

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.

(2.) As caused by his influence, *Upon which thou hast caused me to hope.* The word his warrant, the Spirit his anchor. Would God raise up such a hope merely to defeat it? The word concurred to this hope, as it offered—

(1st.) A command to believe.

(2d.) The promise of the eternal and immutable God to build upon. The influence of his grace concurred; for he that maketh the offer in the word doth also work faith in the believer, and inclineth his heart to apply the promise and trust in it; for faith is ‘the gift of God,’ Eph. ii. 8. In short, here is a promise believed and pleaded; and both confirm our faith in the fulfilling and granting of it.

*Doct.* That believers may humbly challenge God upon his word, and seek the full performance of what he hath promised.

This point, that it may be managed with respect to this text, I shall give you these considerations:—

1. That God delighteth to promise mercy before he accomplish it; which sheweth these things:—

[1.] His abundant love. God’s heart is so kindly affected to his people that he cannot stay till the accomplishment of things, but he must tell us aforehand what he meaneth to do for us: Isa. xlii. 9, ‘Before they spring forth, I will tell you of them;’ long before there was any sight of such things, or means that might produce them: so that his promise is an eruption and overflow of his love.

[2.] His care for our security; for by his promise he giveth his people a holdfast upon him, as he maketh himself a debtor to them by his own promise, who was otherwise free before such engagement to poor creatures: Ps. lxxxix. 34, ‘My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.’ The word is gone out of his lips, not to be recalled, nor reversed. The promises are as so many bonds, wherein he stands bound to us; and these bonds may be put in suit, and his people have liberty and confidence to ask what he hath promised to them. Austin saith of his mother, *Chirographa tua injiciebat tibi Domine*—Lord, she showed thy own bond and handwriting. It is a mighty argument in prayer when we can plead that we ask no more than God hath promised.

2. That there is usually some time of delay between making the promise and fulfilling the promise; for therefore God promiseth, because he meaneth to do us good, but not presently. And this delay is not for want of kindness, or out of any backwardness to our good; for so it is said, he will not tarry: Hab. ii. 3, ‘Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.’ Nor out of ignorance, as not knowing the fittest time to help his people; for his waiting is guided by judgment: Isa. xxx. 18, ‘He waiteth that he may be gracious; for he is a God of judgment;’ he will take hold of the fittest season or occasion. Not from forgetfulness of his promise; for ‘he is ever mindful of his holy covenant,’ Ps. cxi. 5. Not from any mutability of nature or change of counsel; for he is Jehovah, that changeth not: Mal. iii. 6, ‘I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.’ He hath a due foresight of all possible difficulties, and needeth not to alter his counsels. Not from impotency and weakness, as if he could not execute what he had

promised, as the sons of Zeruiah were too hard for David, 2 Sam. iii. 39; all things are at the beck and signification of his will. But (1.) Partly with respect to his own glory, he will do things in their proper season: Eccles. iii. 11, 'Everything is beautiful in its time.' This is the wise providence of God in the government of the world, that everything is brought forth in its proper season, and in the time when it is most fit. God humbleth and God exalteth his people in due time: 1 Peter v. 6, 'Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.' So it is said of their enemies: Deut. xxxii. 35, 'Their foot shall slide in due time.' Summer and winter must succeed in their seasons. (2.) With respect to us, God will try our faith, whether we can stay on his word, and hug it, and embrace it, till the blessing come. As it is said of the patriarchs *ἀσπασάμενοι*, Heb. xi. 13, 'They embraced the promises;' Ps. lvi. 4, 'In God I will praise his word; I have put my trust in the Lord; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.' During this time we may be exercised with divers troubles and difficulties, so that to appearance God seemeth to forget his promises; and this he doth—

[1.] Partly to try our faith to the utmost, to see if we can trust and depend upon God for things which we see not, nor are likely to see. Faith, in the general, is a dependence upon God for something that lieth out of sight. Now, when the object is not only out of sight, but all that is seen and felt seemeth to contradict our hopes, and God seemeth to put us off, and we meet with many a rebuke of our confidence, instead of an answer, as the woman of Canaan that came to Christ at first meeteth not with a word,—then his speech more discourageth than his silence: Mat. xv. 26, 'It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs.' She turneth this rebuke into an encouragement: ver. 27, 'Truth, Lord! yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table;' ver. 28, 'Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman! great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.' Many times we come and pray for blessings promised, and the oracle is dumb and silent. Though God love the supplicant, yet he will not seem to take notice of his desires, but will humble him to the dust. Now, to pick an answer out of God's silence, and a gracious answer out of his rebukes, sheweth great faith. Job saith, chap. xiii. 15, 'Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him.' Faith supports us under the greatest pressures; when God seemeth to deal like an enemy, yet even then trusts in God as a friend, and that his dispensations will never give his word the lie.

[2.] To try our patience as well as our faith. God's dearest children are not admitted to the enjoyment of the mercies promised presently: Heb. vi. 12, 'Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' And Heb. x. 36, 'Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye may receive the promise.' We must first do, and sometimes suffer, the will of God. The promises are to come, and at a great distance. 'And if we hope for that we see not,' and enjoy not, 'then do we with patience wait for it,' Rom. viii. 25. But especially is patience tried when we meet with oppositions, difficulties, dangers, many things done, many things suffered, before we can attain what we hope for. Now,

quietly to wait God's leisure is a great trial of our patience. Our times are always present with us, when God's time is not come. A hungry stomach would have meat ere it be sodden or roasted, and a sickish appetite must have green fruit; but to wait, like the husbandman, in all seasons and weathers, till the corn ripen; and to persevere in hoping and praying, that is that which God requires.

[3.] Our love, though we be not feasted with felt comforts, nor bribed with present satisfaction and benefits in hand. God will try the deportment of his children, whether they will adhere to him when he seemeth to cast them off. It is not said, 'In the way of thy mercies,' but, 'In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee,' Isa. xxvi. 8. Love for himself, without any present benefit from him, yea, when kept under sore judgments and deep distresses.

[4.] To enlarge our desires, that we may have the greater sense of our necessities, and value for the blessings promised. A sack that is stretched out holdeth the more. Delay increaseth importunity: 'Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,' Mat. vii. 7; Luke xi. 8, 'Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet *διὰ τὴν ἀναιδείαν*, because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.' And things promised being asked, and at length obtained, are the more valued.

