidence challengeth a debt, and despair shutteth out hopes of mercy. A proud Pharisee pleads his works, Luke xviii. 11. Cain saith, Gen. iv. 13, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.' The middle between both is the penitent publican: Luke xviii. 13, 'He stood afar off, and would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner.' Go to him; that which with men is the worst plea, with God is the best.

SERMON XLVIII.

So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.—VER. 42.

IN the former verse we saw the man of God begging for deliverance, or temporal salvation, from the mercies of God according to his word. Salvation belongeth to the Lord, and his mercy can pardon great sins,

¹ Qu. 'punitive'?—ED.

and fetch us off from great extremities, and that according to the word of God. He had boasted of this. There is his request; here is his argument, from the use and fruit of his deliverance; he should have something to reply to the scoffs and mocks of wicked men, who insulted over him in his distress and calamity. He had spoken of great things or the promise,¹ and now desireth the promise to be made good, that he might have an answer ready against their reproaches, ‘So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me.’

But hath a child of God nothing to answer to a wicked man before salvation cometh? *Ans.* Yes; a child of God could answer them of the principles of faith; but they must have instances of sense. He could say that his ‘God is in heaven, and doth whatsoever he pleaseth;’ that he is ‘the shield of his help, and sword of his excellency,’ Deut. xxxiii. 29. Weapons offensive and defensive enough yet left; but the business is not what is an answer in itself, but what answer will satisfy them? for they that have no faith must be taught by sense. When we urge principles of faith, unless their senses hear, feel, see, they will not regard them. Then their mouths are stopped when God doth own his people from heaven. They count faith a foolish persuasion, hope a vain expectation, and inward supports and comforts fantastical impressions; as if men did feed themselves with the wind. But God’s salvation would answer for him, and some sensible providences be a real confutation.

Observe three things:—

1. The ground of David’s comfort, *I trust in thy word.*

2. The enemy’s insultation thereupon, intimated in these words, *him that reproacheth me.* They scoffed at his trust in God, as if he would not bear him out in his strictness.

3. The request of the Psalmist, that God would confute and stop their mouths by making good his promises to him, *so shall I have wherewith to answer him.* Points:—

Doct. 1. It is our duty to trust God upon his word.

Doct. 2. Those that do so must look to be reproached for it.

Doct. 3. God making good his promises confuteth their reproaches and insultations.

Doct. 4. God will therefore make them good, and his people may expect and beg deliverance to that end.

Doct. 1. It is our duty to trust God upon his word. The act of trust is spoken of with respect to a twofold object—the word and God; the one more properly noteth the warrant of faith, the other the object. Both are mentioned together, John xvii. 20, ‘Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.’ In other places sometimes one is mentioned, sometimes the other; trusting in God and trusting in the word of God; but whenever the one is mentioned the other is included. To trust in God without his word is a foolish and groundless presumption, and the word without God is but a dead letter. It is not the conveyances merely that a man liveth upon, but the lands conveyed by them.

First, What is this trusting in God?

Ans. An exercise of faith, whereby, looking upon God in Christ

¹ Qu. ‘spoken great things of the promise’?—ED.

through the promises, we depend upon him for whatsoever we stand in need of, and so are encouraged to go on cheerfully in the ways wherein he hath appointed us to walk. It is a fruit of faith, and supposeth it planted in the heart, for an act cannot be without a habit. I suppose a man to have this grace before I require the exercise of it. And it looketh upon God in Christ as the fountain of blessings, for otherwise God, to the fallen creature, is not an object of trust, but horror; as ‘the devils believe and tremble,’ James ii. 19; and that may be the reason why the sons of men are said to ‘put their trust under the shadow of his wings:’ Ps. xxxvi. 7, ‘How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of thy wings;’ and Ps. lvii. 1, ‘My soul trusteth in thee, yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.’ In which there is supposed to be an allusion not only to the feathers of a hen spread over the chickens, but the out-stretched wings of the cherubim over the mercy-seat, which was a type of Christ, who is therefore called *ἱλαστήριον*, a propitiation, as also the mercy-seat, Heb. v. 8, with Rom. iii. 24, ‘Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.’ The mercy-seat, or God offering himself to be reconciled in Christ, is an open sanctuary for distressed souls to fly unto. This doth draw our hearts to him through the promises. These are the holdfast which we have upon God, the sacred bands which he has taken upon himself, the rule and warrant of faith which shows how far God is to be trusted. Our necessities lead us to the promises, and the promises to Christ, and Christ to God, as the fountain of grace; and therefore we put these bonds in suit; we turn them into prayers; and then we have free leave to challenge him upon his word: Ps. cxix. 99, ‘Remember thy word unto thy servant, wherein thou hast caused me to hope.’ Therefore, to bear up our hearts, God hath not only promised us, in the general, that he will ‘never fail us nor forsake us,’ Heb. xiii. 5, ‘And all things shall work together for good,’ Rom. viii. 28; that he will be with us in fire and water, Isa. xliii. 2, and that he will be ‘a sun and a shield, and give us grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold,’ Ps. lxxxiv. 11; but also, in particular, hath multiplied and suited his promises to all our necessities, that when we come to the throne of grace we may have a promise ready. A general intimation is not so clear a ground of hope as a particular and express promise: the more of these we have, the more explicit are our thoughts about God’s protection, and the more are our hearts fortified and borne up in praying to him and waiting upon him. *Chirographa tua injiciebat tibi, Domine*—whose are these? Lay up his words in thy heart, Job xxii. 22. The more of these the more arguments in prayer. We depend upon him for all that we stand in need of. Herein is the nature of trust seen, in dependence and reliance upon God, that he will supply our wants in a way most conducive to his glory and our good. Now, this depending on God must be done at all times, especially in a time of straits and difficulties. At all times: Ps. lxii. 8, ‘Trust in the Lord at all times.’ It is an act never out of season, but especially in a time of fears, misery, and distress: Ps. lvi. 3, ‘At

what time I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee.' In prosperity and adversity we are to depend upon God, and to make use of him in all conditions: Ps. xci. 9, 'Thou shalt make the Most High thy refuge, and my God thine habitation.' A refuge is a place of retreat and safety in a time of war, and a habitation the place of our abode in a time of peace. Whatever our condition be, our dependence must be on God. When all things are prosperous, God must be owned as the fountain of our blessings, all our comforts taken out of his hand, and that we hold all by his mercy and bountiful providence. Because of our forfeiture by sin, and the uncertainty of these outward comforts, and the continual necessity of his providential influence and support, the heart must still be exercised in the acknowledgment of God and his gracious hand over us; and so the heart is not enticed by our outward comforts, but raised by them. Indeed, in some cases, it is harder to trust God with means than without. When there are visible means of supply, the heart is prone to carnal confidence. Good Paul was in danger: 2 Cor. i. 9, 'We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead.' But then in adversity, when kept bare and low, then is a time to show trust; how hard soever our condition be, grounds of confidence are not lost: Zeph. iii. 12, 'I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.' Every man thinketh trusting in God easy when things go well with him; but indeed he trusteth in other things; he eateth his own meat, and weareth his own apparel, only God carrieth the name of it. But now, when we are without all comfort and encouragement from the creatures, as David, when he was left alone, 'Refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul: I cried unto thee, O Lord, and said, Thou art my refuge and portion in the land of the living,' Ps. cxlii. 4, 5. When men fail, God never faileth; when riches take wing, and worldly friends forsake us, then is a time for trust and dependence upon God. It is the end of providence that we should have the less comfort in the creature that we may have all in God. Now we are to depend on God for whatsoever we stand in need of, as at all times, so for all things, temporal and spiritual mercies; for God will withhold no good thing from us. He hath undertaken not only to give us heaven and happiness in the next world, but to carry us thither with comfort, 'that we may serve him without fear all the days of our lives,' Luke i. 75. His providence concerneth the outward and inward man, and so do his promises. A whole believer is in covenant with God, body and soul, and he will take care of both. But all the difficulty is how we ought to depend on him for temporal supplies.

1. It is certain that we ought not to set God a task to provide meat for our lusts: Ps. lxxviii. 18, 'And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lusts.' Carnal affections and hopes do but make trouble for ourselves. Though it be the ordinary practice of God's free grace and fatherly cares to provide things comfortable and necessary for his children, whilst he hath work for them to do, yet he never undertook to maintain us at such a rate, to give us so much by the year, such portions for our children, and supplies for our families.

We must leave to the great Shepherd of the sheep to choose our pastures, bare or large; and he that will depend upon God must be sure to empty his heart of covetous desires, and be contented with our lot, if we would cast ourselves upon his providence: Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' We do but ensnare and perplex our own thoughts while we would reconcile the promises with our lusts, and crave more than ever God meaneth to give.

2. It is as certain that we ought not to be faithless and full of cares about these outward supplies: Mat. vi. 23, 'Take no thought what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed;' because, if we had no promises, there is a common bounty and goodness of God which is over all his works, and reacheth to the preservation of the smallest worm, decketh the lilies, feedeth the ravens and the fowls of the air; and certainly more noble creatures, such as men are, may expect their share in this common bounty; how much more when there is a covenant wherein God hath promised to be a father to us, and temporal blessings are adopted and taken into the covenant as well as other blessings. Will not he give that to children which he gives to enemies, to beasts and fowls of the air? You would count him a barbarous and unnatural father that feeds his dogs and hawks, and lets his children die of hunger; and can we without blasphemy think so of God?

3. As we ought not, on the one hand, to think God will supply our lusts, nor, on the other hand, distrust his care of necessities, so we cannot be absolutely confident of particular success in temporal things; for they are not absolutely promised, but with exception of the cross, and as God shall see them good for us. God reserved in the covenant a liberty both of showing his justice and his wisdom; his justice, in scourging his sinning people: Ps. lxxxix. 32, 'He will visit their iniquity with rods, and their transgression with scourges.' The world shall know God doth not allow sins in his own children. Sin is as odious to God in them as others, yea, more; and therefore they feel the smart of it. The liberty of his wisdom: Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'The Lord God is a sun and a shield: the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly;' Ps. xxxiv. 9, 10, 'O fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him: the young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing.' They may want many comforts, but no good thing. Good is not determined by our fancies, but God's wisdom. Well, then, we cannot expect a certain tenure of temporal happiness; there is great danger in fixing a deceitful hope; much of the subtlety of Satan is to be seen in it, who maketh an advantage of our disappointments, and abuseth our rash confidence into a snare and temptation to atheism and the misbelief of other truths.

4. The dependence we exercise about these things lieth in committing ourselves to God's power, and referring ourselves to God's will. He is so able that he can secure us in his work, so good, that we should not trouble ourselves about his will, but refer it to him without hesi-

tancy, which, if we could bring our hearts to it, it would ease us of many burdensome thoughts and troublesome cares: 1 Peter iv. 19, 'Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator;' Prov. xvi. 3, 'Commit thy ways unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.' Put yourselves into God's hands, so trusting him with the issue of our affairs, though we know not how it will fall: 1 Chron. xix. 13, 'Let the Lord do what is good in his sight;' 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the saviour of all men, especially of those that believe;' and so are encouraged to go on cheerfully with their duty. Trust in God is not idle expectation or a devout sloth, but such a dependence as giveth life to our service, that we may go on cheerfully, without disquiet in our work, and in ways wherein he hath appointed us to walk. The law gives protection to those that travel on the road, not in byways: 'He shall keep thee in all thy ways:' *in viis, non in precipitiis*. Otherwise you seek to draw God into a fellowship of your guilt, and do 'make him serve with your iniquities,' Isa. xliii. 24—he was doubly censured among the heathen that took a lamp from the altar to steal by—to make God's providence subservient to the devil's interest: 1 Peter iv. 19, 'Commit your souls to God in well-doing.' God never undertook to protect us in the devil's service.

Secondly, Reasons why it is our duty.

1. Trust, as it implieth recourse to God in our necessities, is necessarily required in the fundamental article of the covenant, in the choice of God for your God. Nature teacheth men in their distress to run to their gods: Jonah i. 5, 'The mariners cried every man to his god.' It immediately results from the owning of a God, that we should trust him with our safety; much more when taught thus to do, and how to do so in the word.

2. Else there can be no converse with God. Truth is the ground of commerce between man and man; so our dependence, which is built upon God's fidelity, is the ground of commerce between God and us. Man fell from God by distrust, by having a jealousy of him; and still the evil heart of unbelief doth lead us off from God: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' But the more we believe him, the more we keep with him. God doth not give present payment, nor govern the world by sense; therefore faith is necessary: 2 Cor. v. 7, 'For we walk by faith, not by sight.' Sight is for heaven, faith for the present dispensation. We are now under sense, and that will mislead us. Reason is either refined by faith, or depressed by sense.

3. Consider whose word it is. God's word is the signification of his will who is merciful, able, true. (1.) There is benignity and goodness, by which he is willing to help poor creatures, though we can be of no use and profit to him. The hen receiveth no benefit by the chickens, only her trouble of providing for them is increased; but they are her own brood, therefore she leadeth them up and down that they may find a sustenance: so doth God to the creatures. We are the work of his hands, therefore he pitieth us, and is willing to save

us; and not only so, but carried us in the womb of his decree from all eternity. (2.) His truth and fidelity is laid at pawn with the creature in the promises: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' He standeth much on his truth, is punctual in his promises. It is a great disgrace done to God if we do not trust him upon his word; we 'make him a liar:' 1 John v. 10, 'He that believeth not God hath made him a liar,' and so not God. (3.) He is able to make it good; his word never yet found difficulty: 'He spake the word, and it was done.' There is the same power that goeth still along with his word. If he say he will do this, who can let? Therefore, none that ever yet trusted in God were disappointed: Ps. xxii. 5, 'They trusted in thee, and were not confounded.'

4. From the benefits of this trust.

[1.] This fixeth and establisheth the heart against all fears, which so often prove a snare to us: Ps. cxii. 7, 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' Ill news and cross accidents falling out in the world do not dismay him, because he looketh higher, because he hath set God against men, the covenant against providences, eternal things against temporal; he is not fearless, yet his heart is established and fixed.

[2.] It allayeth our sorrows, and maketh us cheerful in the midst of all difficulties and discouragements: Ps. xlii. 5, 'I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation;' so Ps. lii. 8, 'I am like a green olive-tree, for I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.' As some trees are green in winter; this will make a man flourish notwithstanding opposition, and all the bitter cold blasts of trouble and worldly distress.

[3.] It quiets the heart as to murmurings and unquiet agitations of spirit, to wait God's leisure. When there was a storm in David's spirit, he allayeth it thus: Ps. xlii. 5, 'Why art thou disquieted, O my soul? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him.' On the contrary, murmuring, impatience, and vexation is the fruit of distrust: Ps. cvi. 24, 25, 'They believed not his word, and murmured in their tents.' They that distrust God's promise fall a quarrelling with his providence. Did we believe that the wise God is still carrying on all things for our good, we would submit to his will.

[4.] It banisheth and removeth far from us distracting cares and fears; these are a great sin, a reproach to our heavenly Father: Mat. vi. 25, 'Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, nor what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on;' and ver. 32, 'After all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' As if your children, when you are able to maintain them, should distrust your allowance, and beg their bread from door to door. We are forecasting many things, take God's work out of his hands, and are anxious in inquiring what we shall eat, what we shall drink, what shall become of such a business and affair. Now, how shall we be eased of these tormenting thoughts? Prov. xvi. 3, 'Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established;' 2 Chron. xx. 20, 'Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established.'

[5.] It keepeth us from warping and turning aside to crooked paths.

As long as we are persuaded that God will maintain us by honest and lawful means, we are kept upright with God; but an unbelieving person makes haste; right or wrong, he will be his own carver. Men, if they have not faith enough to trust God in an ordinary course of providence, think God is a bad pay-master, and therefore take up with present things: Zeph. iii. 2, 'She obeyed not my voice, she trusted not in the Lord;' that was the reason of her corruption, oppression, and deceit; this was the reason why they rose up against Moses, and would go back to Egypt; they would not believe God could maintain them in the wilderness. Warping and declining from God cometh from want of faith.

The first *use* is to persuade us to trust in God upon his word. I will direct you—

1. As to the means.

2. The nature of this trust.

1. As to the means. If you would do so—

[1.] Know him: Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.' If God were better known, he would be better trusted: 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed.'

[2.] Get a covenant interest in him. If our interest be clouded, how can we put promises in suit? But when it is clear, you may draw comfortable conclusions thence: Ps. xxxi. 14, 'I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God;' Ps. xxiii. 1, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;' he will provide for his own: Lam. iii. 24, 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.'

[3.] Walk closely with him: Micah iii. 11, 'The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money; yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? None evil shall come upon us.' God will shake them as Paul did the viper. Shame, fear, and doubts do always follow sin. Will a man trust him whom he hath provoked? Doubts are the fumes of sin, like vapours that come from off a foul stomach. If we mean to make good and keep a friend, we will be careful to please him. A good conversation breedeth a good conscience, and a good conscience trust in God.

[4.] Observe experiences, when he maketh good his word: Ps. xviii. 30, 'As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is tried; he is a buckler to all them that trust in him.' All these providences are confirmations that feed and nourish faith: Ps. lvi. 10, 11, 'In God will I praise his word; in the Lord will I praise his word: in God have I put my trust; I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.'

2. As to the nature of this trust. Let me commend to you—

[1.] The adventure of faith: Luke v. 5, 'At thy word we will let down the net.' At thy command; when we cannot apply the promise, venture for the command's sake; see what God will do for you, and what believing comes to.

[2.] The waiting of faith, when expectation is not answered, and you find not at first what you wait for; yet do not give God the lie, but resolve to keep the promise as a pawn till the blessing promised cometh: Isa. xxviii. 16, 'He that believeth maketh not haste.' It is carnal affection must have present satisfaction: greedy and impatient

longings argue a disease. Revenge must have it by and by ; covetousness waxeth rich in a day ; ambition would rise presently ; lusts are earnest and ravenous ; like diseased stomachs, must have green trash.

[3.] The obstinacy and resolution of faith. Resolve to die holding the horns of the altar ; you will not be put off ; as she cried so much the more, and the woman of Canaan turned discouragements into arguments : Job xiii. 15, ' Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'

[4.] The submission and resignation of faith : Mat. vi. 33, ' Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added to you.' Set your hearts upon the highest interest, make sure of heaven, and refer other things to God ; be at a point of indifferency for temporal supplies.

[5.] The prudence of faith. Settle your mind against present necessities, and for future contingencies leave them to God's providence : Mat. vi. 34, ' Sufficient for each day is the evil thereof.' Children, that have to allay present hunger, do not cark how to bring the year about ; they leave that to their father. Manna was to be gathered daily ; when it was kept till the morning, it putrified.

[6.] The obedience of faith. Mind duty, and let God take care of success. Let God alone with the issues of things, otherwise we take the work out of his hands. A Christian's care should be what he should be, not what shall become of him : Phil. iv. 6, ' Be careful for nothing ;' and 1 Peter v. 7, ' But cast your care on him, for he careth for you.' There is a care of duties and a care of events. God is more solicitous for you than you for yourselves.

Use 2. Do we thus trust in the Lord ? All will pretend to trust in God, but there is little of this true trusting in him in the world.

1. If we trust God we shall be often with him in prayer, Ps. lxxii. 8, ' Trust in the Lord at all times ; pour out your hearts before him ;' 2 Sam. xxii. 2-4, ' The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, the God of my rock ; in him will I trust ; he is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my Saviour ; thou savest me from violence ; I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised ; so shall I be saved from mine enemies.' We act our trust at the throne of grace ; encourage ourselves in God.