3. That if we yet continue our faith, and heartily believe God upon his word, it is a great encouragement in waiting for the thing promised; for to believe is a qualification. There are in the word of God promises that we may believe, and then promises because we do believe; promises to invite faith and hope, and then promises because we believe in God and hope in his word; promises *for* faith, and *to* faith. As for instance, God hath promised to be a defence unto his people: Zech. ii. 5, 'I the Lord will be unto her a wall of fire round about her, and will be the glory in the midst of her.' Now see how David pleadeth: Ps. lvii. 1, 'Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.' When once we believe, then we have a claim: Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou keepest him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' Trust giveth us a fresh claim or new interest: Ps. lxxxvi. 2, 'O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.' God will not disappoint a trusting soul. An ingenuous man will not fail his friend if he rely on him. We count this the strongest bond we lay upon another, to be faithful and mindful of us: I trust you, that you will do this for me. How much more will God do so,—

[1.] For his own honour, to show himself faithful, willing, and able to succour his people in their distresses. This is the reproach cast upon the worshippers of idols, that they call upon those things which cannot help them nor relieve them in their straits: Judges x. 14, 'Go to the gods whom ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the day of tribulation.' When you trust God, the honour of his Godhead lieth at stake. By trust you own him for a God: Jonah i. 5, 'Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man upon his god.' By making

good your trust he sheweth himself to be a God, that they do not seek to a vain help.

[2.] With a condescension to his people. Nothing goeth so near their hearts as a disappointment of their hope in God. This will mightily damp their spirits, when God spits in their faces, and seemeth to reject their prayers: Ps. xxv. 2, 'O my God, I trust in thee, let me not be ashamed; yea, let none of them that wait on thee be ashamed; but let them be ashamed which transgress without a cause.' To have hopes fail which were invited and drawn forth by promises is a great temptation.

[3.] With respect to their enemies, who will be sure to cast this in their teeth, if the God in whom they trusted should not send help from his holy place. You will find God's servants often mocked for their trust: Ps. xxii. 8, 'He trusted in the Lord; let him now deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.' Christ himself was not free from the lash of profane tongues, he was mocked for his dependence on his Father: Mat. xxvii. 43, 'He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him.' The world counts faith but a fancy. Now if God should deny the things promised to his people, it would seem to countenance the slanders of their enemies. Wherefore do the children of God expose themselves to difficulties, and all manner of hard usages, but because of their hope in God? 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'Therefore we suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God;' for that reason, because they look for great things from God; therefore God hath a great respect for them that trust in him.

4. This trust must be pleaded in prayer.

[1.] Because prayer is one of the means by which God hath decreed to fulfil his promises; and therefore we must obtain mercies in his own appointed way. God saith, I will do thus and thus for you: Ezek. xxxvi. 37, 'But I will be inquired after by the house of Israel for this very thing.' God will do it, but prayer must give a lift; he will be sought to: Jer. xxix. 11, 12, 'I know the thoughts which I think towards you, saith the Lord; thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end,' that is, such an end as yourselves hope for and desire; 'then shall ye call upon me, and go, and pray to me, and I will hearken unto you,' that is, you must address and set yourselves seriously to this work. When the promise is urged by the believer, it will be performed by God. So when Daniel understood by the books and writings of the prophets that the time was come wherein God had promised to deliver his people, then he falleth a-praying in a serious manner, Dan. ix. 3. When God hath a mind to work, then he sets the spirit of prayer awork, for he will have all things accomplished in his own way.

[2.] Because he hath put this office upon his people, that they are to be his remembrancers at the throne of grace: Isa. lxii. 6, 'Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence;' it is in the margin, 'Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers,' whose office it is to be constantly minding God, and soliciting him in the behalf of his church. Public remembrancers are the officers of his church; but every Christian is a private remembrancer; to put God in mind of his promise. Not that God is subject to forgetfulness, as man is, who hath need of

such minders; but he will be sought and solicited for the performance of his gracious promises. We have an advocate in heaven, but there are remembrancers upon earth. We come as David here, 'Remember thy word unto thy servants, on which thou hast caused us to hope.'

5. We are the more encouraged because God, that made the promise, doth also give the faith; for he pleadeth two things—the grant of the promise, and the gift of faith. Reasons:—

[1.] God would not deceive us. Would he raise a confidence to disappoint us? In such a case we might say, as the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xx. 7, 'Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived;' the words seem to intrench upon the honour of God. In the general, I answer—They were spoken by the prophet in a passion. Others soften them by another rendering and interpretation, 'Thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded;' that is, to undertake the prophetic office, of which I was nothing forward of myself, but averse thereunto, yet found it more troublesome than I expected. But put it with a supposition, 'If I be deceived, thou hast deceived me,' there is nothing inconvenient. God had told him he would make him as a brazen wall; God had raised a faith and hope in him to be borne out in his work. Now, if God hath specially excited your faith, it is not a foolish imagination or vain expectation, like as of them that dream; it is God's word you build upon, and it is by a faith of God's operation; he raiseth it in us.

[2.] The prayer of faith is the voice of the Spirit, and God heareth the voice of the Spirit always, 'who maketh requests *κατὰ Θεόν*, according to the will of God;' Rom. viii. 27, 'He that searcheth and trieth the hearts, knoweth what is a groan of the Spirit,' what is a fancy of our own, what is a confidence raised in us by the operation of his own Spirit. For there may be a mistaken faith, seemingly built upon the promises, whereas it is indeed built upon our own conceits. Now God is not bound to make that faith good. But when we can appeal to the searcher of hearts that it is a faith of his own working, surely we may have confidence.

Now how shall we know that it is a faith of God's raising?

1. If the promise be not mistaken, and we do not presume of that absolutely which God only hath promised conditionally, and with the limitations of his own glory and our good, which are joined to all promises which concern the present life. In temporal things, God exerciseth his children with great uncertainties, because he seeth it meet to prove our submission in these things, for our happiness lieth not in them. Those things wherein our happiness doth consist, as remission of sins and eternal life, are sure enough, and that is encouragement to a gracious heart: 2 Tim. iv. 18, 'God hath delivered me out of the mouth of the lion, and will deliver me from every evil work.' In the Old Testament, when God discovered less of heaven, he promised more of earth; but in the New Testament, where life and immortality are brought to light, we are told of many tribulations in our passage; yea, the eminent saints of the Old Testament, that had a clearer view of things to come than others had, were more exposed to the calamities of the present life, because God thought the sight of happiness to come sufficient to countervail their troubles; and if he

would give them rest in another world, they might well endure the inconveniences of their pilgrimage: Heb. xi. 16, 'But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.' The holy patriarchs left their country, flitted up and down upon this hope; but to us Christians the case is clear: Rom. viii. 18, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;' 2 Cor. iv. 17, 'For this light affliction, that is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

2. When the qualification of the person is not clear, we must not absolutely promise ourselves the effect: Jonah iii. 9, 'Who can tell whether God will turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?' So Joel ii. 14, 'Who knoweth if he will return, and leave a blessing behind him?' In this clause I put believers who have sinned away their peace and assurance: 2 Sam. xii. 22, 'Who can tell if God will be gracious unto me, that the child may live?' He speaketh doubtfully; Zeph. ii. 3, 'It may be that ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's fierce anger;' Amos v. 15, 'Hate the evil and love the good; it may be the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.' In such cases the soul is divided between the expectation of mercy and the sense of their own deservings, and can speak neither the pure language of faith nor the pure language of unbelief—half Canaan, half Ashdod. There is a twilight in grace as well as in nature. God in these cases raiseth no other confidence, to heighten mercy, and try how we can venture upon God, and refer ourselves to his will, when we have any business for him to do for us: Mat. viii. 2, 'Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean;' 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26, 'And the king said to Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city; if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it, and his habitation: but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him.'