2. It will quiet and fix the heart, free it of cares, fears, and anxious thoughts : Phil. iv. 6, 7, ' Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God ; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ ;' Ps. xciv. 19, ' In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.'

3. A care to please, for dependence begets observance. They that have all from God will not easily break with him.

Doct. 2. Those that do trust in God must look to be reproached for it by carnal men.

1. There are two sorts of men in the world ever since the beginning — contrary seeds : Gen. iii. 15, ' I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' Some born of the flesh, some of the spirit ; the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent ; some that live by sense, some by faith : ever it will be so.

And there is an enmity between these two, and this enmity vented by reproach: Gal. iv. 29, 'But as he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now;' that persecution was by bitter mockings. So Ishmael: Gen. xxi. 9, 'Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.'

2. The occasion, from their low condition; hence they will take liberty to mock at their interest in God, and to shame them from their confidence, as if the promise of God were of none effect. Carnal men measure all things by a carnal interest; and therefore the life of those that live by faith is ridiculous to them; those that trust in a promise are exercised with delay and distress: Heb. vi. 12, 'Be ye followers of them who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises.' Here is matter for faith and patience. Now, they that know no arm but flesh, no security but a temporal interest, no happiness but in the things of this life, have them in derision that look elsewhere.

Use 1. Not to count it strange when it is our lot to be exercised with reproaches because of our trust; so was Christ: Ps. xxii. 6-8, 'I am a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people: all they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, and shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him;' Mat. xxvii. 39-43, 'And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself; if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross,' &c. If Christ Jesus was mocked for his trust, we should bear it the more patiently. So the people of God: 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.' It is no new thing for the adversaries of religion to scorn such as trust in God, and rely upon his promises; therefore bear it the more patiently. (1.) Whether they be upbraidings of our trust: Mat. xxvii. 43, 'He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God;' Job iv. 6, 'Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?' (2.) Or insultings over our low and comfortless condition. Men will tread down the hedge where they find it low. The Psalmist complaineth, Ps. lxxix. 26, 'They speak to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded;' pour in vinegar and salt where they find a wound, and add affliction to the afflicted. You will hear bitter words. Christ himself was thus exercised: Mat. xxvii. 29, 'Hail, King of the Jews.' To be mocked and scorned we must expect, and that men will insult. (3.) Or whether they be perverse applications of providence. Thus Shimei insulted over David in his distress: 2 Sam. xvi. 7, 8, 'Come out, thou bloody man, thou man of Belial; the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul,' &c. So men will say, 'This is for your rebellion, &c.'

Use 2. Since there are two parties in the world, they that trust and they that reproach them for their trust, consider in what number you are. It is needful to be far from the disposition of the seed of the serpent, and not to have your tongues set on fire of hell, to be far from the disposition of those that are governed by sense and carnal interests.

(1.) It is unmannerly to insult over any in distress, and to reproach them with their condition. Places blasted with lightning were accounted sacred amongst the heathens, because the hand of God had touched them; so you should not speak to the grief of those whom God hath wounded, but pity them, and pray for them, if they are fallen into God's hands. (2.) It is unchristian to reproach those that trust in God. It is easy to know them. Who are they that pray, that plead promises, that carry not on their hopes by present likelihoods? Though they have their faults, they are, for the main, strict, holy, charitable. (3.) It is dangerous to offend any of Christ's little ones, and to grieve their spirits.

Doct. 3. That these reproaches are grievous to God's children, and go near their hearts; therefore David desires God to appear for him, that he may have somewhat to answer them that reproached him.

1. Man's nature cannot endure reproach, especially a scornful reproach: every man thinketh himself worthy of some regard.

2. Religion increaseth the sense of it, as the flood increased when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, Gen. vii. 11. When the deep below and the heaven above combined, the flood was greater; so when grace and nature join, it is very grievous. David said, Ps. xlii. 10, 'It was a sword in my bones when they said, Where is now thy God?' These were cutting words to David's heart.

[1.] It is a dishonour to God, and they are sensible of that, as well as a misery to themselves. It is a dishonour to his power, as if he could not help; to his love, as if he would not; to his truth, as if he would fail in the needful time, or were fickle and inconstant, as if he would desert his friends in misery; to his holiness, as if he favoured wicked men in their evil courses, and formal dead-hearted services: Ps. l. 21, 'These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.' How can a soul that loveth God endure this, that the power of God should be lessened or his truth questioned? Rabshakeh said, 'What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?' Isa. xxxvi. 4, compared with xviii. 19, 20, 'Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The Lord shall deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the heathens delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they amongst all the gods that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?' As if the living God had no more power than dumb idols. Therefore Hezekiah goeth and spreads the letter before the Lord. You touch a godly man to the quick when you strike at God's honour; they have a tender sense and feeling of this.

[2.] It reflects upon the ways of God, to bring them out of request. You thought you were one of God's darlings, you thought nobody served God but you; this is your godly profession, your fasting and prayer; what need such niceness? Thus they count his way folly, his life madness.

[3.] These reproaches strike at the life of faith, and therefore go

very near the hearts of God's children. Trust and confidence in God is the life of their souls : Ps. iii. 2, ' There is no help for him in God'. Such temptations are very catching, when he seemeth opposite to them. Now our unbelief puts in to make the temptation stronger. There is some visible pretence for what is said, Where are the promises thou talkest of ? Where the promises and the deliverance ? What have thy prayers brought from heaven ? Thou hast called and none answered, cried and none hath pity on thee. What profit in serving the Lord ? And then what followeth after this open objection ? Unbelief cometh ; and whispereth in our ears, Do you think those things true the word speaketh ?

Well, then, open your hearts to God, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter ; tell him of these ' cruel mockings,' as they are called, Heb. xi. 36. It is the manner of saints so to do : Ps. cxv. 2, ' Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God ?' and Joel ii. 17, on the fasting day ' let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar ; and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them : wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God ?'

Doct. 4. God making good his promises, confuteth these reproaches and insultations. When deliverance cometh their mouths are stopped : Job v. 16, ' The poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth ;' Ps. cvii. 42, ' The righteous shall see it, and iniquity shall stop her mouth,' then when ' he sets the poor on high from affliction, and maketh them families like a flock.' In both these places it is not said, God stoppeth their mouths, or the saints stop their mouths, but they stop their own mouths ; then we need not answer our adversaries, they answer themselves ; they have not a word to say, and all their pride and insultation is defeated and silenced.

Use 1. Prayer is necessary. Desire God to appear and right himself, that he may confute the perverse thoughts of men, and wrong applications of his providence, that carnal men may see your hope and confidence in God is not in vain. You may beg deliverance on this ground, that the mouth of iniquity may be stopped.

Use 2. Wait. Carnal men reproach God's people with their trust, when in their distress he stays a little, when they have humbled themselves for their sins, and sought reconciliation with God as his word prescribeth, and are sufficiently weaned from carnal props, and have learned to depend on him ; the wicked shall find himself mistaken about the godly, whose ways he counted folly.

SERMON XLIX.

And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth ; for I have hoped in thy judgments.—VER. 43.

In the first verse of this portion David had begged for deliverance according to the word ; this he backeth with several arguments. His

first argument was from his enemies, who would else reproach him for his trust. He now enforceth that request from another argument, lest his case and condition should make him afraid, or his disappointments ashamed to own his faith in God's promises, and so his mouth be shut up from speaking of God and his word, for the edification of others and the confutation of the wicked. Here observe—

1. His request, *and take not the word of truth out of my mouth.*

2. The profession of his faith, repeated by way of argument and reasons, *for I have hoped in thy judgments.*

1. For his request. You may wonder why he beggeth that the word of truth may not be taken out of his mouth. Rather you would think he should ask that it might be kept in his heart. But you must consider that confession of truth is very necessary, and in a time of dangers and distresses very difficult. The proper seat of the word of truth is the heart; it must abide there. But when the heart is full, the tongue will speak: 'I have believed, and therefore have I spoken,' Ps. cxvi. 10. The word is first in the heart, and then in the mouth; therefore David saith, 'Take it not out of my mouth.' And pray, mark, he doth not only deprecate the evil itself, but the degree and extremity of it, 'Take it not utterly out of my mouth.' God's children may not have liberty to speak for him, or if liberty, not such a courage as is necessary. Therefore, though he should or had failed in being ashamed to profess his hope, yet he desireth he might not wholly want either an occasion or a heart so to do; that he might not wholly want an occasion, having no relief and comfort by the promises, nor an heart, as being altogether dismayed or disconsolate.

2. The profession of his faith is renewed, 'For I have hoped in thy judgments.' The word *בִּישְׁפָּטִים*, *judgments*, signifieth either the law, or the execution of the sentence thereof.

[1.] The law, or whole word of God, so that I have hoped in thy judgments is no more but 'in thy word do I hope,' as it is Ps. cxxx. 5, 'I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.'

[2.] Answerable execution, when the promise or threatening is fulfilled.

(1.) When the promise is fulfilled, that is judgment in a sense; when God accomplisheth what he hath promised for our salvation and deliverance. Thus God is said to judge for his people when he righteth and saveth them according to his word: Lam. iii. 59, 'O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong; judge thou my cause.'

(2.) But the more usual notion of judgment is the execution of the threatening on wicked men, which being a benefit to God's faithful servants, and done in their favour, David might well be said to hope for it. Their judgment is our obtaining the promise. Points:—

Doct. 1. It is not enough to believe the word in our hearts, but we must confess it with our mouths.

Doct. 2. Such trials may befall God's children that the word of truth may seem to be taken out of their mouths.

Doct. 3. At such a time God must be dealt withal, as much concerned in it. David saith to the Lord, 'Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.'

Doct. 4. If it please God to desert us in some passage of our trial,

we must not give him over, but deal with him not to forsake us utterly.

Doct. 5. They will not utterly be overcome in their trials who hope in God's judgments.

Doct. 1. It is not enough to believe the word in our hearts, but we must confess it with our mouths. So it is expressly said, Rom. x. 9. 10, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' There is the whole sum of Christianity, and it is reduced to these two points—believing with the heart, and confessing with the mouth; an entertaining of Christ in the heart with a true and lively faith, and a confessing of Christ with the mouth in spite of all persecution and danger. So in the first solemn proposal of the gospel: Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;' where not only belief is required, but open profession; for that end serveth baptism, which is a badge and bond—a badge to distinguish the worshippers of Christ from others, and a bond to bind us to open profession of the name of Christ, and practice of the duties included therein. So Heb. iii. 1, Jesus Christ is called 'the great high priest and apostle of our profession.' The Christian religion is a confession, not a thing to be smothered and kept in secret, or confined to the heart, but to be openly brought forth, and avowed in word and deed to the glory of Christ. If a man should content himself to own God in his heart, what would become of the Church of God, and all his ordinances, and the assemblies of his people, among whom we make this open confession?

1. This confession is necessary as well as the inward belief, because God hath required it by an express law, which law is confirmed by a sanction of great weight and moment, the greatest promises on the one hand, and the greatest penalties and threatenings on the other. That there is an express law for confession, besides what hath been said already, see 1 Peter iii. 15, 'Sanctify the Lord God of hosts in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear;' where they are required not only to revere God in their hearts, but to be ready to own him with their mouths, and to give a testimony of him when it should be demanded; yea, that sanctifying God in their hearts is required in order to the testimony given with their mouths, that having due and awful thoughts of God they may not be ashamed to own him before men. Now this is backed with the greatest promises, and on the other side with the severest threatenings. God hath promised no less than salvation to those that confess him: Mat. x. 32, 'Whosoever will confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.' Father, this is one of mine. He will do them more honour than possibly they can do him; and Rom. x. 10, 'With the mouth confession is made to salvation.' *Salvi esse non possumus. saith Austin, nisi ad salutem proximorum etiam ore profiteamur fidem*—we cannot be saved unless we profess the faith that we have. On the other side, the neglect of profession, either out of shame

or fear, is threatened with the greatest penalties; Mark viii. 38, 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with his glorious angels.' Then, when all shadows flee away, and we would crouch for a little favour, that Christ should be ashamed of us, These were Christians, but cowardly and dastardly ones: I cannot own them to be of my flock and kingdom,—oh, how will our faces gather blackness! The same is Luke ix. 26, 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.' So for fear: 2 Tim. ii. 11, 'If we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he will deny us.' So that you see it is not a matter of small moment whether we confess or no, but a thing expressly enjoined by God, and that upon terms of life and death.

2. This confession is of great use, as conducing much to the glory of God and the good of others.

[1.] The glory of God, which should be the great scope and end of our lives and actions, is much concerned in our confessing or not confessing what we believe. When we boldly avow the truth, it is a sign we are not ashamed of our master: Phil. i. 20, 'According to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.' Ministry or martyrdom, he calls this a magnifying of Christ; whereas flinching, concealing, halving the truth, denying confession, is called a being ashamed of Christ: Luke ix. 26, 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words;' as if his name were a thing base, unworthy, not to be owned.

[2.] The good of others and their edification is concerned in our confessing or not confessing. No man is born for himself, and therefore is not only to work out his own salvation, but as much as in him lieth to procure the salvation of others, and to bring God and his truth into request with them; therefore not only to believe with the heart—that concerneth himself, but to confess with the mouth—that concerneth the good of others. When we own the truth, though it cost us dear, that tendeth to the furtherance of the gospel: Phil. i. 12, 13, 'For I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places,' &c. But when we dissemble, that is a scandal and a stumbling-block to others, whom we justify and harden in a false way; as Peter, fearing them of the circumcision, dissembled, and 'the Jews dissembled with him, insomuch that Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation,' Gal. ii. 12, 13. Men of public fame and favour, when they are not men of courage and of self-denying spirits, their temporising may do a great deal of hurt, and, like a torrent, or stream, carry others with them. Oh, let us beware of this! Zuinglius saith, *Ad aras Jovis et Veneris adorare, et sub antichristo fidem occultare, idem est*—as well worship before the altars of Jupiter and Venus, as hide our faith under antichrist. Fear and weakness excuseth not. The fear-

ful and unbelieving are put with murderers and sorcerers and idolaters, and sent together to the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, Rev. xxi. 8.

Use 1. To reprove them that think it to be enough to own the truth in their hearts, without confessing it with their mouths. This libertinism prevailed at Corinth, where they thought they might be present at idols' feasts, as long as in their consciences they knew that an idol was nothing. The apostle argueth against them, 2 Cor. vi., and concludes his argument thus: 2 Cor. vii. 1, 'Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.' To pretend to serve God in my heart, whosoever thinks so mocketh God and deceiveth himself. He that warreth with the enemies of his prince, and is as forward in battle as any of the rest, can he say, I reserve the king my heart and affections? Or when a woman prostituteth her body to another, will the husband be content with such an excuse, that she reserveth her heart for him? God is not a God of half of a man: he made the whole body and soul, and will be served with both; he bought both: 1 Cor. vi. 20, 'Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are God's.' Therefore you should not only love him in your hearts, but openly plead for him and maintain his quarrel. The devil asketh but Christ's knee: Mark iv. 9, 'Fall down and worship me.' What! were all the martyrs of God rash, inconsiderate, that suffered so many things rather than lose their liberty in God's service? Would we be content God should deal with us as we deal by him, glorify their souls only, love their souls, but punish their bodies eternally?

2. Them that, though not tainted with this libertine principle, yet are afraid or ashamed to own the truth.

[1.] Some afraid because of troubles and persecution. Hath Christ endured so much for us, and shall we be afraid to own his truth? God forbid! If I would fear, whom should I be afraid of? Mat. x. 28, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.' Whom should a child fear, his father or the servants of his house? So, whom should we fear, God or man, a prison or hell?

2. Ashamed in peace and out of trouble, ashamed to own Christ in such company, or to speak of God and his word. O Christians! shall we be ashamed to speak for him that was not ashamed to die for us, or count religion a disgrace which is our glory? Would a father take it well that his son should be ashamed of him? Are we ashamed of the gospel, the great charter of our hopes, the seeds of the new life, the power of God to salvation? Rom. i. 16, 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God to salvation.' Oh, shake off this baseness! John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that comes from God only?'

Use 2. To exhort us to confess with the mouth, and to own the truths we are persuaded of. And here I shall handle the case of profession.

1. How far it is necessary. It is a matter intricate and perplexed, and therefore I care not to comprise all cases, but to the most notable I shall speak.

2. As to the manner how this profession is to be made.

1. How far we are bound to profess.

[1.] The affirmative.

[2.] The negative.

[1.] The affirmative.

(1.) It is certain that the great truths must be owned and publicly professed, or else Christ would not have a visible people in the world, distinct from pagans and heathens. Our baptism bindeth us to this profession, and to all practices consonant and agreeable with it: Rom. x. 10, 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' To own Christ as the Saviour of the world, evidenced by his resurrection from the dead.

(2.) It is certain we must do nothing to contradict the truth in the smallest matters: 2 Cor. xiii. 8, 'We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.' Nothing contrary to the glory of God, or the prejudice of the least truth, whatever it costs us.

(3.) In lesser truths, when they are ventilated and brought forth upon the stage, and God crieth out, Who is on my side, who? we ought not to give up ourselves to an indifferency, to hide our profession for any danger: 2 Peter i. 12, 'Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.' The church of God is out of repair sometimes in one point, sometimes in another; the orthodoxy of the generality of men is usually an age too short in things now afoot; they go wrong, or forbear to give help to the church, because the god of this world hath blinded their eyes. Fight Christ, fight antichrist, they are resolved to be lookers-on.

(4.) When our non-profession shall be interpreted to be a denial. Thus Daniel, chap. vi. 10, opened his casement, which looked towards Jerusalem, and prayed three times a day as he was wont. We must rather suffer than deny the truth by interpretation, when such practices are urged as cross a principle, and we comply.

(5.) When others are scandalised by our non-profession, or not owning the truths of Christ; that is, not only with the scandal of offence or contristation, but with the scandal of seduction, in danger to sin; and to run into error by our not appearing for God, the interest of truth should prevail above our ease and private content.

(6.) When an account of my faith is demanded, and I am called forth to give testimony for Christ, especially by magistrates: Mat. x. 18, 'Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles: 1 Peter iii. 15, 'Be always ready to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you,' provided it be not in scorn: Prov. xxvi. 4, 5, 'Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.' Answer and answer not; not out of curiosity, as Herod questioned Christ many things, but he answered him nothing, Luke xxiii. 9; or to be a snare, Isa. xxxvi. 21, 'They held their peace, and answered him not a word, for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not,' nor parley with Rabshakeh. In such cases you must not 'cast pearls before swine, lest they turn again and rend you,' Mat. vii. 6.

(7.) When impulsions are great, and fair opportunities are offered in God's providence : Acts xvii. 16, 'While Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.' It is an intimation from God that then it is seasonable to interpose for his glory.

[2.] Negatively, which is to be forborne.

(1.) Till you be fully persuaded in your own mind of the truth which you would profess, for otherwise we shall appear with a various and doubtful face to the world, changing and wavering according to the uncertainty of our own thoughts, and so make the profession of religion ridiculous. We often see cause to suspect what before we were strongly conceited of. There is a certain credulity and lightness of believing which men are subject to. Now when this breaks out into sudden profession, men run through all sects and religions, and so blast and blemish their own service, therefore what is contrary to the received sense, especially of the godly, ought to be weighed and weighed again before we appear to the world to be otherwise minded.

(2.) When the profession of a lesser truth proves an offence to the weak, and a disturbance to the church, and a hindrance of some greater benefit. All private opinions must give way to the great law of edification : Rom. xiv. 22, 'Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God.' We must not perplex weak souls with doubtful disputations, till they be established in greater things ; neither must the peace of the church be troubled with nice debates, but all things must give way to the profit and general edification.

(3.) When the unseasonable venting of things will do more hurt than good, and the sway of the times and strong tide and current of prejudices running down against us hinder all probability of doing good, then our profession now may deprive us of a more useful profession another time : Prov. xxix. 11, 'A fool uttereth all his mind, but he that is wise keepeth it in till afterward.' Paul was at Ephesus two years before he spake against Diana, Acts xix. 10 ; only intimated in general terms that they were no gods that were made with hands. When we cannot effect the good things we desire, nor in that holy manner we would, we must not obstruct our future service, but commend the cause to God, and wait further opportunity to do good.

2. The manner how to make profession.

[1.] Knowledge must be at the bottom of profession. Some will run before they can go, leap into opinions and practices before they see the reasons of them ; and then no wonder they are as children, 'carried about with every wind of doctrine,' Eph. iv. 14. Wherefore, that which we profess we must do it knowingly, that we may be able to render a reason of all that we do profess.

[2.] Gracious wisdom to espy the due occasion when God is glorified and our neighbour edified. Rash, arrogant, and presumptuous spirits are heady, high-minded, disgrace religion more than honour it.

[3.] With boldness to do it freely and without fear of men : Acts iv. 13, 'When they saw the boldness of Peter and John,' &c. ; ver. 29, 'Grant to thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word,' and 1 Tim. iii. 13, 'They that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith

which is in Christ Jesus ;' Acts ix. 27, 'Barnabas declared unto them how he had preached boldly to them at Damascus in the name of Jesus ;' ver. 29, 'He spake boldly in the name of Jesus ;' Acts xiv. 3, 'Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord ;' Acts xiii. 46, 'Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold.' Fear and shame argueth diffidence of the truth which we profess, or else a distrust of the God from whom it cometh, or at least the unsoundness of the professing party, that he hath a naughty conscience, or a great deal of fleshly fear unmortified. As he cannot walk stoutly that has a stone in his shoe, so he that hath sin in his conscience. *Obmutescit facundia si agra sit conscientia*, saith Ambrose—a bad conscience stoppeth the mouth.

[4.] With sincerity, without dissimulation and guile. Profession without answerable duty is like leaves without fruit. Words must come from the heart. To be talking of God when they lie under the guilt of known sins. James ii. 16, 'If one say unto the poor, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled ; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit ?' Ps. l. 16, 17, 'Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my word behind thee ?'

[5.] With meekness and reverence : Peter iii. 15, 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear ;' not in a passionate, froward, arrogant way, but with meekness of spirit, without all show of passion, and with sober and respectful language.

[6.] The general end is the glory of God and the edification of our neighbour ; and the means to this end is the fear of God, which keeps us out of all faulty extremes : Eccles. vii. 16, 17, 'Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise : why shouldest thou destroy thyself ? Be not over-much wicked, neither be thou foolish : why shouldest thou die before thy time ?' Some drive all things to extremity, hot like gunpowder ; others freeze into a compliance and time-serving. When the heart is seasoned by the fear of God, and we are guided by reasons of conscience rather than interest, and we constantly wait upon God for direction, then will God guide us.

Doct. 2. Such trials may befall God's children that the word of truth may seem to be taken out of their mouths.

This may come to pass two ways :—

1. They may not have liberty to own it ; as Acts iv. 18, 19, 'They commanded them not to speak at all, nor to teach in the name of Jesus : and they said, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you or unto God, judge ye.' The magistrate's command is a silencing of them, shutting of their mouths ; only here cometh a question whether ministers forbidden by magistrates should desist from preaching ? If we say they ought, it seems to be against the apostle's reply ; if we say not, we shall seem to deny obedience to secular and politic powers, who ought to be satisfied in the persons that exercise a public ministry in their dominions, and so lay a foundation for public disturbance and disorder. For answer—We must distinguish between persons employed to preach the gospel ; some immediately called by Christ himself, others mediately called by men ; some fallible and obnoxious

to errors and many failings, which render them unworthy of such a calling; others infallibly guided and assisted. These latter, without flat disobedience and injury to Christ, could not own any command contrary to the precedent authority of Christ, being the only men of that order that could witness these things. It is true 'a necessity is laid upon us' of preaching the gospel, 1 Cor. ix. 16, so as not voluntarily to relinquish our station, but we may be forced to give way to the greater force. Some are silenced by authority and opposition of men, a dispensation God often permitteth for despising the truth and playing the wanton with an opportunity of open profession. When men dally with the light, God removeth their candlestick, and the door is shut upon them.

2. They may not have courage to own the word of truth for fear of danger, because of many adversaries. There is a great deal of this unmortified fleshly fear in the best, and may be tongue-tied when God's glory is concerned, and awed by the menaces and insults of evil men, or discouraged, that they dare not trust God with events, and are out of all hope of success: Ezek. iii. 26, 'I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, and thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them for a reprove, for they are a rebellious house.' By these and many other ways they may be discouraged from speaking of God and his truth. But now, when such a case falleth out, what shall we do? That in the third point.

Doct. 3. At such a time God must be dealt withal about it upon two grounds:—

1. Because God hath a great hand in the judgment. In the outward case, want of liberty, nothing falleth out without his providence; he seeth fit sometimes to exercise his people with unreasonable men, for 'all have not faith,' 2 Thes. iii. 2, that obstruct and hinder the course of the gospel; some that be like Elymas the sorcerer, 'enemies to all goodness,' Acts xiii. 10. And this *in ecclesia constituta*, in the bosom of the church, where orthodox faith is professed, where magistrates be Christians, and should be nursing fathers to the church. In Abraham's family, which Paul makes the pattern of our estate to the end of the world: Gal. iv. 29, 'But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now.' These may prevail many times to the great discouragement of the faithful. God may suffer it to be so for the punishing and trying of his people: Acts xix. 9, 'But when divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.' Then, as to the inward case, he may justly desert us in the time of trial, when we should give a testimony for him, and take the word of truth out of our mouths. All these speeches: 'Hide not thy commandments from me,' ver. 19; 'Incline not mine heart to covetousness,' ver. 26; and here, 'Take not thy word out of my mouth,' and many such like, relate to God's judicial sentence, in what he doth as a judge. Upon our evil deserving he withdraweth his grace, and then we are delivered over to our own fears and baseness of spirit. Besides our own fault there is judicial tradition on God's part, which takes away the heart and courage of men: Job xii. 24, 'He taketh away the

heart of the chief of the people, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness, where there is no way.' Now none can suspend God's sentence but God himself. If he shut who can open? therefore he is to dealt with.

2. God only can give us a remedy by his grace and power; therefore our great business lieth with him, in regard of the power of his providence, by which he can remove rubs and oppositions: 2 Thes. iii. 1, 'Pray for us, that the word of God may have a free course,' *ἵνα ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ τρέχῃ*—that it may run as chariot wheels on smooth ground, without rubs and oppositions. There are many times mountains in the way, potent oppositions and strongly combined interests, that hinder the liberty of the word; but God can smoothe them into a plain: Zech. iv. 7, 'Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubabel thou shalt become a plain.' Opposition seemeth insuperable. That great mountain that obstructed the work of God was the court of Persia, instigated and set on by the Samaritan faction—a great mountain indeed; but as great as it is, God can thresh it into dust, when it hindereth his interest. As to the inward case, it is God that giveth a spirit of courage and fortitude, and 'a mouth and wisdom which all the adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist,' Luke xxi. 15; he will give it us in that hour what we shall say. So God encourageth Moses when he pleadeth his slowness of speech: 'Who hath made man's mouth, or who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing or the blind? Have not I the Lord?' Exod. iv. 10, 11. Whatever inclination of heart there be in the creature, it is God must give a spirit and a presence, by the continual influence of his grace. He frees the heart from fears, and ordereth the tongue; for the power of the tongue is no more in our hands than the affections of the heart: Prov. xvi. 1, 'The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord,' *παρρησία*, is the gift of God, that we own him and his truth.

Use. Let, then, every person be dealing with God about this case, every single private person for himself; and for public persons the prayers of others are necessary; it is a common case, wherein all are concerned: Col. iv. 3, 'Praying for us, that God would open to us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ;' Eph. vi. 19, 'Pray for me that utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.' They that are sensible of the weight of the ministerial charge and their own many infirmities, and how much it concerns us to own all the truths of God in their season, let us beg of God this boldness, and set others abegging for us.

1. Humbly confessing our ill-deservings. It is a sign God is angry when he suffereth his gospel to be obstructed, much more when the mouths of his ministers are shut up that they shall not plead for his interest and truths. It is a notable sign of his departure that he is not much concerned in the progress of the gospel. God's raising spirits is a hopeful presage. Oh, therefore, let us humble ourselves before the Lord!

2. Earnestly; for it is a case that concerneth us deeply, because upon our trial we should be strict and precise: Phil. i. 20, 'My hope and expectation is that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all

boldness' own Christ. It would be sad if the gospel should suffer loss by us. Alas! what a torment to us will the thought of it be, that we have dishonoured God, and wronged souls, and strengthened the hands of the wicked! Origen, who had exhorted others to martyrdom, having himself bowed under the persecution, could never more open his mouth to preach the gospel, though often requested to it; only one day, having taken for his text Ps. l. 16, 'Unto the wicked he saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?' he wept very much, and could speak no more. Oh, therefore, it is no slight thing!

3. Deal with God believingly; pray in faith. There are two considerations in the text which may fortify us:—

[1.] Because it is a word of truth.

[2.] There are judgments to be executed on the hinderers of the word of truth.

[1.] It is a word of truth, and that will prevail at length, however it be obstructed for a time. In the first publishing of the gospel this was manifested, when the whole world was conspired to shut the door against it: 1 Cor. xvi. 9, 'A great door and effectual is opened to me, and there are many adversaries.' A few fishermen, who had not the power of the long sword, yet it is spread far and near. The fathers often urged this. Clemens Alexandrinus saith, *Propositam Græcæ philosophiam si quisvis magistratus prohibuerit, en statim perit; nostram autem doctrinam a prima usque ejus predicatione prohibent reges, duces, magistratus cum universis satellitibus, illa tamen non flaccescit ut humana doctrina, sed magis floret.* It spread far and near, the first reformation, what small beginnings it had.

[2.] There are judgments, strange providences, by which God breaketh opposition, either changing the hearts of men, or else cutting them off in the mid-way, 'when his wrath his kindled but a little,' Ps. ii. 12. They dash against the corner-stone. God will show himself mighty and powerful in promoting the word of truth, and will carry on the kingdom of Christ over the backs of his enemies.

Doct. 4. We should not give over dealing with God, though he is pleased to desert us in some passages of our trials, that he may not forsake us utterly.

Many of God's choicest servants have been tripping: Ps. lxxiii. 21, 'As for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped;' but they recover themselves again. Peter fell for a time, but afterwards groweth bold. Once timorous Peter, but, Acts iv. 13, 'When they saw the boldness of Peter and John.' The martyrs that were permitted for a while to deny the truth, yet were not permitted to deny it utterly; they bewailed their faults, and suffered the more courageously. (1.) It is fit the creatures should know themselves; therefore God will humble us, and in part leave us to our own fears, but not wholly leave us destitute of grace; as the nurse seemeth to let the child fall, that he may clasp the more strongly about her. (2.) It is fit the world should know that a zealous defence of the truth comes not from natural stubbornness and pertinacity, but from divine assistance; therefore God showeth what the flesh would do, how it would shrink in the confession of the truth, if it were permitted to prevail. (3.) It

is fit we should see the necessity of continual dependence. After grace received we have not always the same presence of mind so as to plead for God, but only as he is pleased to influence us : our case doth change and alter, ebb and flow, as it pleaseth God.

Use. Not to be severe against those that fall out of infirmity, nor to cast them off, for God doth not pity them ; rather than censure them, let us help them out of the mire. Unhumbled hearts, that are puffed up with pride and confidence in their own strength, when out of the temptation may judge it a task of no great difficulty to carry it with courage, and will readily condemn others of cowardice and backsliding who ride not out the storm with as much courage and cheerfulness and resolution as they conceive themselves would do : Job iv. 5-7, 'Now it is come upon thee and thou faintest, it toucheth thee and thou art troubled. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, and the uprightness of thy ways thy hope ?' But a humble heart, acquainted with sufferings, will not judge so : he is sensible of weakness, and how hard it is for flesh and blood to deny itself, and to prefer a good conscience before safety and worldly increase : how ready it is to faint under a continued cross, how crafty to find out evasions to beguile itself into a way of sin, that they pity the poor tempted man. In the primitive times, Novatus and his followers denied those that had fallen to be received into the communion of the church, though upon repentance.

Doct. 5. They will not be utterly overcome in their trials that hope in God's judgments. Why ?

1. Because this hope will teach us to wait upon the Lord until he show us better things : Ps. lxiii. 5, 'My soul, wait thou upon the Lord, for my expectation is from him.' They can tarry a little while, and so are not carried away with the violence of the present temptation. It is an inclination to present things that undoeth us. 'Demas hath forsaken us and loved this present world.' Now, when we can wait for future things, the soul is stayed and kept from apostasy. We read of 'the patience of hope,' 1 Thes. i. 3. And the apostle saith, Rom. viii. 25, 'If we do hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.' He that believeth a better condition is not dejected with present evils.

2. It fortifieth the soul against present difficulties, so as they do not unsettle, but quicken us. It hath an apprehension that the good is hard to be obtained, therefore it gathereth all the force and strength of the soul to resist it.

For the nature of hope, see the Sermon on the 114th verse.

Well, then, hope in God's judgments. Consider who hath made the promises. Is it not God, whose word cannot fail of its effect ? Rom. iv. 20, 21, 'He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform.' And then consider how he standeth affected to us. Doth not he love us ? And also in what relation he is obliged to us as a Father. And then consider what doth the promise say, and how it maketh for his glory to accomplish it ; what plentiful means he hath in store to bring to pass what he hath spoken, and what a potent and wise intercessor we have to plead our cause at the right hand of the Father, and to mind him still of whatever concerns our comfort !

SERMON L.

So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.—VER. 44.

FIRST, David prays for deliverance, ver. 41, 'Let thy salvation come,' &c. Next he prays, if he might not have deliverance, yet a little liberty to own God in the time of his trouble, 'Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth;' and with what argument doth he enforce it? In the close of the former verse he had pleaded, 'I have hoped in thy judgments.' Now he pleads his steadfast purpose to serve God, conceived in the form of a vow, 'So shall I keep thy law,' &c. They that hope in God's promises must have a tender regard to his precepts. First he saith, 'I hope in thy judgments,' then, 'I shall keep thy law.' The tender regard of God's precepts. How? What! to talk of them only? No. As in the former verse he speaks of the word of truth in his mouth, so here he speaks of keeping and observing the law in his practice, to show we should not own God in word only, but in deed also. He spoke of profession there, and now we are to fill up our profession with answerable practice: 'So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.'

The text contains a promise of obedience.

1. The matter promised, *I shall keep thy law.*

2. The manner and constancy of that obedience, *continually for ever and ever.*

Mark, the promise of obedience is brought in by way of argument, 'So shall I keep;' so, that is, this will encourage me, this will enable me.

1. The granting of his requests would give him encouragement. When God answers our hope and expectation, gratitude should excite and quicken us to give him all manner of obedience. If he will give us a heart, and a little liberty to confess his name and serve him, we should not be backward or uncertain, but walk closely with him.

2. This would give him assistance and strength. If God do daily give assistance, we shall stand; if not, we fall and falter. This will be a means of his perseverance; not only engage and oblige him, but help him to hold out to the end.

Then mark the constancy of this obedience, 'Continually, and for ever and ever.' David would not keep it for a fit, or for a few days, or a year; but always, even to the end of his life.

Here are three words to the same sense, 'Continually, for ever, and ever.' And the Septuagint expresseth it thus: I shall keep thy law *always*, and for *ever*, and for *ever and ever*; four words there. This heaping of words is not in vain.

1. It shows the difficulty of perseverance. Unless believers do strongly persist in the resistance to temptation, they will soon be turned out of the way; therefore David binds his heart firmly. We must do it now, yea, always, unto the end.

2. He expresseth his vehemency of affection. Those that are deeply affected with anything are wont to express themselves as largely as they can. As Paul, that had a deep sense of God's power: Eph. i. 19,

‘Exceeding greatness of his power,’ ‘according to the working of his mighty power.’ He heaps up several words, because his sense of them was so great. So David here doth heap up words, *continually*, and *for ever*, and *for ever and ever*.

3. Some think the words are so many, that they may express not only this life but that which is to come. I will keep them ‘continually, and for ever and ever;’ that is, all the days of my life, and in the other world. So Chrysostom, ‘I will keep them continually,’ &c., points out the other life, where there will be pure and exact keeping of the law of God. Here we are every hour in danger, but then we shall be put out of all danger; and without fear of sinning, we shall remain in a full and perfect righteousness. We hope for that which we have not attained unto, and this doth encourage us for the present; so would he make David express himself.

4. If we must distinguish these words, I suppose they imply the continuity and perpetuity of obedience: the continuity of obedience, that he would serve God continually without intermission; and the perpetuity of obedience, that he would serve God for ever and ever, without defection and revolt, at all times, and to the end.

Doct. Constancy and perseverance in obedience is the commendation of it.

When David promiseth to obey, he saith he would do it ‘continually for ever and ever.’ This is the obedience God longs for: Deut. v. 29, ‘Oh, that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always!’ Here we find all things which are requisite to God’s service: the sincerity of it, that they had *a heart*; the gracious principle which works in obedience, a heart to *fear* me; the universality of it, to keep *all* my commands; and the perpetuity of it, to keep them *always*. They are in a good mood now. As if God had said, Oh, that they had a heart to do it always! Christ redeemed us to this end: Luke i. 74, 75, ‘Delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him;’ not for a while only, but ‘all the days of our life.’

I shall distinguish of a double constancy and perseverance, and under each branch give some reasons, with their applications.

1. A perseverance without intermission.

2. Without defection. Both are necessary.

First, A perseverance without intermission. We should at all times and in all places serve God, and not by fits and starts; as it is said of the twelve tribes, Acts xxvi. 12, they ‘served God instantly day and night;’ alone and in company, in all conditions, adverse and prosperous. In all actions, common and sacred, God must be served and obeyed.

Let me give some considerations to enforce it, to serve God continually.

1. The law of God doth universally bind, and the obligation thereof never ceaseth, so as there can be no truce with sin for a while, nor any intermission of grace for a moment: Prov. vi. 21, 22, ‘O my son, keep thy father’s commandments, and forsake not the law of thy mother; bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about

thy neck.' The commandments of God, he calls them the law of the father and mother; for Solomon speaks as to young ones and children, as those that had been trained up by their parents. Now these must be looked upon as having a perpetual obligation to direct us and keep us: sleeping and waking we must have them always in our sight. Every motion and every operation of ours is under a law; our thoughts and words are under a law, and our actions are under a law; all that we speak and all that we do, it is still under a rule. The law of God is of perpetual use to show us what we must do and what we must leave undone. Oh, how exact should we be if we did regard this, and were mindful of the perpetual obligation of the law!