3. In the promises of spiritual and eternal mercies, when God's conditions are performed by us, we may be confident, and must give glory to God in believing and being persuaded that he will fulfil them to us: 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day;' Rom. viii. 38, 39, 'For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' I am persuaded; there is no doubt: the stronger our confidence, the better.

4. When God raiseth in our minds some particular express hope (as in some cases he may do) to these things that are of a temporal nature, and are conditionally promised, and where our qualification is clear, he will not disappoint us, 2 Cor. i. 12. Though the promises of temporal things have the limitation of the cross implied in them, and are to be understood in subordination to our eternal interest and God's glory, without which they would not be mercies but judgments, yet

his usual course is to save, deliver, and supply them here: Ps. ix. 10, 'And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.' And when God by his Spirit doth particularly incline his people to hope for mercy from him, he will not fail their expectations. Where the qualification is uncertain, yet the faith of general mercy wrestleth against discouragements; as in the case of the woman of Canaan: there is the plea of a dog, and the plea of a child, in grievous temptations to fasten ourselves upon God. God will make good the hope raised in them by his Spirit.

*Use.* For direction, what to do in all our distresses, bodily and spiritual. Our necessities should lead us to the promise, and the promise to God.

1. Be sure of your qualification; for David pleadeth here partly as the servant of God, and partly as a believer: first, 'Remember thy word unto thy servant;' and then, 'wherein thou hast caused me to hope.' There is a double qualification—with respect to the precept of subjection, with respect to the promise of dependence: the precept is before the promise. They have right to the promises, and may justly lay hold upon them, who are God's servants; they who apply themselves to obey his precepts, these only can regularly apply his promises. None can lay claim to rewarding grace but those that are partakers of his sanctifying grace. Clear that once, that you are God's servants, and then these promises, which are generally offered, are your own, no less than if your name were inserted in the promise, and written in the Bible. Let us remember our promises made to God, and then desire him to remember his promises to us. The next part of the qualification is, if you be believers, and can wait and depend upon God, though he seemeth to delay, and forget his promise: 'Our eyes must wait upon the Lord, until he have mercy upon us,' Ps. cxxiii. 2. The benefit of some promises droppeth, like the first ripe fruit, into the mouth of the eater; but others must be tarried for. It is said, Acts vii. 17, 'When the time of the promise drew night, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt.' The promise is recorded, Gen. xv. 5, of 'multiplying his seed like the stars of heaven.' Abraham was seventy-five years old when the promise was made, a hundred years old when Isaac was born; when Jacob went into Egypt they were but seventy souls, but at their coming forth they were 603,550. Now, if faith wait, Isa. xxviii. 16, 'He that believeth maketh not haste;' Lam. iii. 26, 'It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God;' Hosea xii. 6, 'Keep mercy and judgment, and wait on the Lord continually.' God delayeth because he would have us make use of faith. Real believers are such as have ventured upon God's word, denied themselves for the hopes offered therein: 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God;' Heb. vi. 10, 'God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards his name.' God's servants must wait for his promises with patience and self-denial: Rom. ii. 7, 'To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life;' Luke viii. 15, 'Those in the good ground are they which



in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.'

2. Then let us plead promises; let them not lie by us as a dead stock, but put them in suit, and put God in remembrance. When the accomplishment is delayed, it is a notable way of raising and increasing our confidence: 2 Sam. vii. 25, 'And now, O Lord, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.' So ver. 28, 'And now, O Lord, thou art that God, and thy words are true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant.' So may we do with any promise of mercy and grace which God hath made with his people in his covenant.

## SERMON LVI.

*This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me.*—VER. 50.

IN the former verse the man of God had complained of the delay of the promise, and that his hope was so long suspended; now in this verse he sheweth what was his support, and did revive him during this delay and the sore afflictions which befell him in the meantime. The promise comforted him before performance came, 'This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath quickened me.'

1. Observe here, the man of God had his afflictions; for we are not exempted from troubles, but comforted in troubles. God's promise, and hope therein, may occasion us much trouble and persecution in the world. Yet—

2. This very promise which occasioneth the trouble is the ground of our support; for one great benefit which we have by the word is comfort against afflictions.

3. This comfort which we have by the word is the quickening and life of the soul. The life of our soul is first received by the word, and still maintained by the same word: James i. 18, 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth;' 1 Peter i. 23, 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.'

*Doct.* That all other comforts in affliction are nothing to those comforts which we have from the word of God.

David confirmeth it from experience; in his deepest pressures and afflictions, his soul was supported and enlivened by the word of God. The apostle Paul doctrinally asserts it: Rom. xv. 4, 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.' The general end of scripture is instruction; the special end is comfort and hope. *Id agit tota scriptura, ut credamus in Deum* (Luther)—the business and design of scripture is to bring us to believe in God, and to wait upon him for our salvation; to hope either for eternal life, which is the great benefit offered in the scriptures, or those intervening

blessings which are necessary by the way, and also adopted into the covenant. The reasons are taken—

1. From the quality of those comforts which we have from the word of God.

2. From the provision which the word hath made for our comfort.

3. From the manner whereby this comfort is received.

*First*, From the quality of those comforts which we receive from the word of God.

1. It is a divine comfort: Ps. xciv. 19, ‘In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.’ In all the comforts we have, it is good to consider from whence it cometh. Is it God’s comfort, or a fancy of our own? A comfort that is made up of our own fancies is like a spider’s web, that is weaved out of its bowels, and is gone and swept away with the turn of a besom. But God’s comfort is more durable and lasting; for then it floweth from the true fountain of comfort, upon whose smiles and frowns our happiness dependeth. Now God’s comforts are such as God worketh, or God alloweth. Take them in either sense, they come in with a commanding or overpowering efficacy upon the soul. If God exciteth it by his Spirit, who is the comforter, Ps. iv. 7, ‘Thou hast put gladness into my heart.’ There is little warmth in a fire of our own kindling: the Holy Ghost raiseth the heart to a higher degree of a delightful sense of the love of God than we can do by a bare natural act of our own understanding. Or whether it be of such comforts as God alloweth, if we have God’s covenant for our comfort we have enough; no comfort like his comfort. In philosophy, man speaketh to us by the evidence of reason; in the scripture, God speaketh to us by way of sovereign authority: in his commands he interposeth his power and dominion; in his promises he empawneth his truth. And therefore scriptural comforts are God’s comforts, and so more powerful and authoritative.

2. It is a strong comfort: Heb. vi. 18, ‘That the heirs of promise might have strong consolation,’ *ισχυράν παράκλησιν*. Other comforts are weak and of little force; they are not affliction-proof, nor death-proof, nor judgment-proof; they cannot stand before a few serious and sober thoughts of the world to come; but this is strong comfort, that can support the soul, not only in the imagination and supposition of a trouble, when we see it at a distance, but when it is actually come upon us, how great soever it be. If we feel the cold hands of death ready to pluck out our hearts, and are summoned to appear before the bar of our judge, yet this comfort is not the more impeached; that which supported us in prosperity can support us in adversity; what supports in life can support us in death; for the comforts of the word endure for ever, and the covenant of God will not fail us, living or dying.