2. Grace planted in the heart should be always working. The fire on the altar was never to go out; and so grace should be always working, and influence all our actions, civil and sacred: 1 Peter i. 15, 'Be ye holy, as he that hath called you is holy, in all manner of conversation.' There is no part of a Christian's conversation which should not savour of holiness; not only his religious, but his common and civil actions. The pots in Jerusalem and the horses' bells were to bear God's impress, as well as the vessels and utensils of the temple, Zech. xiv. As the sun is placed in the middle of the heavens to diffuse his influence and scatter his beams up and down the world, and nothing is hid from his light, so is grace planted in the heart to diffuse its influence into every part of his conversation; and therefore grace, where it is true, it is always at work. There are some parts of the body that are never out of action, as the heart and lungs; wherever a man goes, and whatever he goes about, yet they always do their office. So some graces are of continual exercise; as the fear of God: Prov. xxiii. 17, 'Be thou in the fear of God all the day long.' A Christian doth not only pray in the fear of God, but eat, drink, and trade in the fear of God. So the love of God, in referring all things to his glory, whether they be acts of worship, or acts of charity, or of our callings, or recreations: grace hath an influence upon these, and is still to be at work upon these, 1 Cor. x. 31. And so faith is always at work in depending upon God and looking up to him; it is our life, 'That which I live in the flesh:' Gal. ii. 20, 'All that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.' Well, then, the law of God is always binding, and every operation of ours is under a law, and grace should always be working.

3. God's eye is always upon us; he is alike everywhere; therefore a Christian should be alike everywhere, always like himself, at home and abroad, alone and in company: Phil. ii. 12, 'As ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but much more in my absence.' Many are devout abroad, but carnal, careless, profane, if you follow them home to their families. When you are alone you are not alone, God is there; we have a heavenly Father that seeth in secret, Mat. vi. 4; what you do in your closets, the doors made fast, and all company shut out. A man might allow himself in carnal liberty if he could go anywhere where God doth not see him; but his eye is still upon us; and therefore we should say with David, 'I will keep thy law continually.' 'Will he force the queen before my face?' saith Ahasuerus. We break God's laws before his face; his eye is always upon us, and all our ways are before him.

4. God is always at work for us : John v. 17, ' My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' He sustains us every day, hour, moment, and waketh for us, watcheth over us by night and by day. When we sleep, the devil is awake to do us mischief. Ay! but the God of Israel, ' he that keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth,' but watcheth for our good. As soon as we arise, ' his compassions are new every morning,' Lam. iii. 22, 23. Now, can we offend him from whom we receive life and breath every moment? If God should intermit his care but for one day, nay, but suspend it for one hour, what would become of thee?

5. All our actions concern eternity. This life is compared to a walk, Eph. ii. 10. Everything we do or speak is a step either to heaven or hell, therefore to have an influence or tendency on that action. The more good we do, the more we are acted with a fear of God, and love of God, to do all things to his glory, the nearer heaven; and the more evil, the nearer hell. We should not stand still or go back, but always be getting ground in our journey.

6. To be off and on with God will cost us much sorrow; it will be bitterness in the end. Either it will cost us the bitterness of repentance here, or of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever; either holy compunction or everlasting horror. When you straggle from God, there is no returning to your former husband but by Weeping-cross, Hosea ii. 14. And who would provide matter of sorrow for himself? I say, when you thrust your hand into Satan's dish, there is some sauce mingled with his meat, and then everlasting horror if not compunction, for that will be the end of them that are always unstable in all their ways, James i. 8. God will not always bear with them; he may at first, while they are children, poor weak novices, but will not always, Eph. iv. 14. God expects that at length we should grow more constant, and grow up to a radicated state of grace; therefore, if we are always children, off and on with God, then he will cast us off.

7. By every intermission we may lose ground, and possibly may never wholly, if we recover it in part again. We may lose ground, for ' the way of the Lord is strength to the upright,' Prov. x. 29. The more we continue in it the fitter we are to walk in it. A bell, when once up, is kept up with greater ease than if we were to raise it anew. A horse warm in his gears is more fit for his journey than at first setting forth; and therefore keep up while you are in the way of God. If it be hard to keep in with God, it will be harder to recover when you are out of the way. The only way to make religion easy is to be still in it, and to have our hearts still upon it; and therefore you lose by your intermission. And if you recover yourselves after intermission, it is not always to that degree of largeness of heart and fulness of spiritual comfort. A prodigal that hath rioted away his estate, if set up again, is not trusted with the like stock; and after a great disease, though a man recovers, yet it is not to the degree of his former health many times. Therefore we should without intermission persevere in our duty to God.

To apply this part.

Use 1. It should humble us all that we are so fickle and inconstant

in that which is good. Our hearts are unstable as water. In the space of an hour, how are our thoughts changed from good to evil, and from evil to good in a moment! What a monster would man seem, if his heart were visible, in the best duty that ever he performed! Our devotion and goodness comes by pangs and fits; now humble, anon proud; now meek, anon passionate; now confident, then full of fear and anguish. Like men sick of an ague, sometimes well, sometimes ill, we do not seem to be the same men in a duty and out of a duty; nay, sometimes in the same duty we do not seem to be the same men, are not carried on with the same largeness of heart, and confidence in God, and savouriness and spirituality. Oh, how changeable and fickle are our hearts! This should humble us.

2. It reproveth them that would have a dispensation at times, and take liberty to cast off all Christian modesty and gravity; that think if they be serious sometimes, they may be light and vain at others; and therefore sometimes like angels of light, at other times like fiends of darkness. Sometimes we would take them for grave, serious Christians, at other times for loose libertines; and they cast the fear of God behind their backs: Ezek. xxxiii. 13, 'If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity,' &c.; that is, if upon presumption that he hath been righteous, he dispenseth with himself, and takes an indulgence from his former duty to be light, vain, careless, all his righteousness shall be forgotten. Such a dissimilitude is there between men; now they seem to be grave and serious, anon vain, light, and wanton; so very uncertain and uneven are we in our temper and practice.

3. It shows what need there is of a constant watchfulness, that in all things we may behave ourselves as God's children. Sin is always at work: Gen. vi. 5, 'The imaginations and thoughts of our heart are only evil, and that continually:' and Satan is always at work, espying advantages against us, 1 Peter v. 8, to draw us off from God. Oh, then, let grace be in its continual exercise! Live as knowing all the motions and operations of the soul are under a rule; live as being always under the eye of God; live as being sensible God takes care of us himself, remembereth us every moment, therefore it is but reason we should take him.

Secondly. A perseverance without defection and apostasy, that we may not fall off from God when we have taken a profession of his name upon us. Now, the considerations to quicken you to that will be these:—

1. Consider how equal it is that our duty should last so long as we would have God's blessings last, that one part should answer another. We would have God bless us to the end, therefore we must serve and obey him to the end: Ps. xlviii. 14, 'For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.' He doth not lay down the conduct of his providence until we come to heaven, and therefore we should keep his law for ever and ever. How can we desire God to be ours to the end, if we are not his to the end? The stipulation of our part of the covenant must answer that of God's.

2. We have the same reasons to continue that we had to begin at first; there is the same loveliness in God's ways; Christ is as sweet as

ever, and heaven as worthy and as great as ever. If there be any difference, there is more reason to continue than there was to begin. Why? Because we have more experience of the sweetness of Christ; you knew him before only by report and hearsay, but now you have tasted he is gracious, you know him by experience, 1 Peter ii. 3. Surely when we have made trial, Christ should be sweeter and heaven nearer: Rom. xiii. 11, 'Our salvation is nearer.' The nearer to the enjoyment of any good, the more impatient in the want of it. A Christian, as he is nearer to his hopes and happiness, and the more experience of God and Christ, the more stable should his heart be in the ways of God. I speak of this, because at first men are carried out with great affection and zeal, and are of very promising beginnings. There is no reason of altering our course, or why we should grow remiss, lazy, and changeable in God's service. What is more usual with men than to cast off their first faith, 1 Tim. v. 12, and their first love, Rev. ii. 4, and their first diligence and obedience, 2 Chron. xvii. 3. We read of 'the first ways of David.' Many that seem to have set forth with a great deal of forwardness and zeal tire afterward. In the marriage relation true affection increaseth, but adulterous love is hot only while it is new.

3. Consider the danger and mischievous effects of apostasy and declining from God.

[1.] This is somewhat, that you lose your crown: Rev. iii. 11, 'Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.' The honour and comfort of all we have hitherto done and suffered will be lost and gone, 'Therefore take heed to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which ye have wrought.' All your watchings, strivings, prayings, fastings, professing the name of God, all is come to nothing. The Nazarite under the law was to begin again if the days of his separation were defiled, Num. vi. 12. If he had separated himself for such a while, though he kept almost all his time, yet if he defiled himself before the time was out, he was to begin all again: Ezek. xviii. 24, 'When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned.' When you turn head against your former profession, all comes to nothing.

[2.] Consider, falling off is more dishonourable to God than a simple refusal. Why? You bring an ill report upon him, as if he were not a good master. A wicked man that refuseth grace, he does not so much dishonour God, because his refusal is supposed to be the fruit of his prejudice. But now you cast him off after trial, and so your refusal is supposed to be the fruit of your experience, as if the devil were a better master. When you have tried both, you do as it were deliberately judge that Satan's service is best, or that you do not find in God that which he promised, and you expected from him. And that is the reason why God stands upon his credit, and pleads with apostates, Jer. ii. 5, 'What iniquity have your fathers found in me that they are gone far from me?' and Micah vi. 3, 'O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.' Is he hard to please, or backward to reward? What cause of distaste have you found in him? for you do implicitly accuse him.

[3] When you fall off after a taste of the sweetness and comfort of the practice of godliness, your condition is worse than if you had never begun, and you will be more unable than you were at first. A man that is climbing up a tree or ascending a ladder, if after he hath gotten up many steps he let go his hold and falls down, he doth not only lose the benefit of his former pains, but gets a bruised body and broken bones, and is less able to climb up than he was before.

[4.] All the promises are made to perseverance, Heb. iii. 6; Col. i. 23; Rev. ii. 10; Rom. ii. 7. Oh! there be many that leave their first love, and so they forfeit all the comfort of the promises.

[5.] The more you persevere, the more assurance you have of the goodness of your condition: Heb. vi. 11, 'We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.' When a man keeps up his warmth, his hope increaseth, and he grows to more assurance and more establishment, and keeps up his diligence in God's service.

Use 1. For reproof.

1. Those that take up religion only by way of essay and trial, that do not resolve upon all hazards, but take it only as a walk, and not a journey, like men that go to sea for pleasure, not to make a voyage. But whenever we begin with God, we should say, I will keep thy law continually for ever and ever. We should sit down and count the charges, make God a good allowance, resolve that nothing shall withdraw us from him, Rom. viii. 35, 36.

2. It reproveth aguish Christians, whose piety and devotion takes them by fits. Their righteousness is like 'the morning dew,' Hosea vi. 4, that cannot endure the rising sun, and so they are off and on with God.

3. Those that are of the Samaritan temper, swayed altogether by temporal advantages. The Samaritans, sometimes they would be of the Jews' religion, when favoured by Alexander; when the Jews were pursued by other princes, then they would be against the Jews, and deny the temple of God: sometimes their temple was dedicated to the God of Israel, sometimes to the God of the heathens, as their interests did fall or rise. So there are many that do intend or remit the conscience of their duty according to their interests; and therefore, when trouble ariseth, they are offended, Mark iv. 17.

Use 2. For exhortation, to press you thus to keep God's law for ever and ever. To this end—

Direct. 1. Be fortified within. After you have gotten grace—I suppose men that they are in a good way—oh, be fortified from that which may shake you from without. Three things are wont to hurry men from one extreme to another—errors, persecutions, and scandals.

1. Errors. Be not troubled when differences fall out about the truths of God, nor shaken in mind: 1 Cor. xi. 19, 'For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.' Many question the ways of God and all religion; because there are so many differences about them, therefore they think nothing certain. These winds God lets loose upon the church to distinguish the chaff and the solid grain. God saw this discipline necessary, that we might not take up religion upon trust, without the pains of study and prayer.

2. Persecutions are an offence: Mat. xi. 6, 'Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me;' that is, offended because of troubles that accompany the profession of the truth. The whole drift of the Christian religion is to draw us off from the interests and concerns of the present world, to look after another.

3. Scandals of professors. All that profess the name of God are his witnesses; their lives should be a confirmation of the gospel, but indeed they often prove a confutation of it; we should confirm the weak, and we offend the strong. Many have been gained by persecution, when they have seen the courage of God's servants; but the scandals of those that profess the name of God have proved a stumbling-block. Those that are offended by crosses, yet they have a secret liking of the truth; but those that are offended by scandals, they loathe the truth itself, and so are hurried away against the profession of God. Therefore be fortified against all these.

Direct. 2. Be fortified within by taking heed to the causes of apostasy and falling off from the truth, either in judgment or practice. What are those things?

1. Ungrounded assent. A choice lightly made is lightly altered, when men do not resolve upon evidence. We are to 'try all things,' 1 Thes. v. 21. When we take up a profession without evidence, we soon quit it: men waver hither and thither for want of solid rooting in the truth.

2. Ungrounded profession, want of solid rooting in grace, when not rooted either in faith, Col. ii. 7, or grounded in love, Eph. iii. 17, or established by grace, Heb. xiii. 9. There must be a foundation before a building, a thorough sense of the love of God, and a being rooted, when our hearts are sound in God's statutes.

3. Unmortified lusts. That which is lame is soon turned out of the way. While men keep up their respects to the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world unbroken, they are sure to miscarry; though they should stand for a while, yet temptation will come that will take them away. Lusts put us upon great uncertainty, as fear, or the favour of men, or as carnal hopes sway: 2 Tim. iv. 10, 'Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world.'

4. A fond easiness. Men change their religion with their company, out of a desire to please all, as theameleon changeth colours according as it touches. True religion is indeed 'easy to be entreated,' James iii. 17. But now, to make bold with God and conscience, to please men, is a sad adventure; it is not a good disposition, but pusillanimity.

5. Self-confidence, when we think to bear it out with natural courage and resolution, and will be playing about the cockatrice's hole, and dallying with temptation; as Peter's confidence; you know how dear it cost him, John xviii. 16, 17. It is God which 'keepeth the feet of his saints,' and he will be known to be their guardian, 1 Sam. ii. 9; therefore he will be depended on.

Direct. 3. Take heed of the first decays, and look often on the state of your hearts. A man that never casts up his estate is undone insensibly. It is the devil's policy, when once we are a-declining, to carry us further and further. A gap once made in the conscience,

grows wider and wider every day. The first declinings are the cause of all the rest. Evil is best stopped in the beginning. When first you begin to be careless, mindless of God, and neglectful of communion with him, oh! then take heed. It is easier to crush the egg than kill the serpent. He that keeps the house in constant repair prevents the ruin and fall of it; so do you keep your soul in constant repair, take notice of the first swerving, lest it carry you further and further. Men fall off by degrees, and grow worse and worse, neglect this duty and that, till they cast off all. Like Nebuchadnezzar's image, which was of gold, silver, iron, clay, from worse to worse, they presently run from one extremity to another. There are degrees of hardness: Heb. iii. 14, 'Let us hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.' The first sense, taste, and liveliness of it: learn from whence you are fallen. And then a steadfast expectation of the reward, 1 Cor. xv. 58. You have but a few years' service more, a little while to be put upon labour and striving, then you shall be as happy as heart can wish. Then a religious use of the Lord's Supper, for here you renew again the oath of allegiance to God. The great purport of this duty is to bind yourselves to this firm and close walking. The Lord's Supper is a renewing of covenant, to fix our hearts by new promises of obedience. When we begin to waver and faint, and stand, we receive new strength; as they, when they had a little refreshing, then they went on from strength to strength, Ps. lxxxiv. 7, 8. The Lord's Supper is our *viaticum*, our well and refreshing by the way, that we may hold out to our journey's end.

SERMON LI.

And I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts.—VER. 45.

THE copulative in front of the text sheweth some dependence which the words have upon the former. His last request was, ver. 43, for an opportunity and heart to own the ways of God. His arguments are—

1. His present hope, in the end of that verse.
2. His perseverance in obedience, ver. 44. Now—
3. The freedom of his heart in that continued course of obedience.

A free and open confession of the truth may seem to cast us into bonds and straits, but yet it giveth us liberty: the truth sets us free, John viii. 32. If it bring the body under fetters, yet it enlargeth the heart. We never have greater freedom than when we are pleasing God, though at our bitter cost: 'I will walk at liberty,' *non in angustiis timoris, sed in latitudine dilectionis*—not straitened by fear, but set at large by love: 'I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts.' In the words observe—

1. David's privilege, *and I will walk at liberty.*
2. The ground of it, *for I seek thy precepts.*

The points are two:—

Doct. 1. To walk in the way of God's precepts is to walk at liberty.

Doct. 2. The more we take care to do so, the more we find this liberty. *I seek*, that noteth an earnest diligence. Both these points will be made good by these three considerations:—

1. The way of God's precepts is in itself liberty.
2. There is a liberty given to walk in that way.
3. Upon walking in that way we find it liberty.

First, The way of God's precepts is liberty. Therefore his law is called a 'law of liberty,' James i. 25. No such freedom as in God's service; and, on the contrary, no such bondage as to be held with the cords of our own sin: 2 Peter ii. 19, 'While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.' A liberty to do all we please is the greatest bondage. There are three pairs of notions in which men are extremely mistaken—in misery and happiness, wisdom and folly, liberty and bondage. Men think none miserable but the afflicted, and none happy but the prosperous, because they judge by the present ease and commodity of the flesh; therefore Christ in his Sermon on the Mount maketh it his drift to undeceive the world, to show that the mourners and the persecuted, the pure and the meek, they are the happy men, Mat. v. So in the notions of wisdom and folly the world are mistaken. Man, that is an intelligent creature, affects the reputation of wisdom, and would rather be accounted wicked than weak. But how do they mistake? He is the wise man in their account that can carry on his worldly business with success. They judge of wisdom and folly, not by the concernments of the other world, but by present interests. Therefore the whole drift of the scripture is to make us 'wise to salvation,' 2 Tim. iii. 15, to call us off from secular wisdom, and to teach us to become fools that we may be wise. So they are out in the notions of liberty and bondage. All men desire liberty, especially from tyranny and base servitude; and so far they do well in the general: but then they think that is only liberty to do what they please; and so the more they think to be, and labour to be, free in a carnal way, the more slaves they are. The service of God, and strict walking with him, they count a very prison and thralldom; and therefore cry out of bonds and yokes and cords: Ps. ii. 3, 'Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us;' and are impatient of any restraint. Whereas, on the other side, to do what we list without check or control, and to speak what we list, and think what we list, this they think the only freedom: 'Our tongues are our own: who is Lord over us?' Whereas, indeed, he liveth the freest life that lieth under the bonds of duty, that maketh conscience of praying and praising God, and conversing and walking with him in a course of holiness; and the true liberty is in walking in God's statutes. So that true bondage and liberty is little or nothing at all known and discerned in the world. To make this evident unto you, I shall prove—

1. That carnal liberty is but thralldom.
2. That the true liberty is in the ways of God.

1. That carnal liberty is but thralldom. To understand this, I must lay down one proposition that conduceth to cure the great mistake about liberty and bondage: That liberty is not *potestas vivendi ut velis*—a power to live as we list; no, it is to live as we ought—*potestas*

volendi quod lex divina jubet. The life and spirit of liberty lieth in that, a power to do what we ought, not a power to do what we will. Ever since we drank in that poison, 'Ye shall be as gods,' Gen. iii. 5, man affecteth a dominion over himself, and would be lord of his own actions, *sui juris*, at his own dispose, do what he pleaseth. Indeed, if we had a perfectly holy understanding to guide us, the danger would not be so great; but now it is the greatest misery that can befall a man to be at his own dispose, to do lawlessly what he will: and therefore God's fearful and dreadful judgment, after all other courses tried, is to give up men to the sway of their own hearts, to do what they please: Ps. lxxxi. 12, 'So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels;' to be left to our brutish affections. But to prove it.

[1.] That infringeth a man's liberty that hindereth and disableth him from prosecuting his great end, which is to be truly happy. Now thus doth the carnal life, and therefore this is true and perfect bondage. Though men live in their bonds with as much delight as fishes in their own element, yet that doth not alter the case; they are slaves for all that: 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh,' Rom. viii. 5. They seem to live at large, but indeed they are in a spiritual prison; they cannot use the means that should make them happy. They employ their whole time in the remote subservient helps to a happy life, in pleasures, and honours, and profits; as dissolute and carnal factors and servants, who, finding contentment at the first inn they come at, spend most of their time and money there, which should be spent at the fairs and mart for which they are bound. Pleasure, and delight, and contentment of mind and body, is a remote subservient help; so competency of wealth, and some place wherein we may glorify God: these things are not to be desired for themselves, nor in any great measure, but subordinately, in order to our great end. Now, when they entice and detain our affections, and we cannot look after our great end, they break our liberty; for the less power we have to do that which we should desire to do, the more slaves are we.

[2.] That which disordereth the constitution of the soul, and puts reason out of dominion, that certainly is spiritual bondage and thralldom. Now, when the base prevail above the honourable, it is a sign a country is enthralled; where beggars are on horseback, and princes walk on foot; or, as it is monstrous in the body if the head be there where the feet should be, and the feet where the head should be; such a de-ordination is there in the soul when the affections carry it, and lust taketh the throne instead of reason: Titus iii. 3, 'Serving divers lusts and pleasures.' When a man yieldeth up himself to his own desires, he becometh a proper servant: Rom. vi. 16, 'Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?' Now, man rightly constituted, his actions are thus governed: The understanding and conscience prescribe to the will; the will, according to right reason and conscience, moveth the affections; the affections, according to the command and counsel of the will, move the bodily spirits and members of the body. But by corruption there is a manifest inversion and change; pleasures affect the

senses, the senses corrupt the phantasy, phantasy moveth the bodily spirits, they the affections; and by their violence the will is carried captive, man blinded, and so man goeth on headlong to his own destruction. The corrupt passions are like wild horses, that do not obey the driver, but draw to precipices for his destruction. Therefore Basil of Selencia calleth a carnal man a slave, that runs after the chariots of his own passions and corrupt affections.

[3.] Consider the great tyranny and power of sin; it leaveth us no right and power to dispose of ourselves and our actions, and so men cannot help themselves when they would; as is sensible in them that are convinced of better, and do worse: they see what they should do, but do not do it, being drawn away by their own lusts. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.* Sin hath gotten such a deep interest in their actions, and command over their affections, that they cannot leave what they know to be naught, or follow that which they conceive to be good. And this bondage is more sensible in them that have some kind of remorse and trouble with their convictions, either from temporal inconvenience, shame, or loss, and yet cannot leave their lusts, and so in despair resolve to go on, and make the best of it: Jer. xviii. 12, 'And they said, There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart;' Jer. ii. 25, 'Thou hast said, There is no hope; no, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go;' yea, further, that have a kindly remorse from the conviction of the Spirit: Jer. xxxi. 18, 'I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, thus, 'Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.' And so Paul: Rom. vii. 14, 'I am carnal, sold under sin.'

[4.] Consider how this bondage is always increased by custom, which is a second nature, or an inveterate disease not easily cured: Jer. xiii. 23, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good who are accustomed to do evil.' The more he continueth in this course, the less able to help himself; the more he sinneth, the more he is enthralled to sin; as a nail, the more it is knocked, the more it is fastened in the wood. First a man yields up himself to sin as a servant by covenant: Rom. vi. 16, 'Know ye not to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?' that is, gives up his principal time, actions, and employment. Then a servant of conquest: 2 Peter ii. 19, 'While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.' A sinner is under the dominion of sin, as a hired servant and a captive. We first willingly, and by our own default, run into it, and after cannot rid ourselves of it. *Ligatus eram non ferro alieno, sed mea ferrea voluntate; velle meum tenebat inimicus, et me mihi catenam fecerat, et constrinxerat me*—Lord, I am bound, not with iron, but with an obstinate will; I gave my will to mine enemy, and he made a chain of it to bind me, and keep me from thee. *Quippe ex voluntate perversa facta est libido, et dum servitur libidini facta est consuetudo, et dum consuetudo non resistitur facta est necessitas* (Aug. Confes. lib. viii. cap. 5)—a perverse will gave way to lustings, and lustings made way for a custom, and a custom let alone brought a

necessity upon me, that I can do nothing but sin against thee. And after that, *Reformulabam quasi mortem consuetudinis mutationem* (Aug. Confes. lib. viii. cap. 7). Thus are we by little and little enslaved, brought under the power of every toy. Things are lawful as subordinate helps; but we, contrary to the law of reason, and the inclination to true happiness, immoderately desire them; and these desires being excessive, get a complete victory over our souls: and at length we are brought under the power of every creature: 1 Cor. vi. 12, 'All things are lawful, but I will not be brought under the power of any.'

[5.] There is one thing more that maketh the carnal life to be a mere slavery; and that is, the fear and terror which doth arise from the consciousness of sin, the fear of death and damnation, and wrath to come, which doggeth sin at the heels. When Adam sinned, he was afraid, Gen. iii. 7; and carnal men are 'all their lifetime subject to bondage through the fear of death,' Heb. ii. 15. There is a fire smothering in the bosom of a sinner, and sometimes it flashes out in actual gripes and horrors; they have grievous damps of heart; so that sinners are so far bondmen, that they dare not seriously call themselves to an account for the expense of their time and employments, which every one should do, nor think seriously of death, or God's judgment, or hell. He that is always under the check of a cruel master cannot be said to be a freeman. Now so is every man that is not in Christ; let him be never so great, and mighty, and powerful, he is *ἐνοχος δουλείας*, 'subject to bondage,' in danger of hidden fears, easily awakened in his heart. Well, then, call you this a free life? As jolly and jocund as wicked men seem to be, or as great as they are, it is a liberty of the flesh taken by men, not given by God; the quietness of the flesh, but bane of the soul.

2. On the contrary, the true liberty is in the ways of God.

[1.] There we are directed how to attain to our great end, which is true blessedness: Mat. vii. 14, 'Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' A way of sin seemeth broad and easy to the flesh, but it is strait and hard to the spirit; and the way of duty strait and narrow to the flesh, but, because it is to life, it is broad to the spirit or new nature: 'I shall walk at liberty.' To a renewed heart the divine commandments are not grievous, 1 John v. 3, for by this means they come to enjoy God, and walk to their happiness, and attain to the end for which they were made. A poor heart goes home cheerfully.

[2.] In loving, fearing, praising, serving God, the noblest faculties are exercised in the noblest and most regular way of operation. The soul is in the right temper and constitution; they are the highest actions of the highest faculties, elevated by the highest principles, about the highest objects. The objects are God, Christ, heaven, the great things of eternity. The principles are the love and fear of God, the faculties, understanding, and will, not sensitive appetite; these exercised in thinking of God, and choosing of God.

Secondly, The second part of the demonstration is that there is liberty given to walk in that way. Ever since Adam's fall every man is a spiritual slave, under the dominion and power of sin and Satan,

and the curse of the law ; but now, ' Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' 2 Cor. iii. 17; true Christian liberty, or a power given us to walk familiarly with God, and cheerfully and comfortably in his service. By grace a man is freed—

1. From the yoke of oppressing fears.

2. The tyranny of commanding lusts.

1. We are freed from the bondage of sin : Rom. viii. 2, ' The law of the spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, hath made us free from the law of sin and death ;' John viii. 36, ' If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' There is a liberty in that which is good : Ps. cxix. 32, ' I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.'

2. We are freed from those doubts and fears and terrors which accompanied the state of sin : Job xxxvi. 8, ' If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in the cords of affliction ;' Job xiii. 27, ' Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks ;' Lam. iii. 7, ' He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain heavy.' So that the meaning is, I shall walk at liberty, be cheerful and enlarged in heart; for I seek thy precepts.

Thirdly, There is liberty in that walking : it is the fruit of strictness. There is a twofold liberty :—

1. Outward deliverances out of straits and afflictions : Ps. cxviii. 5, ' I called upon the Lord in distress ; the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place ;' and Ps. xviii. 19, ' He brought me forth also into a large place ; he delivered me because he delighted in me.' So Ps. iv. 1, ' Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.' Affliction is compared to a prison, where the poor afflicted creature is as it were confined, committed by God, and must not break prison, come out by the window, but the door. When we are let out by God upon submission and supplication, urging the satisfaction of Christ, as we are sent thither by God's authority, so we come out by God's love. Now, God doth this for those that obey him, as all those places manifest.

2. Inward confidence. *Ἐννομος ζωῇ τῆς παρρησίας δημιουργος*, saith Chrysostom on the text—A holy life is the ground of liberty, and holy boldness : 1 John iii. 21, ' If our hearts condemn us not, then have we liberty towards God ;' we have delight, and pleasure, and contentment. Till we defile conscience, we have a great deal of boldness and courage against opposition, yea, a boldness to go to God himself, who otherwise is a consuming fire.

Use 1. Is to take off that prejudice that we have against the ways of God, as if they were strait and hard, and not to be endured. Oh, no! all God's ways are for our good : Deut. vi. 24, ' The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes,' to fear the Lord our God for our good always. And the duties that he requireth of us are honourable and comfortable ; we never walk more at large than when we have a conscience of them. Man acteth like himself when he is holy, just, temperate, sober, humble. Grace puts all things in the right frame and posture again : it puts reason in dominion, and maketh us kings in governing our own hearts ; and this breedeth sweetness and peace. *Pax est tranquillitas ordinis*—when all things keep their place, then is there peace. As when the humours of the body are in order, and the

spirits move tuneably, there is a cheerfulness ensueth ; so the fruit of righteousness is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. If a man had no rule to guide him, and God had left him without a law, yet, if he were well in his wits, he would prefer the duties which he hath enjoined before liberty, and of his own accord choose to live according to such an institution ; there is such a suitableness in all those things to the reasonable nature. What do men aim at—pleasure, honour, or profit ? For pleasure : Prov. iii. 17, ‘ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.’ None have such a sweet life as they that live virtuously and as God hath commanded. All the sensualists in the world have not such a dainty dish to feed on as they that have a good conscience : they have a continual feast, that never cloyeth. You never come away from your sports with such a merry heart as they come away from the throne of grace. If men would consider their experiences after the discharge of their duties and when straggling to carnal delights ; after saddest duties, there is a serenity in the conscience. Who ever repented of his repentance ? 1 Sam. i. 18, ‘ Hannah went her way, and did eat, and her spirit was no more sad.’ Prayer giveth ease, but sensual pleasures leave remorse and a sting. If you count liberty to consist in hunting after honours and great places, can there be a greater honour than to serve God ? Who hath the better service, he that attendeth on the uncertain will of men, yea, of the greatest princes, or he that waiteth on the Lord ? Your work is more noble : Prov. xii. 26, ‘ The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.’ What an unprofitable drudgery is the service of the greatest prince in the world, in comparison of the work of a poor Christian, that liveth in communion with God ? We serve a greater prince, and on surer terms. Then for profit : Where is there more gain, as to our vails and wages, than in God’s service ? Well, then, he that liveth holily hath much the sweeter and happier life than they that serve covetousness, ambition, or any other lust. Certainly this should persuade us to put our neck under Christ’s yoke ; it is ζυγος χρηστος—Mat. 11. 29, ‘ His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.’ If it be grievous, it is to the flesh, and we have no reason to indulge the flesh : Rom. viii. 7, ‘ The carnal mind is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.’ The command to an unsound conscience is as a light burden laid on a sore back. Men that are soaked in pleasures are incompetent judges of the sweetness of the heavenly life. On the other side, what a miserable servitude is there in sin ! how disabled for their great end for which they were created ! Corruption is an imperious master ; it will not suffer us to hear good things, to be there where good things are spoken, to accompany them that are good ; it hath them in so strait a custody, they hate the means of their recovery. They have many masters. *Quot habet dominos qui unum habere non vult !* Titus iii. 3, ‘ For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures ;’ and James iv. i, ‘ Whence come wars and fightings among you ? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members ?’ One lust draweth one way, another another way ; covetousness, voluptuousness, ambition, uncleanness ; as when two seas meet. We have little reason to envy them for their free life ; pity them rather. How do their

brutish affections hurry them! What pains, aches in the body, wounds in the conscience! How many secret gripes and scourges! No such subjection, no slave so subject to the will of his lord, as a man to his lusts and sinful desires,—will speak, think nothing but what sin commands. It is a besotting slavery. Wicked men remain in this bondage with a kind of pleasure. Galley-slaves would fain be free, wish for liberty. Israel was in bondage in Egypt, but they groaned under it: ‘The cry of the children of Israel is come up to me.’ Here men loathe to come out of their slavery, and are enemies to those that would help them out. Their work is hard and oppressive,—loss of name, health, estate. They tire their spirits, rack their brains, and after all their drudging are cast into hell.

Use 2. Do we walk at liberty?

1. There was a time when we served sin; but being converted, we change masters: Rom. vi. 18, ‘Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.’ If there be such a change, it will discover itself. (1.) You will do as little service for sin as formerly for righteousness: Rom. vi. 20, ‘When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness;’ righteousness had no share in your time, thoughts, cares; you made no conscience of doing good, took no care of it: so now you do as little for sin. (2.) Positively do as much for grace as formerly for sin: ver. 19, ‘As you yielded your members servants unto uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, so now yield your members servants unto righteousness unto holiness;’ as watchful, as earnest, as industrious to perfect holiness, as formerly to commit sin: it is but equal. He that hath been servant unto a hard and cruel master is thereby fitted to be diligent and faithful in the service of a loving, gentle, and bountiful master. You can judge what a tyrant sin was. Shall not grace have as much power over you now, and will you not do as much for God as for your lusts?

2. What do you complain of as the task and yoke—the strictness of the law, or the relics of corruption? Rom. viii. 7, ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;’ compared with 1 John v. 3, ‘This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.’ What is a bondage—sin or duty? Is the commandment grievous, or indwelling sin? The apostle was complaining, but of what? The purity of the law? No; but the power of indwelling corruption, the body of death: Rom. vii. 24, ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?’ Which do your hearts rise against?

3. What freedom? Luke i. 74, 75, ‘That you, being delivered out of the hands of your enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of your lives.’ If you are enslaved to any one lust, you cannot walk at large. Are your gyves and fetters knocked off? Have you that free spirit? Ps. li. 11, 12, ‘Cast me not away from thy presence, take not thy Holy Spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me by thy free spirit.’

SERMON LII.

I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.—VER. 46.

THE man of God had prayed, ver. 43, that God would ‘not take the word of truth utterly out of his mouth;’ that is, deny him the liberty or the grace, the opportunity or the heart, to make an open profession of his faith and respect to God and his ways. This suit he backeth with sundry arguments.

1. From his hope: ver. 23, ‘For I have hoped in thy judgments.’ He had placed all his confidence in them, and therefore would openly profess what rule he lived by, and what expectations he had from God.

2. His resolution to persist in this course, whatever befell him: ver. 44, ‘So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever;’ it would engage him to constancy to the end of his life.

3. From the alacrity and readiness of his obedience, as well as the constancy: ver. 45, ‘And I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts.’ Then we have true liberty.

4. That no worldly splendour or terror should take him off from making this confession, if God would give him liberty and opportunity. Two things hinder a free confession of God’s truth—carnal fear and carnal shame. Both are obviated by the resolution of the man of God; he would neither be afraid nor ashamed to recommend the ways of God to the greatest princes of the world.

[1.] The terror of kings or men in power may be supposed to be a hindrance to the free confession of God’s truth; therefore he saith, ‘I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.’

[2.] Carnal shame may breed a loathness to own God’s despised ways; therefore he addeth, ‘I will not be ashamed.’ David would neither be afraid nor ashamed, if called thereto, to make this open confession, to own God and his truth.

First, His resolution against fear deserveth a little opening: ‘I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.’ The words may be looked upon as a direction for them who are called to speak before kings. Men may suppose to be called—

1. Either by the duty of their office, to speak to them in a way of instruction; or

2. As convened before them in a judiciary way, to give an account of their faith.

1. In the first sense, those who are called to instruct kings ought with the greatest confidence to recommend the ways of God to them, as that which will enhance their crowns and dignity, and make it more glorious and comfortable to them and their subjects than anything else. And so David’s resolution sheweth what faithfulness becometh them who live in the courts of princes. It concerneth princes to be instructed: Ps. ii. 10, ‘Be wise now therefore, ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth.’ Few speak plainly and sincerely to them, as Nathan to David: 2 Sam. xii. 7, ‘Thou art the man;’ and God to

David: 2 Sam. xxiv. 13, 'Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land; or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in the land?' John the Baptist to Herod: Mat. xiv. 4, 'It is not lawful for thee to have her.' Jehu to Jehoshaphat: 2 Chron. xix. 2, 'Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord.' Many times they are impatient of truth, as Ahab could not endure Micaiah: 1 Kings xxii. 8, 'And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, 'There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil,' &c. (Josephus, lib. viii. cap. 10; Theodoret, lib. iv. cap. 30).

2. If convened before them in a judiciary way, as the three children were before Nebuchadnezzar: Dan. iii. 13, 'Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and they brought these men before the king;' and ver. 16-18, 'They answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar! we are not careful to answer thee in this matter; if it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us out of thine hand, O king; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up;' Mat. x. 18, 19, 'Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.' There are some kings that have not submitted their crowns and sceptres to the King of kings; so pagans and wicked princes who can neither endure the truth, nor those which profess it. *Οι καλλίνικοι μάρτυρες τῶν δυσσεβῶν κατεφρόνησεν βασιλέων.* The children of God ought not to be daunted by any power and fear of princes. Their power may be a terror to us, and in other cases ought to be revered by us; but it should not be a snare to us, to make us desert our duty to God. We must never forget the honour put upon them by God: they bear his image, and in all lawful cases we acknowledge God's authority in them; they are those by whom God will govern us; but if anything be decreed against God, we only urge our obedience to the Lord paramount: Acts iv. 19, 'Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than God, judge ye;' Acts v. 29, 'Then Peter and the apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.'

The latter branch needeth little explaining. What shall we observe?

1. If I should take the first reference, and urge the duty of kings and princes, that would be unseasonable for this auditory. It is a preposterous solecism to preach to the people the duty of kings, and then to kings the duty of their people; as foolish a course as to make fires in summer, and adorn the chimney with herbs and flowers in winter.

2. If I should speak of the second reference, the clemency of the government we live under maketh it unseasonable also; for our king (whom God preserve) hath often avowed his resolutions against persecutions for conscience' sake. Therefore, waiving all other things, I shall only insist upon two points, which are necessary, partly to show the excellency of our religion which we profess, partly to guide our practice.

Doct. 1. That nothing is so necessary for kings, princes, and magistrates to know as God's testimonies.

Doct. 2. That God's testimonies are so excellent, that we should not be afraid or ashamed to own them before any sort of men in the world. Of the first briefly.

Doct. 1. That nothing is so necessary for the potentates of the world to know as God's testimonies. The king of Israel was to write a copy of the law of God in a book, and to have it ever before him, that he might read therein, and learn to fear the Lord his God, Deut. xvii. 18, 19. And therefore Josiah, one of the good kings which God gave unto his people, searched for the book of the law, 2 Kings xxiii. 2. The reasons concern them, if considered both as men and as potentates.