3. It is a full comfort, both for measure and matter.

[1.] Sometimes for the measure; the apostle speaketh of ‘comforts abounding by Christ.’ 2 Cor. i. 5, and Acts xiii. 52, ‘The disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost;’ and the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. vii. 4, *ὑπερπερισσεύομαι τῇ χαρᾷ*, ‘I am filled with comfort, and am exceeding joyful in all your tribulations.’ Paul and Silas

could sing praises in the prison, and in the stocks, after they had been scourged and whipped, Acts xvi. 25. And our Lord Jesus Christ, when he took care for our comfort, he took care that it might be a full comfort: John xv. 11, 'These things have I spoken, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.' The joy of believers is a full joy, needing no other joy to be added to it: it is full enough to bear us out under all discouragements. If Christians would improve their advantages, they might by their full joy and cheerfulness entice carnal men, who are ensnared by the baits of the world and the delights of the flesh, once to come and try what comforts they might have in the bosom of Christ, and the lively expectation of the promised glory.

[2.] For the matter; it is full, because of the comprehensiveness of those comforts which are provided for us. There is no sort of trouble for which the word of God doth not afford sufficient consolation; no strait can be so great, no pressure so grievous, but we have full consolation offered us in the promises against them all. We have promises of the pardon of all our sins, and promises of heaven itself; and what can we desire more? We have promises suited to every state—prosperity and adversity. What do we need, which we have not a promise of? Prosperity, that it shall not be our ruin, if we take it thankfully from God, and use it for God; for, 'to the pure all things are pure,' Titus i. 15. But especially for adversity, when we most need; there are promises either of singular assistance or gracious deliverance. In short, the word of God assureth us of the gracious presence of God here in the midst of our afflictions, and the eternal enjoyment of God hereafter; that he will be with us in our houses of clay, or we shall shortly be with him in his palace of glory; and so here is matter of full comfort.

(1.) His presence with us in our afflictions: Ps. xci. 15, 'I will be with him in trouble;' and Isa. xlii. 2, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee;' and many other places. Now if God be with us, why should we be afraid? Ps. xxiii. 4, 'When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not be afraid, for thou art with me;' and in many other places. We see in the body, if any member be hurt, thither presently runneth the blood to comfort the wounded part; the man himself, eye, tongue, and hand, is altogether employed about that part and wounded member, as if he were forgetful of all the rest. So we see in the family, if one of the children be sick, all the care and kindness of the mother is about that sick child; she sits by him, blandisheth him, and tendeth him, so that all the rest do as it were envy his disease and sickness. If nature doth thus, will not God, who is the author of nature, do much more? For if an earthly mother do thus to a sickly and suffering child, will not our heavenly Father, who hath an infinite, incredible, and tender love to his people? Surely he runneth to the afflicted, as the blood to the hurt member; he looketh after the afflicted, as the mother to the sick child. This is the difference between God and the world; the world runneth after those that flourish, and rejoice, and live in prosperity, as the rivers run to the sea, where there is water enough already; but God 'comforteth us in

all our tribulations,' 2 Cor. i. 4. His name and style is, 'He comforteth those that are cast down,' 2 Cor. vii. 6. The world forsaketh those that are in poverty, disgrace, and want; but God doth not withdraw from them, but visiteth them most, hath communion with them most, and vouchsafeth most of his presence to them, even to those that holily, meekly, and patiently bear the afflictions which he layeth upon them; and one drop of this honey is enough to sweeten the bitterest cup that ever they drank of. If God be with us, if 'the power of Christ will rest upon us,' then we may even glory in infirmities, as Paul did.

(2.) Of our presence with God, when our afflictions are over; that is our happiness hereafter; we shall be there where he is: John xii. 26, 'There where I am shall my servant be;' and John xvii. 24, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.' When we have had our trial and exercise, we shall live with him for ever; therefore is our comfort called everlasting consolation: 2 Thes. ii. 16, 'Who hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.' Nothing more can be added or desired, if we have but the patience to tarry for it, that we may come to the sight of God and Christ at last. Surely this will lighten the heart of that sorrow and fear wherewith it is surcharged. Here is an everlasting ground of comfort; and if it doth not allay our fears and sorrows, the fault is not in the comfort, for that is a solid and eternal good; but on the believer's part, if he doth not keep his faith strong, and his evidences clear.

4. It is a reviving comfort, which quickeneth the soul. Many times we seem to be dead to all spiritual operations, our affections are damped and discouraged; but the word of God puts life into the dead, and relieveth us in our greatest distresses. Sorrow worketh death, but joy is the life of the soul. Now when dead in all sense and feeling, 'the just shall live by faith,' Hab. ii. 4; and the hope wrought in us by the scriptures is 'a lively hope,' 1 Peter i. 3. Other things skin the wound, but our sore breaketh out again and runneth; faith penetrates into the inwards of a man, doth us good to the heart; and the soul reviveth by waiting upon God, and gets life and strength.

*Secondly*, The provision which the word hath made for our comfort; it might be referred to four heads.

1. Its commands.

[1.] Provisionally, and by way of anticipation. The whole scripture is framed so that it still carrieth on its great end of making man subject to God and comfortable in himself. Our first lesson in the school of Christ is self-denial: Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' Now this seemeth to be grievous, but provideth for comfort; for self-denial plucketh up all trouble by the root; the cross will not be very grievous to a self-denying spirit. Epictetus summed up all the wisdom that he could learn by the light of nature in these two words, *ἀνέχου καὶ ἀπέχου*—bear and forbear; to which answereth the apostle's 'temperance, patience,' 2 Peter i. 6. Certainly were we more mortified and weaned from the world, and could we deny ourselves in things

grateful to sense, we should not lie open to the stroke of troubles so often as we do. The greatness of our affections causeth the greatness of our afflictions. Did we possess earthly things with less love, we should lose them with less grief. Had we more entirely resigned ourselves to God, and did love carnal self less, we should less be troubled when we are lessened in the world. Thus provisionally, and by way of anticipation, doth the word of God provide against our sorrows. The wheels of a watch do protrude and thrust forward one another; so one part of Christian doctrine doth help another: take any piece asunder, and then it is hard to be practised. Patience is hard if there be no thorough resignation to God, no temperance and command of our affections; but Christianity is all of a piece; one part well received and digested befriendeth another.

[2.] Directly, and by way of express charge, the scripture requireth us to moderate our sorrow, to cast all our care upon God, to look above temporal things, and hath expressly forbidden distracting cares, and doubts, and inordinate sorrows: 1 Peter v. 7, 'Cast all your care upon God, for he careth for you;' and Phil. iv. 6, 'Be careful for nothing.' We have a religion that maketh it unlawful to be sad and miserable, and to grieve ourselves inordinately: care, fear, and anguish of mind are forbidden, and no sorrow allowed us but what tendeth to our joy: Isa. xxxv. 4, 'Say to them that are of fearful hearts, Be strong, fear not;' Isa. xli. 10, 'Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God.' To fear the rage, and power, and violence of enemies, is contrary to the religion which we do profess: 'Fear not them which can kill the body,' Mat. x. 26, 28. Now surely the word, which is full fraught with precepts of this nature, must needs comfort and stay the heart.

2. The doctrines of the word do quicken and comfort us in our greatest distresses, all of them concerning justification and salvation by Christ; they serve to deaden the heart to present things, and lift it up to better, and so to beget a kind of dedolency and insensibility of this world's crosses; but especially four doctrines we have in the word of God that are very comforting.

[1.] The doctrine concerning particular providence, that nothing falleth out without God's appointment, and that he looketh after every individual person as if none else to care for. This is a mighty ground of comfort; for nothing can befall me but what my Father wills, and he is mindful of me in the condition wherein I am, knoweth what things I stand in need of, and nothing is exempted from his care, ordering, and disposal. This is a ground both of patience and comfort: Ps. xxxix. 9, 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.' So Hezekiah: Isa. xxxviii. 15, 'What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it.' It is time to cease, or say no more; why should we contend with the Lord? Is it a sickness or grievous bodily pain? What difference is there between a man that owneth it as a chance or natural accident, and one that seeth God's hand in it? We storm if we look no further than second causes; but one that looketh on it as an immediate stroke of God's providence hath nothing to reply by way of murmuring and expostulation. So in loss of good children; how do we rave against

instruments, if we look no further ! But if we consider the providence of God, Job i. 23, not *Dominus dedit, diabolus abstulit*, but ‘The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ So for contumely and reproaches ; if God let loose a barking Shimei upon us, 2 Sam. xvi. 11, ‘The Lord bid him curse.’ To resist a lower officer is to resist the authority with which he is armed. So in all other cases, it is a ground of patience and comfort to see God in the providence.

[2.] His fatherly care over his people. He hath taken them into his family, and all his doings with them are paternal and fatherly. It allayeth our cares : Mat. vi. 32, ‘Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye hath need of all these things.’ Our sorrows in affliction are lessened by considering they come from our Father : Heb. xii. 5–7, ‘Ye have forgotten the exhortation that speaketh upon you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him ; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons ; for what son is that whom the father chasteneth not ? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons ;’ and so those whom God doth love tenderly, he doth correct severely.

[3.] His unchangeable love to his people. God remaineth unchangeably the same. When our outward condition doth vary and alter, we have the same blessed God as a rock to stand upon, and to derive our comforts from, that we had before : he is the God of the valleys, as well as of the hills. Christ in his desertion saith, ‘My God, my God,’ Mat. xxvii. 46. Surely we deserve that the creature should be taken from us, if we cannot find comfort in God : Hab. iii. 18, ‘Although the fig-tree should not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, &c., yet will I rejoice in the Lord ; I will joy in the God of my salvation ;’ ‘Nothing can separate us from the love of God,’ Rom. viii. 36. Men may separate us from our houses, countries, friends, estates, but not from God, who is our great delight. In our low estate we have a God to go to for comfort, and who should be more to us than our sweetest pleasures.

[4.] The scripture sheweth us the true doctrine about afflictions, and discovereth to us the author, cause, and end of all our afflictions. The author is God, the cause is sin, the end is to humble, mortify, and correct his children, that they may be more capable of heavenly glory. God is the author ; not fortune, or chance, or the will of man ; but God, who doth all things with the most exact wisdom, and tender mercy, and purest love. The cause is just : Micah vii. 9, ‘I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.’ The end is our profit, for his chastisements are purgative medicines, to prevent or cure some spiritual disease. If God should never administer physic till we see it needful, desire to take it, or be willing of it, we should perish in our corruptions, or die in our sins, for want of help in due time : 1 Cor. xi. 32, ‘But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.’ Now, should we not patiently and comfortably endure those things which come by the will of our Father, through our sins, and for our good ?

3. The examples of the word, which show us that the dearly beloved of the Lord have suffered harder things than we have done, and with greater patience. Christ : 1 Peter ii. 21, 'Who suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.' The servants of the Lord : James v. 10, 'Take, my brethren, the prophets of the Lord, who have spoken the word of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.' We complain of stone and gout ; what did our Lord Jesus Christ endure when the whole weight of his body hung upon four wounds, and his life dropped out by degrees ? We complain of every painful disease, but how was it with Christ when his back was scourged, and his flesh mangled with whips ? We are troubled at the swellings of the gout in hands or feet ; how was it with him when those sinewy parts were pierced with strong and great nails ? We complain of the want of spiritual consolations ; was not he deserted ? We mourn when God maketh a breach upon our relations ; was not Abraham's trial greater, when he was to offer his son with his own hands ? Heb. xi. 17, 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac ; and he that had received the promise offered up his only-begotten son.' Job lost all his children at once by a blast of wind. The Virgin Mary near the cross of Christ, 'Woman, behold thy son,' John xix. 26. She was affected and afflicted with that sight, 'as if a sword pierced through her heart.' We complain of poverty ; Christ 'had not where to lay his head.' If we lose our coat to keep our conscience, others of God's children have been thus tried before us : Heb. x. 34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' The Levites 'left their inheritance,' 2 Chron. xi. 14. Thus God doth not call us by any rougher way to heaven than others have gone before us.

4. The promises of scripture. To instance in all would be endless. There are three great promises which comfort us in all our afflictions—the promises of pardon of sins, and eternal life, and the general promises about our temporal estate.

[1.] The promises of pardon of sin. We can have no true cure for our sorrow till we be exempted from the fear of the wrath of God. Do that once, and the heart of sorrow and misery is broken. Others may steal a little peace when conscience is laid asleep, but not solid comfort till sin be pardoned : Isa. xl. 1, 2, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God ; speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned ;' Mat. ix. 2, 'Son, be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee ;' Rom. v. 1, 'Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

[2.] The promises of eternal life. Nothing will afford us so much content as one scripture promise of eternal life would do to a faithful soul. Heaven in the promise seen by faith is enough to revive the most doleful and afflicted creature : Mat. v. 12, 'Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' Nothing can be grievous to him that knoweth a world to come, and hath the assurance of the eternal God that shortly he shall enjoy the happiness of it : Rom. v. 2, 'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' This comforts

against troubles, sicknesses, wants. Everlasting ease, everlasting joy, surely will counterbalance all that we can endure and suffer for or from God. There all our fears and sorrows shall be at an end, and all tears shall be wiped from our eyes.