1. As men.

[1.] They are upon the same level with others, and are concerned to understand the way of pleasing, glorifying, and enjoying God, as much as their meanest subjects; for it is said, Job xxxiv. 19, 'He accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor; for they are all the works of his hands.' God dealeth with them impartially, respecting the greatest no more than the meanest. He hath an equal interest in all, and therefore doth command and dispose of all; for all are his creatures, not exempted from being subject to his dominion; as the potter is not more obliged to vessels of honour, than of dishonour. As his law bindeth all, so all that continue in impenitency and the neglect of his grace are obnoxious to the curse of the law. It is general to all transgressors: 'Cursed is every one,' &c. And if God should lay their sins home to their consciences, and speak to them in his wrath, they can stand before him no more than the meanest: Rev. vi. 15, 16, 'And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.'

[2.] The higher their station the greater their obligation. No sort of men more obliged to God than those that are advanced by him to rule over his people; therefore their ingratitude would be greater if they should sin against God: 2 Sam. xii. 7-9, 'I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hands of Saul, and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight?' Their sins do more hurt, because of their example and authority, Job xxxiv. 20.

2. As rulers and potentates they are concerned to be acquainted with God's testimonies.

[1.] That they may understand their place and duty. They are first God's subjects, then his officers. They have their power from God: Rom. xiii. 4, 'For he is the minister of God to thee for good.' They hold their power in dependence on him; both natural, their strength and force: 'Thou couldest have no power unless it were

given thee from above,' John xix. 10, 11. Legal, their authority or governing power, they hold it in dependence upon the absolute and heavenly Sovereign, who is the 'Lord of lords and King of kings:' Prov. viii. 15, 16, 'By me kings reign, and princes decree justice; by me princes rule, and nobles, and all the judges of the earth.' And as they hold it in dependence on him, they must use it in subordination to him. God, who is the beginning, must also be the end of their government. They are not officers of men, but ministers of God, from whom they have their authority; and therefore must rule for God, and seek his glory.

[2.] That they may be carried through their cares, and fears, and snares, and may know what reward to expect from the absolute Sovereign, who is the great patron of human societies. It is trust and dependence upon God that maketh good magistrates: 2 Kings xviii. 5, 'He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that went before him.' Oh! it is a blessed thing when they can go to God for direction, and depend upon God for success. Great are the cares and fears which belong to a governor; and who can ease him of this burden but the Lord, who hath showed in his word how far he is to be trusted? It is not carnal policy which helpeth them out in their work, but trust in God in their high calling. Whosoever will improve his power for God will meet with many discouragements. Now that which supports his heart in his work is this holy trust: Prov. xxix. 25, 'The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.' Every public calling hath its snares and temptations from the fears of men. A minister, if he doth not trust God to bear him out in his work, he will do nothing with that courage which becometh a minister, but comply with the lusts of men, grow lukewarm, prostitute the ordinances for handfuls of barley, and pieces of bread, and family conveniences. The magistracy is a higher calling, which is more obnoxious to temptations from the different humours of men who are to be governed. Nothing will carry a man through it but this holy courage and dependence on God. The fear of man brought a snare to Jeroboam, that he perverted the worship of God: 1 Kings xii. 30, 'And this thing became a sin; for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.' So Jehu, so others, for their cares. But he that trusts in God in his discharge of this public office, though many difficulties interpose, finds the blessed experience of the Psalmist verified, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.'

[3.] As to success and acceptance, obedience to God makes them a double blessing to the people—as governors, as holy; as they have the natural image of God in dominion and authority: 1 Cor. xi. 7, 'Forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God,' which must be revered and respected, not resisted; so the spiritual image of God in holiness: the people doubly see God in their rulers. And besides, it bringeth down God's blessings, while they command and the people obey in the Lord: 2 Kings xviii. 7, 'And the Lord was with him, and he prospered whithersoever he went forth.' Good magistrates are usually more prosperous than good men in a private condition, because they are given as a public blessing.

Use 1. To inform us that religion hath a great influence on the welfare of human societies; for it equally respects governors and governed, carving out their respective duties to them, causing the one to rule well, and the other to obey for conscience' sake. The testimonies of the Lord prescribe the duty of rulers: 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.' There is a word belonging to either table; justice to the second, fear of God to the first. Now all this duty is best learned out of God's testimonies. For the governed it interposeth express rules for their obedience: Rom. xiii. 1, 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers;' and 1 Peter ii. 15, 'For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' There are many arguments why we should reverence magistrates. They bear God's image: Ps. lxxxii. 6, 'I have said ye are gods;' visible representators of his authority and dominion over the creatures, because of their majesty, largeness of command and empire, and because of their use: they are exalted *supra alios*, above others in their authority; but *propter alios*, for others in their use and benefit. But the supreme reason is the will of God. The magistrate was then an enemy to religion when this commandment was given forth, even then when that part of the world in which the church was seated was under the command of Nero, whose universal wickedness and particular cruelty against the Christians might tempt them to disobedience and scorn of his authority: then God said, Obey 'not for fear of wrath, but conscience' sake;' then, 'Fear God, honour the king, for so is the will of God.' Now let atheists and anti-scripturists, or the enemies of those who profess to live by scripture, think, if they can, that the Christian religion doth not befriend human societies, or doth contain dangerous principles to government.

Use 2. It sheweth us what to pray for, for our princes and governors, even a wise and an understanding heart, and a spirit of the fear of the Lord, that they may rule for God, and take his blessing along with them in all their affairs.

Doct. 2. That God's testimonies are so excellent that we should not be afraid or ashamed to own them before any sort of men in the world; for David saith, 'I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.'

First, Observe, here are two things supposed which might shut his mouth and obstruct the confidence and boldness of his profession—fear and shame. Fear represents danger in owning the ways of God; shame represents mockage, scorn, and contempt. Fear considereth our superiors and governors; we fear them that have power and authority in their hands. Shame may arise not only from the consideration of superiors, but inferiors and equals also. Fear respects the danger of the party professing; shame, the cause or matter professed. Therefore, of the two, to be ashamed of the ways of God doth more destroy godliness than to be afraid to own them, for then it is a sign we are not so soundly convinced, and deeply possessed of the goodness of them; for, *Pudor est conscientia turpitudinis*—it is a consciousness of something that is base. Look, as, on the contrary, to be ashamed of sin doth more wound it to the heart than to be afraid of sin, many a

man is apprehensive of the danger of sin, who yet doth not hate it in his heart, but only abstaineth out of the fear of punishment; but when he is ashamed of sin, then he beginneth to hate sin as sin. In conversion, fear is stirring before shame; as a man sick of a loathsome painful disease is more and first affected with the pain than with the nastiness and filthiness and putrefaction that accompanieth the disease. So here, in religion; as the case is hopeful when ashamed of sin, so dangerous when ashamed of a strict holy course. A man may be willing to do that which he dares not do for fear; but shame extinguisheth the willingness itself. In short, to be afraid respects our interest; to be ashamed respects the cause, the gospel itself.

Secondly, I shall speak of them distinctly; and so—

1. Show why we should not be afraid to own the testimonies and ways of God before any sort of people in the world.

[1.] Because holy boldness in confession is an especial gift of God. David asketh it here, 'Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth;' and promiseth that if God would give him this gift, the splendour of worldly greatness should not dazzle his eyes, and he would behave himself as one armed against all terrors of men, or gotten above the hopes and fears of the present world. And indeed it argueth some good degree of profiting in the word of God when it is so with us. Fearlessness of men in God's cause is an excellent grace, which God hath promised to his choice servants. To Christ: Isa. l. 7, 'For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed; I shall not be confounded, for God is at my right hand.' To Jeremiah, whom God set up 'as a brazen wall' against all oppositions: Jer. i. 18; and to Ezekiel, chap. iii. 8, 'Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads.' So to the disciples: Mat. x. 19, 20, 'They shall bring you before rulers and governors; but take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in the same hour what ye shall speak.' None have the gift of boldness but those to whom God gives it. If left to ourselves, we shall falter, as Peter did at the damsel's question; but God will assist the resolved heart by his Spirit, and assist him in that very hour when the trial cometh; and then we need not be afraid before whomsoever we come, we need not be anxious. The servants of God beg this gift: Acts iv. 29, 'Grant unto thy servants that with all boldness we may speak thy word;' when the world rageth against them.

[2.] Though it be an especial gift of God, yet the duty is contained in our first dedication and resignation of ourselves to Christ; when we professed ourselves to be dead to every worldly interest, and promised to own him and his ways, whatever it cost us: Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple;' ver. 33, 'So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' Therefore this should not be retracted, but verified in our whole course, for that sheweth this dedication was sound: Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto

the end; ver. 14, 'For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.' And therefore we should be 'ready to render a reason of the hope which is in us, to every one that asketh us, with meekness and fear,' 1 Peter iii. 15. *Λόγον ἐλπίδος* is an account of our religion, *ἔτοιμοι*, ready to confess Christ in persecutions and dangers: it is the same with *ἐτοίμως ἔχω*—Acts xxi. 13, 'I am ready not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus;' the same with *ἐτοιμασία τῆς εἰρήνης τοῦ εὐαγγελίου*, 'the preparation of the gospel of peace,' Eph. vi. 15; a prepared resolved heart to encounter all difficulties for the gospel's sake, so satisfied with the truth and hopes thereof.

[3.] This duty is confirmed in us by many Christian graces, as faith, love to God, fear of God, a deep sense of the world to come. We are afraid to own God and his ways, because we have not such a high opinion of God as we should have, but too great a love to ourselves; therefore faith, fear, and love is necessary to confirm and strengthen this resolution in us, and also the lively hope of blessedness to come.

(1.) Faith informeth us of the truth, goodness, power, and excellency of God, the worth of his favour, and the terror of his wrath, that the displeasure of God is much worse than the frowns of men. When we think of a higher Lord, why should we be afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man that is as grass? If a great man stand by, we are not afraid of an underling. If the King of kings be with us, whom should we fear? Heb. xi. 27, 'By faith Moses feared not the wrath of the king,' meaning Pharaoh. Why? For 'he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.' A heathen could say, *Regum timendorum in proprios greges, reges in ipsos imperium est Jovis*. A believer should much more oppose God's heavenly majesty to their earthly dignity. Their power is great, and to be revered next to God; but God is greater. We serve a king whose power is everlasting, and whose kingdom is to all generations.

(2.) Love to God is necessary to confirm and strengthen this resolution in us, for that overcometh all terrors: Rom. viii. 37, 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us;' and Cant. viii. 6, 7, 'Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame; many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.' There is an unconquerable force in love; it is a fire that cannot be quenched. When Christ hath us by the heart, it is much more than when he hath us by the head. They that make a religion of their opinions, and have a faith that never went deeper than their brains and fancies, are soon discouraged; but when Christ 'dwelleth in the heart by faith,' Eph. iii. 17, there he resideth as in his strong citadel and castle. A Christian, because he loveth Christ, will own him, and his ways and truth, though they be never so much despised in the world. A superficial bare assent to the gospel may let Christ go, but a faith working by love will not.

(3.) The fear of God, or a deep awe and reverence of him, when we are more afraid to offend God than to suffer from man. The apostle, when he biddeth us to be ready to make profession, 1 Peter iii. 5, bids

us do it 'with meekness and fear.' Meekness respects men ; fear, a care to approve ourselves to God. The fear of men is checked by the fear of God : Isa. viii. 12, 13, 'Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid : sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread ;' Luke xii. 4, 5, 'Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do : but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear ; fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.' A holy impression of God's excellency and greatness left upon the heart is this fear that carrieth the cause clearly for God ; and as one nail driveth out another, the fear of men banisheth the fear of God out of our hearts. We are obliged to none so as to God, who hath the power of eternal life and eternal death. What is a prison to hell, a little vainglory to eternal glory, the creature to God ?

(4.) A deep sense of the other world. When we translate the scene from earth to heaven, from this world to the next, and consider who is scorned there, received there, or rejected there, the temptation is lessened. The apostle sheweth that a spirit of faith is at the bottom of confession with the mouth : 2 Cor. iv. 13, 'We, having the same spirit of faith, believe, and therefore speak.' He that believeth another world, and hopeth for it, will never be cowardly and bashful, but will confidently confess Christ, and own him both in worship and conversation. A spirit of faith cannot be suppressed, but will break out and show itself, and not be ashamed of Christ, his truth and ways.

Well, then, Christians should be ashamed of that spirit of fear, bashfulness, and inconfidence which keeps us from confessing Christ and owning his ways. Kings are more formidable by their place and power than the rest of the world ; but alas ! we give place to the meanest men, and the smallest opposition maketh us give out : 2 Tim. i. 7, 'We have not the spirit of fear, but the spirit of love, power, and a sound mind.' The Christian spirit is a sober spirit, that valueth all things according to their weight ; but not a dastardly spirit : a spirit of love and power, that owneth Christ with meekness, and a due respect to earthly tribunals ; and yet with courage, as looking higher, to the throne of God.

2. We must not be ashamed to own the testimonies and ways of God before any sort of men in the world. The apostle telleth us, Rom. i. 16, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.' The gospel is such a pure, sure rule, and offereth us such glorious hopes, that we should be ready to profess it without being ashamed of it. So he bids Timothy, 2 Tim. i. 8, 'Be not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner ;' neither of the profession, nor of our companions in the profession, when they are under the greatest disgrace. So again, 1 Peter iv. 16, 'If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorify God in this behalf ;' it is matter of thanksgiving, not of shame. David is an instance ; when Michal scoffed at him, 'I will yet be more vile,' 2 Sam. vi. 22. It is an honour to be dishonoured for Christ. The primitive Christians, when the heathens reproached them, Art thou not ashamed to believe in him that was crucified ? the answer was, I am ashamed to believe in

him that committed adultery, meaning the heathen Jupiter. Affliction is no disgrace, but sin is.

But what danger is there of being ashamed of the gospel, since Christianity is in fashion?

Ans. 1. Sometimes the simplicity of the gospel is contemned by the wits of the world; and therefore they either muster up the oppositions of science falsely so called, or else droll upon religion, and make it the common jest and byword.

Ans. 2. The stricter profession of the ways of God is under reproach. Though the nominal Christian and the serious Christian have the same Bible, and believe the same creed, and are baptized into one and the same profession, yet those that are false to their religion will hate and scorn those that are true to it; and among the carnal it will be matter of reproach to be serious and diligent. Now, though a gracious heart can be vile for God, yet others are afraid they shall be marked, and accounted precise, or Puritans; and so by resisting an imaginary shame, they fall into an eternal reproach.

Ans. 3. It may be the strict sort of Christians are the poorer sort; and though they be precious in the eyes of God, yet they are despised by men: John vii. 49, 'This people that knoweth not the law are accursed. Have any of the Pharisees believed in him?' any people of quality? They shall be accounted people of no port and breeding if they are strictly Christian. *Quantus in Christiano populo honor Christi est, ubi religio ignobilem facit? coguntur esse viles ne mali videantur.* Religion is too mean a thing for persons of quality, of their rank. Thus with many God's image is made a scorn, and the devil's image had in honour, and serious godliness is made a byword.

Now, to fortify you against being ashamed of God and his ways, take these considerations:—

1. The short continuance of this world's glory. Within a while we shall be levelled with the lowest, and our dust mixed with common earth; and shall we love the praise of men more than the praise of God? This corruptible flesh must turn into a loathsome rottenness, though now it looketh high, and sets forth itself, and would be brave and lordly; but 'the spirit must return to God that gave it,' to be commanded into unseen and unknown regions: 1 Peter i. 24, 'All flesh is grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass.'

2. God is the fountain of honour; all things and persons receive an honour by having relation to him: James ii. 1, 'Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, in respect of persons.' Services mean in themselves are accounted honourable with respect to princes. The reproach of Christ is enough to weigh down all the honours in the world: Heb. xi. 26, 'Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.'

3. If your hearts be sincere with God, you will not be ashamed of his ways, for 'wisdom is justified of her children;' in Luke it is, 'All her children,' Luke vii. 35. They that have a faith which is the fruit of conviction only may be ashamed: John xii. 42, 43, 'Among the rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue;

for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.' But that faith which is the fruit of conversion will make us courageous in God's cause. In its infancy there may be some relics of fear in a Christian, as Nicodemus at first came to Jesus by night, John xix. 39; but a grown faith counts it no loss of honour or impeachment of dignity to become vile for God.

4. The eternal recompense: 1 Sam. ii. 30; 'Those that honour me I will honour;' 1 Peter i. 7, 'That your faith may be found to praise, glory, and honour, at Christ's coming.' On the other side, if we are ashamed of Christ, Christ will be ashamed of us for evermore: Mark viii. 38, 'Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his father, with the holy angels.' The eagle eye of faith can look through all the pageantry of the world, and the mists and clouds of time, to the future state, the judgment that shall be made of things. To a believer's eye all the honour of the world is but a fancy and vain appearance, a scene in which a base fellow acteth the part of a prince.

5. The judgment of the world is not to be stood upon. Why should we desire the applause of the blind ungodly world, or make any great matter of their contempt and scorn? Shall the scorn of a fool be more to us than the approbation of God? If they slight you who slight God and Christ and their own salvation, why should you be troubled? They are incompetent judges of these things: 1 John iii. 1, 'The world knoweth us not.'

Use. See the strange perversion of human nature. Men are ashamed where they should be bold, and bold and confident where they should be ashamed: 'They glory in their shame;' but think it a disgrace to speak of God, and own God, not before kings only, but before their familiars and companions. Be ashamed to be filthy, false, proud; but never be ashamed to go to a sermon, where you may profit in the ways of God, and the knowledge of his testimonies; to be strict in conversation, to speak reverently of God, though scorned by men. None of God's servants have reason to be ashamed of their master.

SEVERAL SERMONS UPON THE CXIX. PSALM.

SERMON LIII.

And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.—VER. 47.

THE man of God is giving arguments to enforce his request that ‘the word of truth might not be taken utterly out of his mouth.’

1. He could not bear it, because all his hopes of felicity were built upon it, ver. 43.

2. He promiseth constancy of obedience, ver. 44.

3. Liberty of practice, ver. 45.

4. Liberty of profession, not hindered by fear or shame, but should be borne out with confidence in that profession.

5. He urgeth in the text with what delight he should carry on the work of obedience, ‘And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.’ In which observe—

1. His great pleasure and contentment is asserted and professed, *I will delight myself.*

2. The object of it, *in thy commandments.*

3. The fundamental reason or bottom cause of this delight, *which I have loved.*

Doct. A gracious heart doth love and delight in the commandments of God: the godly are described by it. Hence David makes it the character of a blessed man: Ps. i. 2, ‘His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in that law doth he meditate day and night. And Ps. cxii. 1, ‘Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his commandments.’ Paul asserts of himself, as a comfortable evidence of his sincerity in the midst of his infirmities, Rom. vii. 22, ‘For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.’ By ‘the inward man’ he means the renewed part, that is pleased with all things that please God, if we have such a delight as is above the delight of sense, &c. I will—

1. Explain the point as it lieth here in the text.

2. Show how the heart is brought to this; for corrupt nature is otherwise affected.

First, To explain the point.

1. His pleasure and contentment is asserted, 'I will delight myself.' A Christian hath his joys and delights, but they are pure and chaste; they delight in the Lord, and in his word and ways: Phil. iv. 4, 'Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice.' He hath a liberty, *ἀλλὰ μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ*, 'but only in the Lord,' 1 Cor. vii. 39; not only *may*, but *must*. It is his duty. Joy is a great part of his work; not our felicity or wages only, but our work also. Now, I shall prove that all the pleasures and delights of the earth are nothing to the pleasures and delights which the godly do find in God and in a holy life.

[1.] These delights are more substantial. It is not a superficial joy that they are delighted withal, but a substantial joy. It must needs be so, partly because these are better grounded, not built upon a mistake and fancy, but the highest warrant and surest foundation which mankind can build upon, the word of the eternal God, which can never fail; whereas the joy that is merely built upon carnal delights is built upon a fancy and mistake. Both are represented by the apostle: 1 John ii. 17, 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever.' If they considered the shortness of their pleasures, and in what a doleful case their wealth, and honour, and fleshly delights will leave them, they would have little list to be merry till they had looked after a more stable blessedness. The world will be soon gone, and the lust and gust thereof gone also; but he that goeth on with the work of holiness, building on the promise of another world, layeth a sure foundation. Partly because they do more intimately affect the soul. Sensual delights do not go so deep as the delights of holiness: Ps. iv. 7, 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time when their corn and their wine increased;' like a soaking shower that goeth to the root. The other tickleth the senses; poor, slight, and outside comforts, that do not fortify the heart against distresses, much less against the remembrance of our judge, or the fears of an offended God, or the serious thoughts of another world. For these two reasons, the joys of a Christian, stirred up in him by the conformity of his will to the will of God, are solid, substantial joys. A wicked man may be jocund and jovial, but he hath not the true delight; he may have more mirth, but the Christian hath the true joy: 'In the midst of mirth the heart is sorrowful.' It is easy to be merry, but it is not easy to be joyful, or to get a substantial delight.

[2.] These delights are more perfective; a man is the better for them. Other delights, that please the flesh, feed corruption, but these corroborate and strengthen graces. They are so far from disordering the mind, and leading us to sin, that they compose and purify the mind, and make sin more odious, and fortify us against the baits of sense, which are the occasion of all the sin in the world. All our joy is to be considered with respect to its use and profit: Eccles. ii. 2, 'I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doth it?' The more a man delighteth in God, and in the ways of God, the more he cleaveth to him, and resolveth to go on in this course, and temptations to sensual delights do less prevail; for, 'the joy of the Lord is our strength.' The safety of the spiritual life lieth in the keeping up our joy and de-

light in it : Heb. iii. 6, ' Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end ; ' Isa. lxiv. 5, ' Thou meetest him who rejoiceth and worketh righteousness.' But now carnal delights intoxicate the mind, and fill it with vanity and folly. The sensitive lure hath more power over us to draw into the slavery of sin : Titus iii. 3, ' For we ourselves were also foolish, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures.' Surely then the healing delights should be preferred before the killing, wounding pleasures that so often prove a snare to us.

2. The object is to be considered, ' Thy commandments.' Here observe—

[1.] David did not place his delight in folly or filthiness, as they do that glory in their shame, or delight in sin, and give contentment to the lusts of the flesh ; as the apostle speaks of some that ' sport themselves in their own deceivings,' 2 Peter ii. 13 ; that do not only live in sin, but make a sport of it, beguiling their own hearts with groundless apprehensions that there is no such evil and hazard therein as the word declareth and conscience sometimes suggesteth ; they are beholden to their sottish error and delusion for their mirth. Neither did he place his delight in temporal trifles, the honours, and pleasures, and profits of the world, as brutish worldlings do ; but in the word of God, as the seed of the new life, the rule of his conversation, the charter of his hopes ; that blessed word by which his heart might be renewed and sanctified, his conscience settled, his mind acquainted with his Creator's will, and his affections raised to the hopes of glory. The matter which feedeth our pleasures sheweth the excellency or baseness of it. If, like beetles, we delight in a dunghill rather than a garden, or the paradise of God's word, it shows a base, mean spirit, as swine in wallowing in the mire, or dogs to eat their own vomit. Our temper and inclination is known by our complacency or displacency : Rom. vii. 5, ' For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin which were by the law did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death.' Therefore see which your hearts carry you to—to the world or the word of God. The most part of the world are carried to the pleasures of sense, and mastered by them ; but a divine spirit or nature put into us makes us look after other things : 2 Peter i. 4, ' Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises,' even of the great blessings of the new covenant, such as pardon of sin, eternal life, &c.

[2.] Not only in the promissory, but mandatory part of the word. *Commandments* is the notion in the text. There is matter of great joy contained in the promises, but they must not be looked upon as exclusive of the precepts, but inclusive. Promises are spoken of Ps. cxix. 111, ' Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.' They contain spiritual and heavenly riches, and so are matter of joy to a believing soul. But the commandments call for duty on our parts. The precepts appoint us a pleasant work, show us what is to be done and left undone. These restraints are grateful to the new nature, for the compliance of the will with the will of God, and its conformity to his law, hath a pleasure annexed to it. A renewed soul would be subject to God in all things, therefore delights in his commandments without limitation or distinction.

[3.] It is not in the study or contemplation of the justice and equity of these commandments, but in the obedience and practice of them. There is a pleasure in the study and contemplation, for every truth breedeth a delectation in the mind: Ps. xix. 8, 'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the soul.' It is a blessed and pleasant thing to have a sure rule commending itself with great evidence to our consciences, and manifesting itself to be of God. Therefore the sight of the purity and certainty of the word of God is a great pleasure to any considering mind; no other study to be compared with it. But the joy of speculation or contemplation is nothing to that of practice. Nothing maketh the heart more cheerful than a good conscience, or a constant walking in the way of God's commandments: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, with simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have had my conversation in the world.' Let me give you this gradation: The pleasures of contemplation exceed those of sense, and the delights of the mind are more sincere and real than those of the body; for the more noble the faculty is, the more capable of delight. A man in his study about natural things hath a truer pleasure than the greatest epicure in the most exquisite enjoyment of sense: Prov. xxiv. 13, 14, 'My son, eat thou honey because it is good, and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste; so shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul when thou hast found it; then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.' But especially the contemplation of divine things is pleasant; the objects are more sublime, certain, necessary, profitable; and here we are more deeply concerned than in the study of nature. Surely this is sweeter than honey and honeycomb, to understand and contemplate the way of salvation by Christ. This is a heaven upon earth to know these things: John xvii. 3, 'This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' As much as the pleasures of the natural mind do exceed these bodily pleasures, so much do these pleasures of faith and spiritual knowledge exceed those of the natural mind; these things the angels desire to pry into. Now the delights of practical obedience do far exceed those which are the mere result of speculation and contemplation. Why? Because they give us a more intimate feeling of the truth and worth of these things, and our right in them thereby is more secured, and our delight in them is heightened by the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost. The joy of the Spirit is said to be 'unspeakable and full of glory,' 1 Peter i. 8. In short, it is exercised about noble objects, the favour of God, reconciliation with him, and the hope of eternal life—all these as belonging to us; and it is excited by a higher cause, the Spirit of God; and lastly, it giveth us a sense of what we had but a guess before: we 'know the grace of God in truth,' Col. i. 6; we know it so as to taste of it.

3. The fundamental or bottom cause of this delight is expressed, 'Which I have loved.' There is a precedent love of the object before there can be any delight in it. Love is the complacency and propension of the soul toward that which is good, absolutely considered, abstracting both from presence and absence. Desire regardeth the

absence and futurity of a good ; delight the presence and fruition of it. It is impossible anything can be delighted in, but it must be first loved and desired. None can truly delight in obedience but such as desire it. By nature we were otherwise affected, counted his commands burdensome, because contrary to the desires of the flesh : Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' But when the heart is renewed by grace, then we have another love and another bias upon our affections : 1 John v. 3, 'This is love, to keep his commandments ; and his commandments are not grievous.' To others they are against the bent and the hair, and too tedious, and love maketh way for delight.

Secondly, Reasons why a gracious heart doth love and delight in the commandments of God.

1. The matter of these commandments sheweth how much they deserve our love and delight. The matter respects either law or gospel. (1.) That which is strictly called the moral law is the decalogue ; a fit rule for a wise God to give, or a rational creature to receive, a just and due admeasurement of our duty to God and man : the world cannot be without it. To God, that we should love him, serve him, depend upon him, delight in him, that we may be at length happy in his love. 'The law is holy, just, and good ;' not burdensome to the reasonable nature, but perfective. Surely to know God, to love him, and fear him, and trust and repose our souls on him, and to worship him at the time, in the way, and manner appointed, is a delightful thing, and should be more delightful to us than our necessary and appointed food. To man, justice, charity : Micah vi. 8, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy ;' Hosea xii. 6, 'Keep mercy and judgment.' Now all kinds of justice should not be grievous. Political justice, between the magistrates and people. How should we live else ? This maintaineth the order of the world. Private justice, between man and man : Mat. vii. 12, 'Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' Family justice, between husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants. How else can a man have any tolerable degree of safety and comfort ? 1 Peter iii. 7, 'Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge.' Then for mercy, there is not a pleasanter work in the world than to do good ; it is God-like. A man is as an earthly god, to comfort and supply others : Acts xx. 35, 'It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive.' And blessedness is not tedious ; the work rewards itself. The satisfaction is so great of doing good, and being helpful to others, that certainly this is not tedious. (2.) The gospel offereth such a suitable remedy to mankind that the duties of it should be as pleasant and welcome to us as the counsel of a friend for our recovery out of a great misery into which we had plunged ourselves. In the law, God acteth more as a commander and governor ; in the gospel, as a friend and counsellor. Surely to those that have any feeling of their sins, or fears of the wrath of God, what can be more welcome than the way of a pardon and reconciliation with God, whom his word and providence, and the fears of a guilty conscience, represent as an enemy to us ? Surely this should be more

pleasant than all the lust, sport, and honours, and pleasures of the world. Here is the foundation laid of everlasting joy, a sufficient answer to the terrors of the law, and the accusations of a guilty conscience, which is the greatest misery can befall mankind. In short, that the matter of God's commands deserves our delight and esteem is evident:—

[1.] Because those that are unwilling to submit to them count them good and acceptable laws. When their particular practice and sinful customs have made them incompetent judges of what is fittest for themselves in their health and strength, yet their conscience judgeth it a more excellent and honourable thing in others if they can deny the pleasures of the flesh, and overcome the temptations of the world, and deny themselves the comforts of the present life, out of the hopes of that which is to come. Such are accounted a more excellent and better sort of men : Prov. xii. 26, 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour;' he hath more of God and of a man than others, as he hath a freer use of reason, and a greater command of his own lusts and passions. There is a reverence of such darted into the consciences of wicked men : Mark vi. 20, 'Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and observed him.'

[2.] Because of the sentiments which men have of a holy, sober, godly life, when they come to die, and the disallowance of a dissolute carnal life : Job xxvii. 8, 'What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?' Ps. xxxvii. 37, 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.' When men are entering upon the confines of eternity, they are wiser; the fumes of lust are then blown over, their joys or fears are then testimonies to God's law : 1 Cor. xv. 56, 'The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.' It is not from the fancy or melancholy of the dying person, nor his distemper, that his fears are awakened, but his reason. If it did only proceed from his distemper, men would be rather troubled for leaving worldly comforts than for sin. No; it is the apprehension of God's justice by reason of sin, who will proceed according to his law, which the guilty person hath so often and so much violated and broken. They are not the ravings of a fever, nor the fruits of natural weakness and credulity. No; these troubles are justified by the law of God or the highest reason.

[3.] By supposing the contrary of all which God hath commanded concerning the embracing of virtue, shunning of vice. If God should free us from these laws, leave us to our own choice, command us the contrary, forbid us all respect to himself, commanding us to worship false gods, transform and misrepresent his glory by images, and fall down before stocks and stones, blaspheme his name continually, and despise all those glorious attributes which do so clearly shine forth in the creation; if he had commanded us to be impious to our parents, to fill the world with murders, adulteries, robberies, to pursue others with slanders and false-witnessings, to covet and take what is another man's, wife, ox, or ass,—the heart of man cannot allow such a conceit; nay, the fiercest beasts would abhor it, if they were capable of receiving such an impression. Now, surely a law so reasonable, so evident, so conducing to the honouring of God, government of ourselves, and

commerce with others, should be very welcome and acceptable to a gracious heart.

2. The state and frame of a renewed heart; they are fitted and suited to these commandments, and do obey them not only because enjoined, but because inclined. Nothing is pleasant to men but what is suitable to their nature; so that may be delightful to one which is loathsome to another; as the food and converse of a beast is loathsome to a man; one man's pleasure is another's pain. There is a great deal of difference between a carnal and a spiritual mind, the heart sanctified and unsanctified: Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, 'I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh; and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments to do them.' When the heart is fitted and suited by principles of grace, the work is not tedious, but delightful. Things are easy and difficult according to the poise and inclination of the soul. So Heb. viii. 10, 'I will write my laws upon their hearts, and put them into their minds.' The law without suiteth with an inclination within; and when things meet which are suitable to one another, there is a delight: Ps. xl. 8, 'Thy law is in my heart; I delight to do thy will, O God.' There is an inclination, not necessary, as in natural agents; but voluntary, as in rational agents. There is an inclination in natural agents, as in light bodies to move upwards, heavy bodies to move downwards; in rational agents, when a man is bent by his love and choice. This latter David speaketh of, Ps. cxix. 36, 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.' The heart of man standeth between two objects—the laws of God and carnal vanities. In our natural estate we are wholly bent to please the flesh; in our renewed estate there is a new bent put upon the heart. Now the old bent is not wholly gone, though overmastered and overpowered: the false bias of corruption will still incline us to the delights of sense; but the new bias to the way everlasting, to spiritual eternal happiness: as that prevaileth, we love and delight in the commandments of God.

3. The helps and assistances of the Spirit go further, and increase this delight in the way of God's commandments. God doth not only renew our wills, and fit us with an inward power to do the things that are pleasing in his sight, but exciteth and actuateth that power by the renewed influences of his grace: Phil. ii. 13, 'He giveth us to will and to do;' not only a will, or an urging and inclination to do good; but because of the opposition of the flesh and manifold temptations, he gives also a power to perform what we are inclined unto: 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' 2 Cor. iii. 17, or a readiness of mind to perform all things required of us, not only with diligence, but delight.

4. The great encouragements which attend obedience, as the rewards of godliness both in this life and the next. The rewards of godliness in this life I shall speak of in the next head; for the future, the end sweetens the means to us. We have no mean end, but the eternal enjoyment of God in a complete state of glory and happiness. Now this hath an influence upon the love and delight of the saints, to sweeten their labours, and difficulties, and temptations. The scripture

everywhere witnesseth : 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord ;' Phil. iii. 14, 'I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus ;' Rom. v. 2, 'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God ;' and Rom. viii. 18, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'

5. Present comfortable experience.

[1.] In the general, of peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost.

(1.) Peace, which is the natural result of the rectitude of our actions : 'The fruit of righteousness is peace,' Isa. xxxii. 17 ; and Ps. cxix. 165, 'Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.' *Pax est tranquillitas ordinis*. That description fits internal peace, as well as external. When all things keep their order, affections are obedient to reason, and reason is guided by the Spirit of God according to his word, there is a quiet and rest from accusations in the soul.

(2.) Joy in the Holy Ghost is distinct from the former : Rom. xiv. 17, 'For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' These two differ in the author. Peace of conscience is the testimony of our own souls approving the good we have done ; joy in the Holy Ghost is a more immediate impression of the comforting Spirit : Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing ; that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' They differ in their measure : peace is a rest from trouble ; joy, a sweet reflection upon our good condition or happy estate. It is in the body a freedom from a disease, and a cheerfulness after a good meal ; or in the state, peace, when no mutinies and disturbances ; joy, when some notable benefit or profit accrue to the state. So here they differ in their subjects. The heathen, so far as they did good, might have a kind of peace or freedom from self-accusing and tormenting fears : Rom. ii. 15, 'Which show the work of the law written in their hearts ; their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts in the meantime excusing or else accusing one another ;' but 'a stranger intermeddleth not with these joys.' The Spirit, where a sanctifier, there he is a comforter. They differ in the ground. The joy of the Holy Ghost is not merely from a good conscience as to a particular action, but from a good estate as being accepted with God, who is our supreme judge, and assured of our interest in eternal life. They differ in effects. Peace is an approbation for the present ; joy in the Holy Ghost a pledge and beginning of that endless joy we shall have hereafter : 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts ;' and Rom. viii. 23, 'We ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.' Both together show that there is no such solid comfort as in the obedience of God's commandments ; certainly more than in all the pleasures of sin, yea, more than in all the enjoyments of the world : whoever have proved them both

will find it so. Many have proved the pleasures of sin, but never yet found what comfort is in mourning for sin. Many have proved the comforts of the world, but never yet proved what is the joy of a good conscience, and the sweet pleasure of a godly conversation.

[2.] There is a particular experience, when borne out in the confession of truth in the time of trial. A man that out of love to God's commands hath endured troubles and trials, and hath overcome temptations, will see more cause to love these commandments, and to increase his obedience to them, than ever before in ordinary temptations: Ps. xix. 11, 'Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is a great reward.' When they see that divine truth is like to bear out itself, and man that doth confess it, in such cases, they feel the excellency of God's truth, and the power of God sustaining them that confess it, therefore embrace heartily the Lord's commands, and take pleasure in his ways. The Lord appealeth to this experience: Micah ii. 7, 'Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?' Have not you found the fruit answerable? Therefore the children of God value and esteem and look upon them as the greatest means of their safety and comfort.

6. Because of their love to God, they have a value for everything which cometh from God and leadeth to him. Common mercies point to their author, and their main end is to draw our affections to him, and enable us in his service; but these are apt to be a snare, and are used as an occasion to the flesh. But here is a greater impression of God on his word and laws; their use is more eminent to direct us to God, therefore are valued above ordinary comforts: Job xxiii. 12, 'I have not gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.' They are his commandments, therefore dear to us, who hath obliged us so much in Christ, whose love they believe and have felt. The word is wholly appointed to maintain the life of grace in us.

Use 1. Is to show us how to bring our hearts to the obedience of God's commands.

1. Love them, if we would keep them. Nothing is hard to love. An esteem will quicken us to the obedience of them.

2. Delight in them, for then all goeth on easily. Delight sweeteneth everything, though in themselves toilsome or tedious; as fowling, hunting, fishing. Delight never mindeth difficulties. The reason why the commands are grievous is want of love and delight.

Use 2. Showeth of what kind our obedience must be—free and unconstrained; when we are not forced to our duty, but do willingly delight in it and the law which prescribeth it, and do bewail our daily failings. Many do some external works of obedience, but not with an inward delight, but out of custom or compulsion. God never hath our heart till he hath our delight, till we willingly abstain from what may displease him, and cheerfully practise what he requireth of us; when it is grateful to obey, and all pleasures to this are nothing worth.

SERMON LIV.

My hands also will I lift up to thy commandments, which I have loved ; and I will meditate in thy statutes.—VER. 48.

IN the morning we opened one profession of David's respect to the word of God ; now follows another. He would employ all his faculties about the commandments of God, which is his last argument : his mind, for here is meditation promised ; his heart, for here is love asserted ; his tongue, for that is his original request which occasioned all these professions ; and here his hands, his life, ' My hands also will I lift up,' &c. Observe—

1. The ground or cause of his respect to the commandments of God, in that clause, *which I have loved*.

2. A double effect, *I will lift up my hands to thy commandments, and I will meditate in thy statutes*.

Lifting up the palms or hands is a phrase of various use.

1. For praying: Ps. xxviii. 2, ' Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle ;' Lam. ii. 19, ' Lift up thy hands towards him, for the life of thy young children,' &c. ; Hab. iii. 10, ' The deep uttered his voice, and lift up his hands on high.' Thence the apostle, 1 Tim. ii. 8, ' I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.'