[3.] The general promises concerning our temporal estate. There are many particular promises concerning the supply of all our necessities, removing of our grievances and burdens, or else that God will allay our troubles and enable us to bear them, mix with them the taste of his goodness and fatherly love. But I shall only speak of those general promises, that we may be confident that he will never utterly fail his people: Heb. xiii. 5, 'He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;' that he will not give us over to insupportable difficulties: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'There hath no temptation taken you but what is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.' He will dispose of all things for the best to them that love him, Rom. viii. 28. These things are absolutely undertaken, and these things should satisfy us.

*Thirdly*, From the manner wherein this comfort is received. They are applied by the Spirit, who is a comforter, and received by faith.

1. Applied by the Spirit, which is dispensed in a concomitancy with this word: 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.' The Holy Ghost is purposely given to be our comforter. If we are fit to receive it, he will not be wanting to give solid joy and delight to the penitent and believing soul.

2. It is received by faith. The word of God cannot deceive us. Faith is contented with a promise, though it hath not possession; for, Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.' Sickness with a promise, poverty with a promise, captivity with a promise, is better than health, riches, liberty without one; yea, death with a promise is better than life. What you possess without a promise you may lose when most secure: Luke xii. 19, 20, 'I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be that thou hast provided?' But in the eye of faith, that which we hope for is more than that which we possess; for we have God's word; it is set before us.

*Use 1.* For information.

1. How likely it is that the children of God will be exercised with afflictions, because God in his word hath laid in so many comforts beforehand; a full third of the scriptures would be lost, and be as bladders given to a man that stands on dry land, and never meaneth to go into deep waters: 'Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward,' Job v. 7. Many think they come into the world not to bear crosses, but to spend their days in pleasure; but alas! how soon do they find themselves mistaken, and confuted by experience! If life be anything lengthened out, it is vexed with the remembrance of what is past, or trouble of what is present, or fear of what is to come. The first part



of our life we know not ourselves ; in the middle, we are filled with cares and sorrows ; our last burdened with weakness and age. But now the godly are more appointed to troubles, because God will try their faith, perfect their patience, train them up for a better world. They are now hated by the world : 2 Tim. iii. 12, ‘ Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution ;’ Acts xiv. 22, ‘ We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.’ He that would not be exempted from the hopes of Christians, he must not look to be exempted from the troubles of Christians.

2. The excellency of the word of God and the religion it establisheth. It containeth store of sure comforts ; and when all other comforts can do us no good, then the word of God affordeth us relief and support. Bare human reason cannot find out such grounds of comfort in all their philosophy ; it doth not penetrate to the inwards of a man. It will tell us it is in vain to trouble ourselves about what we cannot help : Jer. x. 19, ‘ It is an evil, and I must bear it ;’ that we are not without fellows, others suffer as much as we do, &c. ; but the word of God giveth us other consolations—the pardon of sin, the promises of a better life ; that if we lose temporal things we shall have eternal ; that we would not fear the threatenings of men, having the promises of God, &c., nor death, which hath life at the back of it ; these are comforts indeed. When David was even dead in the nest, the word, that was not so clear then in these points as now, revived him. What would he have said if he had known the gospel so fully as we do ? How should we be affected that live in so much light ?

*Use 2.* For reproof to those that seek other comforts,—

1. In the vanities of the world. This is too slight a plaster to cure man’s sore or heal his wound : the comforts of this world appear and vanish in a moment ; every blast of a temptation scattereth them. It must be the hope and enjoyment of some solid satisfaction that can fortify the heart and breed any solid and lasting comfort, and this the world cannot give unto us ; but in the word we have it. Alas ! what is a dream of honour, or the good-will and word of a mortal man ? Everlasting glory is as much above all these as the treasures of a kingdom before a child’s toys. May-games, vain pleasures, are gone before we well feel that we have them.

2. Or in philosophy. That cannot give a true ground of comfort. That was it the wise men of the world aimed at to fortify the soul against troubles ; but as they never understood the true ground of misery, which is sin, so they never understood the true ground or way of comfort, which is Christ. That which man offereth cannot come with such authority and power as that which God offereth. The light of reason cannot have such an efficacy as divine testimony. This is a poor moonlight, that rotteth before it ripeneth anything. In short, they were never acquainted with Christ, who is the foundation of comfort ; nor the promise of heaven, which is the true matter of comfort ; nor faith, which is the instrument to receive comfort ; so that you leave the fountain of living water for the dead puddle of a filthy ditch, if you think the writings of the heathens will comfort you and revive you, and neglect the word of God that brings rest for the soul.

3. Those are to be reproved that are under a spiritual institution.

and profess to keep to it, and do so little honour it, either by their patience or comfort, or hope under troubles. Wherefore were the great mysteries of godliness made known to us, and the promises of the world to come, and all the directions concerning the subjection of the soul to God, and those blessed privileges we enjoy by Christ, if they all be not able to satisfy and stay your heart, and compose it to a quiet submission to God when it is his pleasure to take away your comforts from you? What! 'Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there?' Will not all the word of God yield you a cordial or a cure? Oh! consider what a disparagement you put upon the provision Christ hath made for us, as if the scripture were a weaker thing than the institutions of philosophy, or the vain delights of the world! But what may be the reasons of such an obstinacy of grief?

[1.] Sometimes ignorance. They do not study the grounds of comfort, or do not remember them; for oblivion is an ignorance for the time: Heb. xii. 5, 'Have ye forgotten the exhortation that speaketh to you as children?' They are like Hagar, have a well of comfort nigh, and yet ready to die for thirst. The scripture hath breasts of comfort, so full as a breast ready to discharge itself, and yet they are not comforted.

[2.] They indulge and give way to the present malady, hug the distemper, and do not consider the evil of it; as 'Rachel refused to be comforted,' Jer. xxxi. 15.

[3.] They do not chide themselves, ask the soul the reason, cite it before the tribunal of conscience, which is one way to allay passions: Ps. xlii. 5, 'Why art thou so disquieted, O my soul?' They look to the grievance, not to the comfort, as that which is of use; they aggravate the grievance and lessen the love of God: 'Are the consolations of God so small with thee?' Job xv. 11. It is spoken to them who have high thoughts of their troubles, low thoughts of God's comforts.

[4.] Uncertainty in religion. Principles must be fixed before they can be improved, and we can feel their influence and power. But people will be making essays, and try this and try that. God's grounds of comfort are immutably fixed; God will not change his gospel laws for thy sake: and therefore, unless we would have a mountebank's cure, we must stand to them: Jer. vi. 16, 'Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' When we have tried all, we must come home at length to these things; and our uncertainty in religion will be none of the meanest causes of our troubles.

[5.] They look to means and their natural operation, and neglect God; and God only will be known to be the God of all comfort: 2 Cor. i. 3, 4, 'Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comforts, who comforteth us in all our tribulation.'

*Use 3.* To exhort us—

1. To prize and esteem the scriptures, and consult with them often: there you have the knowledge of God, who is best worth our knowing; and the way how we may come to enjoy him, wherein our happiness lieth. It is a petty wisdom to be able to gather riches, manage your business in the world. Ordinary learning is a good ornament, but this

is the excellent, deep, and profound learning, to know how to be saved. What is it I press you to know?—the course of the heavens, to number the orbs and the stars in them, to measure their circumference and reckon their motions, and not to know him that sits in the circle of them, nor know how to inhabit and dwell there? Oh, how should this commend the word of God to us, where eternal life is discovered, and the way how to get it! Other writings and discourses may tickle the fancy with pleasing eloquence, but that delight is vanishing, like a musician's voice. Other writings may represent some petty and momentary advantage; but time will put an end to that, so that within a little while the advantage of all the books in the world will be gone; but the scriptures, that tell us of eternal life and death, their effects will abide for ever: Ps. cxix. 96, 'I have seen an end of all perfections, but thy commandments are exceeding broad.' When heaven and earth pass away, this will not pass; that is, the effects will abide in heaven and hell. Know ye not that your souls were created for eternity, and that they will eternally survive all these present things? and shall your thoughts, projects, and designs be confined within the narrow bounds of time? Oh, no! Let your affections be to that book that will teach you to live well for ever, in comparison of which all earthly felicity is lighter than vanity.

2. Be diligent in the hearing, reading, meditating on those things that are contained there. The earth is the fruitful mother of all herbs and plants, but yet it must be tilled, ploughed, harrowed, and dressed, or else it bringeth forth little fruit. The scripture containeth all the grounds of hope, comfort, and happiness, the only remedy of sin and misery, our rule to walk by till our blessedness be perfected; but we have little benefit by it unless it be improved by diligent meditation: Ps. i. 2. 'His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in that law doth he meditate day and night.' This must be your chief delight, and you must be versed therein upon all occasions: Ps. cxix. 97, 'Oh, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.' When we love it and prize it, it will be so, for our thoughts cannot be kept off from what we love and delight in.

3. Reader, hear, meditate with a spirit of application, and an aim of profit: Job v. 27, 'Hear it, and know thou it for thy good;' as the rule of your actions and the charter of your hopes; Rom. viii. 31, 'What shall we then say to these things?' That you may grow better and wiser, and may have more advantages in your heavenly progress, take home your portion of the bread of life, and turn it into the seed of your life. It is not enough to seek truth in the scriptures, but you must seek life in the scriptures. It is not an object only to satisfy your understandings with the contemplation of truth, but your hearts with the enjoyment of life; and therefore you must not only bring your judgment to find the light of truth, but your affections to embrace the goodness of life offered. Think not ye have found all, when you have found truth and learned it. No; except you find life there, you have missed the best treasure. You must bring your understandings and affections to them, and not depart till both return full.

## SERMON LVII.

*The proud have had me greatly in derision ; yet have I not declined from thy law.—VER. 51.*

IN these words are—

1. David's temptation.
2. His constancy and perseverance in his duty notwithstanding that temptation.

First, In the temptation observe—

1. The persons from whom the temptation did arise, *the proud*. The wicked are called so for two reasons :—

[1.] Because either they despise God and condemn his ways, which is the greatest pride that can fall upon the heart of a reasonable creature : Rom. i. 30, 'Haters of God, despiteful, proud.'

[2.] Or else, because they are drunk with worldly felicity. In the general, scoffing cometh from pride. What is, Prov. iii. 34, 'He scorneth the scorners, and giveth grace to the lowly,' is, James iv. 6, 'He resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.'

2. Observe the kind or nature of the temptation ; he was *had in derision*. This may be supposed either for dependence on God's promises, or for obedience to his precepts. Atheistical men, that wholly look to the pleasing of the flesh and the interest of the present world, make a mock of both. We have instances of both in scripture.

[1.] They make a mock of reliance upon God when we are in distress ; think it ridiculous to talk of relief from heaven when earthly power faileth : Ps. xxii. 7, 8, 'They laugh me to scorn, saying, He trusted in the Lord.' The great promise of Christ's coming is flouted at by those mockers : 2 Peter iii. 3, 4, 'There shall come in the last days mockers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming ? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the creation.' Such scoffers are in all ages, but now they overflow. These latter times are the dregs of Christianity, in which such kind of men are more rife than the serious worshippers of Christ. At the first promulgation of the gospel, while truths were new, and the exercises of Christian religion lively and serious, and great concord among the professors of the gospel, they were rare and infrequent. Before men's senses were benumbed with the frequent experiences of God's power, and the customary use of religious duties, and the notions of God were fresh and active upon their hearts, they were not heard of ; but when the profession of Christianity grew into a form and national interest, and men fell into it by the chance of their birth rather than their own choice and rational conviction, the church was pestered with this kind of cattle. But especially are they rife among us when men are grown weary of the name of Christ, and the ancient severity and strictness of religion is much lost, and the memory of those miracles and wonderful effects by which our religion was once confirmed almost worn out ; or else questioned and impugned by subtle wits and men of a prostituted conscience. Therefore now are many mockers and atheistical spirits everywhere, who ask, 'Where is the

promise of his coming?' question all, and think that there are none but a few credulous fools that depend upon the hopes of the gospel.

[2.] Their obedience to his precepts. And so whosoever will be true to his religion, and live according to his baptismal vow, is set up for a sign of contradiction to be spoken against. It is supposed the mocking by the heathen of the Jews is intended in these words, Lam. iv. 15, 'Depart ye; it is unclean; depart, depart, touch not: when they fled away and wandered.' The words are somewhat obscure, but some judicious interpreters understand them of the detestation of the Jewish religion, their circumcision, their sabbaths, &c. But however that be, certainly the children of God are often mocked for their strict obedience, as well as their faith.

3. Observe the degree, *greatly*. The word noteth *continually*. The Septuagint translates it by *σφόδρα*; the vulgar Latin by *usque valde* and *usque longe*. They derided him with all possible bitterness, and day by day they had their scoffs for him; so that it was both a grievous and a perpetual temptation.

Secondly, His constancy and perseverance in the duty; that is set forth—

1. By the rule in the word, *thy law*. If we have God's law to justify our practice, it is no matter who condemneth it; we have God's warrant to set against man's censure. It must be God's way wherein we seek to be approved; otherwise our reproach is justly deserved, if it be for obstinacy in our own fancies.

2. The firmness and strictness of his adherence: *I have not declined*. The word signifies either to turn aside or to turn back. Sometimes it is put for turning aside to the right hand or to the left; as Deut. xvii. 11, 'Thou shalt not decline from the way which they shall show to thee, to the right hand or to the left;' sometimes for turning back: Job xxiii. 11, 'My feet have held his steps; his way have I kept, and not declined; neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips.' As it is taken for turning aside, it noteth error and wandering; as it is taken for turning back, it noteth apostasy and defection. Now David meaneth that he had neither declined in whole nor in part. Understand it of his faith: all their scoffs and bitter sarcasms did not discourage him, or tempt him to forsake his hold, or let go the comfort of the promise. Understand it of his obedience: he still closely cleaved to God's way. A declining implieth an inclining first. Well, then, David did not only keep from open apostasy, but from declining or turning aside in the least to any hand. Testimonies we have of his integrity in scripture: 1 Kings xiv. 8, 'David kept my commandment, and followed me with all his heart, to do only that which was right in my sight.' His great blemish is mentioned elsewhere: 1 Kings xv. 5, 'David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything which he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.' However, the derision of his enemies made him not to warp.