2. For blessing others. Aaron lift up his hands towards the people, and blessed them. Or for praising or blessing God: Ps. cxxxiv. 2, ' Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord ;' so Ps. lxiii. 4, ' Thus will I bless thee while I live ; I will lift up my hands in thy name.'

3. For swearing or vowing: Gen. xiv. 22, ' I have lift up my hand to the most high God,' that is, sworn ; so Rev. x. 5, the angel ' lift up his hand and swore.' So of God: Ps. cvi. 26, ' Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness,' that is, ' swore they should not enter into his rest.'

4. For setting about any action, especially of weight: Gen. xli. 41, ' Without thee shall no man lift up his hand,' that is, attempt or do anything ; so Ps. x. 12, ' Arise, O Lord, lift up thine hand ; forget not the poor,' that is, set to thine active hand for their assistance ; so Heb. xii. 12, ' Lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees,' that is, set actively and vigorously about the Christian task. To this rank may be also referred what is said Mat. vi. 3, ' Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.' The hand is the instrument of action.

Now all these senses might be applied to the present place.

[1.] Praying for God's grace to perform them.

[2.] Blessing God, as we do for our daily food, giving thanks for them.

[3.] Vowing or promising under an oath a constant obedience to them. But the commandments are not the proper object to which the acts of praying, blessing, swearing are directed, but God. It is not,

I will lift up my hand to God, but 'thy commandments.' We ought indeed to bless God and praise God for the blessings we receive by his word, to vow our duty; but lifting up the hand in all these senses is to God. Therefore—

[4.] Here it meaneth no more but I will apply myself to the keeping of them, or set vigorously about it, put my hands to the practising of thy law with all earnestness, endeavouring to do what therein is enjoined. Two points:—

Doct. 1. That it is not enough to approve or commend the commandments of God, but we must carefully set ourselves to the observance of them.

Doct. 2. Whosoever would do so must use great study and meditation.

Doct. 1. That it is not enough to approve or commend the commandments of God, but we must carefully set ourselves to the practice of them.

1. Hearing without doing is disapproved: Deut. iv. 5, 'I have taught you good statutes and judgments, that ye might do so;' Deut. v. 1, 'Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and do them.' Otherwise we deceive our own souls: James i. 22, 'But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls.' We put a paralogism on ourselves, build on a sandy foundation: Mat. vii. 26, 'Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man that built his house upon the sand.'

2. Knowledge without practice is not right: Luke xii. 47, 48, 'He that knoweth his master's will, and prepareth not himself to do it, shall be beaten with many stripes.' Better never known, if not done, for then they do but aggravate our guilt and increase our punishment.

3. Our love is not right unless it endeth in practice. A Christian's love, to whatever object it be directed, must be an unfeigned love. If God, if the brethren, if the word of God, those words must ever sound in our ears, 1 John iii. 18, 'My little children, love not in word and tongue, but in deed and in truth.' Do you love the word of God? Do it not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

4. Our delight is not right; the pleasure is but an airy, idle, and speculative delight, unless it set us about the practice of all holy obedience unto God, making it the design and business of our lives to exercise ourselves unto godliness. That sheweth the reality of your delight, when you come under the power of the truth, and are absolutely governed by it; for then you delight in them aright as mysteries of godliness. The Lord complaineth of them that had a delight in the prophet, 'His voice was as pleasing to them as a minstrel; they hear the words, and do them not,' Ezek. xxxiii. 32. They may delight in sublime strains of doctrine or flourishes of wit. Demosthenes had made a plausible speech to the Athenians; Phocion told them that the cypress-tree is goodly and fair, but beareth no fruit. There may be flourishes of wit, but no food for hungry consciences.

5. Our commendation is not right unless it endeth in practice. Many may discourse of the ways of God, never speak of them but with commendation, but they do not lift their hands to this blessed work: they show some love to God's commandments, but when it

cometh to action, their hands are remiss and faint. Christ refuseth that respect of bare naked commendation: Luke xi. 27, 28, 'Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that thou hast sucked. *Μενοῦργε*, yea, rather, blessed is he that heareth the word of God, and keepeth it.' We are disciples of that master that did both teach and do: Acts i. 1, 'The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.' Of the Pharisees it is said, 'They say, and do not,' Mat. xxiii. 2, 3. But in Christians there must be saying and doing: James ii. 12, 'So speak, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.' We shall be rewarded, not for speaking well, but for doing, hands lifted up.

Well, then, nothing remains but practising duties that are pressed upon you on the first opportunity. Not he that heareth, understandeth, loveth, delighteth, commendeth, but 'he that *keepeth* instruction,' it is, 'is in the way of life,' Prov. x. 17. He that submitteth himself to be guided by God's word, he is going the right way to eternal life and happiness. But to set home this point more fully, I shall inquire—

1. What kind of observance we must address ourselves unto.

2. Why we must thus lift up our hands, or address ourselves to our duty.

First, How, for the manner, must we lift up our hands, or what doing is necessary?

1. It must be universal: 'Herod did many things,' Mark vi. 20. Partial reformation in outward things will not serve the turn. In sundry particulars men may yield to the word of God, but in others deny their obedience; as in some cheap observances, or such duties as cross not our lusts; but David would lift up his hands to the commandments, without distinction and limitation. Many, this they will do, and that they will not do; and so do not obey God's will, but their own: Ps. cxix. 6, 'Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments;' Luke i. 6, 'And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.'

2. This doing must be serious and diligent. Every Christian must bend the powers of his soul, and lay out the first of his care and labour, in his obedience unto God: Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling:' this is not a work to be done by the bye; but with the greatest care and solicitude.

3. This must be our settled and our ordinary practice. To lift up our hands now and then is not enough, to do a good thing once, or rarely. No; we must make religion our business. The lifting of the hands to God's commandments is not a thing done accidentally, occasionally, or in a fit of zeal, but our trade and course of life: Acts xxiv. 16, 'I exercise myself in this, to have a conscience void of offence both towards God and men, *ἐν τούτῳ ἀσκήω*. This was the employment of his life.

4. We must persevere or continue with patience in well-doing, notwithstanding discouragements: Heb. xii. 12, 'Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.' There must be no fainting, whatever discouragements happen; as there was a great deal of do to hold up Moses's hands in Israel's conflict with Amalek:

Exod. xvii. 11, 12, 'As long as he held up the rod of God, Israel prevailed; but Moses' hands were heavy;' a sign of many infirmities, not able long to endure in spiritual exercise; for though 'the spirit be willing, yet the flesh is weak.' But faith should still hold up our hands.

5. This lifting up the hands, or alacrious diligence, should flow from a right principle, and that is faith and love.

[1.] Faith, or a sound persuasion of God's love to us in Christ, that keepeth us doing: Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service;' and Titus ii. 11, 12, 'The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' Thankfulness to God is the great principle of gospel obedience.

[2.] Love: 'Thy commandments, which I have loved;' 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' Nothing holdeth up the hands in a constant obedience to God and performance of his will so much as a thorough love to God and his ways. Faith begets love, and love obedience. These are the true principles of all Christian actions.

6. This lifting up of the hands imports a right end. Commanded work must be done to commanded ends, else we lift up our hands to our own work. Now, the true end is the glory of God: 1 Cor. x. 31, 'Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;' and Phil. i. 11, 'Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus, unto the glory and praise of God.' God's glory must be our main scope, not any by-respect of our own. Well, then, this is lifting up our hands to the commandments of God, not doing one good work, but all; and this with a serious diligence, in our ordinary practice, continuing therein with patience, whatever oppositions we meet with; and this out of faith, or a sincere belief of the gospel, and fervent love, and an unfeigned respect to God's glory.

Secondly, Why such a lifting up the hands, or serious addressing ourselves to our duty, is necessary? My answer shall be given in a fourfold respect—God, ordinances, graces, and the Christian, who is to give an account of himself unto God.

1. God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: Father, as a lawgiver; Son, as a redeemer and head of the renewed estate; Holy Ghost, as our sanctifier.

[1.] God the Father, who in the mystery of redemption is represented as our lawgiver and sovereign lord, and will be not only known and worshipped, but served by a full and entire obedience: 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 'And thou, Solomon, my son, know the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.' He hath given us a law not to be trampled upon or despised, but observed and kept; and that not by fear or force, but of a ready mind. Though there be an after provision of grace for those that break his law because of the frailty of the creature, yet if we presume upon that indulgence, and sin much that God may pardon much, we may render

ourselves incapable of that grace; for the more presumptuously wicked we are, the less pleasing unto God. The governor of the world should not be affronted upon the pretence of a remedy which the gospel offered; for this is to sin that grace may abound, than which wicked imagination nothing is more contrary to gospel grace: Rom. vi. 1, 'What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid.' To check this conceit, God deterreth men from greater sins, as more difficult to be pardoned than less; they shall not have so quick and easy a pardon of them as of others; nay, he deterreth men from going on far in sin, either as to the intensive increase or the continuance in time, lest he cut them off and withdraw his grace, and pardon them not at all. Therefore he biddeth them to call upon him while he is near, Isa. lv. 6; not to 'harden their hearts, while it is called to-day,' Heb. iii. 7, 8. Therefore, if we should only consider God as our lord and lawgiver, we should earnestly betake ourselves to obedience.

[2.] If we consider the Son as redeemer and head of the renewed estate, he standeth upon obedience: Heb. v. 9, he is 'the author of eternal life to them that obey him.' As he hath taken the commandments into his own hand, he insisteth upon practice, if his people will enjoy his favour: John xv. 10, 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, as I have kept my father's commandments, and abide in his love.' He hath imposed a yoke upon his disciples, and hath service for them to do: he, being a pattern and mirror of obedience, expects the like from his people. He fully performed what was enjoined him to do as the surety of believers, and therefore expecteth we should be as faithful to him as he hath been to God. So John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' No love of Christ should encourage us to cast off duty, but continue it. He taketh himself to be honoured when his people obey: 2 Thes. i. 11, 12, 'Wherefore also we pray always for you, that God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you.' The work of faith is obedience, and Christ is dishonoured and reproached when they disobey: Luke vi. 46, 'Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?'

[3.] The Spirit is given to make graces operative, to flow forth: John iv. 14, 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life;' and John vii. 38, 'He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water: this spake he of his Spirit, which they that believe in him should receive.' Therefore, if we have an inward approbation of the ways of God, unless we lift up our hands, we resist his work.

2. With respect to ordinances: They are all means, and means are imperfect without their end. Things *πρὸς ἄλλο* are of no use, unless that other thing be accomplished for which they serve: as he is a foolish workman that contents himself with having tools, and never worketh; for tools are in order to work, and all the means of grace are in order to practice. We read, hear, meditate, to understand our duty.

Now if we never put it in practice, we use means to no end and purpose: 'Hear and live;' 'Hear and do.' The word layeth out work for us; it was not ordained for speculation only, but as a rule of duty to the creatures: therefore, if we are to hear, read, meditate, we must also lift up our hands.

3. All graces are imperfect till they end in action, for they were not given us for idle and useless habits. Knowledge, to know merely that we may know, is curiosity and idle speculation. So Ps. cx. 10, 'A good understanding have all they that do his commandments;' Jer. xxii. 16, 'He judgeth the cause of the poor and the needy. Was not this to know me? saith the Lord.' That is true knowledge that produceth its effect. So James ii. 22, 'By works faith is made perfect;' faith hath produced its end. So love is perfected in keeping the commandments: 1 John ii. 5, 'Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected;' as all things are perfect when they attain their end and their consummate estate. The plant is perfect when it riseth up into stalk, and flower, and seed; so these graces.

4. The person or Christian is judged not only by what is believed, but what is done; not by what is approved, but what is practised. Many profess faith and love; but if it be not verified in practice, they are not accepted with God: 1 Peter i. 17, 'If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work;' and Rev. xx. 12, 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.' God will judge men according to their works, and what they have done in the flesh, whether it be good or evil: John v. 29, 'They that have done good shall rise to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.' The redeemed sinner shall have his trial and judgment.

Use 1. For the disproof of two sorts—preachers and professors.

1. Preachers: if they be strict in doctrine and loose in practice, do they lift their hands to God's commandments? No; they are like the Pharisees, who 'bind heavy burdens upon others, and do not touch them with their own little finger,' Mat. xxiii. 4. It is not enough to lift up our voice in recommending, but we must lift up our hands in practising, lest like a mark-stone, they show others the way to heaven, but walk not in it themselves, and contribute nothing of help by their examples.

2. Professors.

[1.] That approve the word only. There may be an idle naked approbation: Rom. ii. 18, 'Thou knowest his will, and approvest the things that are most excellent, being instructed out of the law.' *Video meliora proboque*; they esteem these things better, but their hearts incline them to what is evil, and their reason is a slave to appetite.

[2.] That commend as well as approve: Rom. ii. 20, 'Who hast a form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law,' but without action and practice. Have many good words; their voice Jacob's but their hands Esau's: Ps. l. 16, 17, 'What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or to take my covenant in thy mouth, since thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind me?' It pertaineth not to thee

to profess religion, since thou dost not practise it, to commend the law which thou observest not, or to profess love to what thou dost not obey.

Use 2. Is to press you to lift up your hands, and to obey and do the things which God hath prescribed in his word. Do not rest in the notional part of religion. That which will approve you to God is not a sharp wit, or a firm memory, or a nimble tongue, but a ready practice. God expecteth to be glorified by his creatures both in word and deed; and therefore heart, and tongue, and hand, and all should be employed. I will urge you with but two reasons:—

1. How easy it is to deceive ourselves with a fond love, a naked approbation, or good words, without bringing things to this real proof, whether the truth that we approve, esteem, and commend, have a real dominion over and influence upon our practice! 1 John ii. 4, ‘He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;’ James i. 22, ‘Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving your own souls.’ Respect to God and his word is a true evidence of a gracious heart. Now, how shall we know this respect real, but by our constant and uniform practice?

2. That it is not so easy to deceive God: he cannot be mocked with a vain show, for he looketh to the bottom and spring of all things: 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.’ He searcheth our hearts, knoweth our inward disposition, whether firm, strong, or productive of obedience. Now, to him you are to approve yourselves, and he will not be mocked with lying pretences and excuses: Gal. vi. 7, ‘Be not deceived; God is not mocked.’ The all-seeing God cannot be blinded: he knoweth our thoughts afar off, and seeth all things in their causes; much more can he judge of effects. Therefore, whatsoever illuminations we pretend unto, if we do not live in the obedience of the commands of self-denial, humility, justice, patience, faith, and love, he can soon find us out. If our actions do not correspond to our profession, it is a practical lie, which the Lord can easily find out.

Doct. 2. Whosoever would lift up his hands to God’s commandments, and seriously address himself to a course of obedience, must use much study and meditation. On the one side, non-advertency to heavenly doctrine is the bane of many: Mat. xiii. 19, ‘When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not,’ *μη συνιέντος, non advertit animum*, ‘then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.’ And so James i. 23, 24, ‘If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.’ God’s great complaint of his people is that they will not consider: Isa. i. 3, ‘The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.’ So Jer. viii. 6, ‘I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done?’ The heathens have commended such recollection. On the other side, the scripture recommendeth meditation, as one great help to obedience.

Lydia's conversion is described by attendancy: Acts xvi. 14, 'The Lord opened her heart, that she attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul;' because that is the first step to it; minding, choosing, prosecuting. So the man that will benefit by the word of God is he, James i. 23, 'That looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein;' that is, abideth in the view of these truths; for a glance never converted or warmed the heart of any man: 'This man being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed.' Now, more particularly, why meditation is necessary:—

1. To know the mind of God and understand our duty. A superficial knowledge hath no efficacy and hold upon us; therefore, by deep meditation, search and study, we come to be more thoroughly acquainted with the mind of God revealed in his word. We are bidden, Prov. ii. 4, to 'dig for knowledge as for silver.' Mines do not lie on the surface, but in the bowels of the earth. Every day we should get more knowledge: Rom. xii. 2, 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God;' and Eph. v. 17, 'Be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.' Now we cannot know this without a serious search and inquiry into the rule of duty: there must be an accurate search; spiritual knowledge will not drop into our mouths. There are many clouds of ignorance and folly that yet hover in the minds of men, and they are dispelled more and more by a sound study of the scriptures.

2. To keep up a fresh remembrance of our duty. Oblivion and inconsideration is a kind of ignorance for the time. Though we habitually know a thing, yet we do not actually know a thing till we consider of it: Eccles. v. 1, 'They consider not that they do evil;' so Hosea vii. 2, 'They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness.' That which we consider is always before us; but that which we consider not is forgotten, laid by, and the notions which we have about them are as it were laid asleep, they work not. But now frequent meditation keepeth these things alive.

3. Meditation is necessary to enkindle our affections. Affections are stirred by thoughts, as thoughts by objects. The truth cannot come home to our hearts till we think of it again and again. We have no other natural way to raise affection; and we must not think that grace worketh like a charm, in a way contrary to the instituted order of nature. No; the heart of man must be besieged with frequent and powerful thoughts before it will yield to God and give entertainment to his truth and ways. There is no coming at the heart but by the mind; and the mind must be serious in what it represents to gain the heart; that is, we must meditate. The devil watcheth our postures; he seeketh to catch these thoughts out of our mind as soon as he seeth that we begin to be serious, Mat. xiii. 19.

4. Meditation is necessary to show our love: 'I will lift up my hands also to thy commandments, which I have loved, and I will meditate in thy statutes;' Ps. i. 2, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night;' Ps. cxix. 47, 'And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.' The mind will muse upon what we love. As thoughts stir affections,

so affections stir up thoughts; for in all moral things there is a *κυκλογένησις*. A pleasing object will be much revolved in our mind, and frequently thought of.

The *use* is for direction to us. When you have heard the word, remember what you hear, and apply it to yourselves by serious inculcative thoughts. So when you read the word, do not only understand it, but think of it again and again: Deut. xxxii. 46, 'Set your hearts to all the words which I testify among you this day,' saith Moses to the Israelites. So Christ: Luke ix. 44, 'Let these sayings sink into your hearts.' Truths never go to the quick of the affections but by serious and ponderous thoughts. You will not lift up your hands till the truth sink into the heart. You read chapters, hear sermon after sermon; they do not stir you, or it is but a little, for a fit, like a man that hath been a little warming himself by the fire, and goeth away, and is colder than he was before. O Christian! this means is not to be neglected, no more than reading and hearing, because of its great use, both for first conversion, and continual quickening.

1. For first conversion. A man cometh to himself by serious thoughts of those great and important truths which are delivered in the word of God: Luke xv. 17, 'And when he came to himself, he said,' &c.; Ps. xxii. 27, 'All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord;' Ps. cxix. 59, 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.'

2. For continual quickening. Musing maketh the fire burn. The greatest things will not move us if we do not think of them: Rom. viii. 31, 'What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?' Job v. 27, 'Lo, this we have searched, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.' The benefit of sound doctrine consists in the application thereof by the hearers. When men have spent their time and strength to find a good lesson for us, shall not we think of it?

SERMON LV.

Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.—VER. 49.

IN the words observe—

1. His prayer and humble petition to God, *remember thy word*. God is said to remember when he doth declare by the effect that he doth remember. He sometimes seemingly forgets his promise, that is, to appearance carrieth himself as one that doth forget.

2. His argument is taken—

[1.] From his interest, *thy servant*.

[2.] From his trust and hope, which is expressed—

(1.) As warranted.

(2.) As caused.

(1.) As warranted by his *word*; that gave him ground of hope and comfort.