*Doct.* That a Christian should not suffer himself to be flouted out of his religion, either in whole or in part; or no scorn and contempt cast upon us should draw us from our obedience to God.

In the managing of it observe—

1. That a holy life is apt to be made a scorn by carnal men.
2. That this, as it is a usual, so it is a grievous temptation.
3. That yet this should not move us either to open defection or partial declining.

*First*, That a holy life is apt to be made a scorn by carnal men, and they that abstain from iniquity are as owls among their neighbours, the wonder and the reproach of all that are about them. To evidence this, I shall give you an account of some of the scorns which are cast upon religion, with the reasons of them.

1. Some of the scorns are these:—

[1.] Seriousness in religion is counted mopishness and melancholy. When men will not flaunt it and rant it, and please the flesh as others do, but take time for meditation, and prayer, and praise, then they are mopish.

[2.] Self-denial, when, upon hopes of the world to come, they grow dead to present interests, and can hazard them for God, and can forsake all for a naked Christ; the world thinketh this humorous folly. To do all things by the prescript of the word, and live upon the hopes of an unseen world, is by them that would accommodate themselves to present interests counted madness.

[3.] Zeal in a good cause is in itself a good thing (Gal. iv. 18, 'It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing'), but the world is wont to call good evil. As astronomers call the glorious stars by horrid names, the serpent, the dragon's tail, the greater or lesser bear, the dog-star; so the world is grossly guilty of misnaming. God will not be served in a cold and careless fashion. See Rom. xii. 11, *ζέοντες πνεύματι*, 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' But this will not suit with that lazy and dull pace which is called temper and moderation in the world.

[4.] Holy singularity; as Noah was an upright man in a corrupt age: Gen. vi. 9, 'Noah walked with God.' And we are bidden 'not to conform ourselves to this world,' Rom. xii. 2. Now, because they would have none to upbraid them in their sins, and to part ways, and the number of the godly is fewer, they count it a factious singularity in them that walk contrary to the course of the world and the stream of common examples.

[5.] Fervour of devotion and earnest conversing with God in humble prayers is called imposture and enthusiasm. The world, who are wholly sunk in flesh and matter, are little acquainted with these elevations and enlargements of the spirit, think all to be imposture and enthusiasm. And though praying by the Spirit be a great privilege, —(Jude 20, 'Praying in the Holy Ghost;' Rom. viii. 26, 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself helpeth our infirmities with groanings which cannot be uttered;' Zech. xii. 10, 'I will pour upon you the spirit of grace and of supplication')—yet it is little relished by them; a flat dead way of praying suiteth their gust better. Christ compareth the duties of the gospel, fasting, with prayer in the Spirit, to new wine, which will break old bottles, Mat. ix. 17; but the duties of the Pharisees to old, dead, and insipid wine; there is no life in them.

[6.] Serious speaking of God and heavenly things is, in the phrase of the world, canting. Indeed, to speak swelling words of vanity, or an unintelligible jargon, betrayeth religion to scorn; but a pure lip and speech seasoned with salt, and that holy things should be spoken of in a holy manner, our Lord requireth.

[7.] Faith of the future eternal state is esteemed a fond credulity by them who affect the vanities of the world, and the honours and pleasures thereof. They are all for sight and present things, and Christianity inviteth us to things spiritual and heavenly. Now, to live upon the hopes of an unseen world, and that to come, they judge it to be but foppery and needless superstition. Thus do poor creatures, drunk with the delusions of the flesh, judge of the holy things of God.

[8.] The humility of Christians, and their pardoning wrongs and forgiving injuries, they count to be simplicity or stupidity, though the law of Christ requireth us to forgive others, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

[9.] Exact walking is scrupulosity and preciseness, and men are more nice than wise; which is a reproach that reflecteth a mighty contempt upon God himself, that when he hath made a holy law for the government of the world, that the obeying of this law should be derided by professed Christians; the scorn must needs fall on him that made the law, and gave us these commands. If he be too precise that imperfectly obeyeth God, what will you say of God himself, who commandeth more than any of us all performeth? Thus the children of God are not only reproached as hypocrites, but derided as fools; and it is counted as a part of wit and breeding to droll at the serious practice of godliness, as if religion were but a foppery.

2. The reasons of this are these:—

[1.] Their natural blindness: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' They are incompetent judges: Prov. xxiv. 7, 'Wisdom is too high for a fool.' Though by nature we have lost our light, yet we have not lost our pride: Prov. xxvi. 16, 'The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.' Though their way in religion be but a sluggish, lazy, and dead course, yet they have a high conceit of it, and censure all that is contrary, or but a degree removed above it. From spiritual blindness it is that carnal men judge unrighteously and perversely of God's servants, and count zeal and forwardness in religious duties to be but folly and madness.

[2.] Antipathy and prejudicate malice. The graceless scoff at the gracious, and the profane at the serious; there is a different course, and that produceth difference of affections: John xv. 19, 'The world will love its own, but because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you;' and they manifest their malice and hatred this way by evil-speaking: 1 Peter iv. 4, 'Speaking evil of you.'

[3.] Want of a closer view. Christians complained in the primitive times that they were condemned unheard, *διὰ τὴν φήμην*, and *διὰ τὸ ὄνομα*, without any particular inquiry into their principles and practices. And Tertullian saith, *volentes auditis*, &c.—they would not

inquire, because they had a mind to hate. A man riding afar off seeing people dancing, would think they were mad, till he draws near and observes the harmonious order. They will not take a nearer view of the regularity of the ways of God, and therefore scoff at them.

[4.] Because you do by your practice condemn that life that they affect: John vii. 7, 'The world hateth me, because I testify that their deeds are evil;' Heb. xi. 7, 'Noah by faith, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world.' Now they would not have their guilt revived; and therefore, since they will not come up to others by a religious imitation, they seek to bring others down to themselves by scoffs, reproaches, and censures.

[5.] They are set awork by Satan, thereby to keep off young beginners, and to discourage and molest the godly themselves; for bitter words pierce deep and enter into the very soul.

*Secondly*, It is a grievous temptation; it is reckoned in scripture among the persecutions: Gal. iv. 29, 'As he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so is it now.' He meaneth those bitter mockings that Isaac did suffer from Ishmael: Gen. xxi. 9, 'And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.' When the wicked mock at our interest in God, shame our confidence, the church complaineth of it: Ps. cxxiii. 4, 'We are filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud;' the insultations of those that live in full pomp, over the confidence and hope the saints have in God. So we read, Heb. x. 33, that the servants of God were 'made a gazing-stock by reproaches and afflictions;' again, of 'cruel mockings,' Heb. xi. 36. It is more grievous when they mock and persecute at the same time; there is both pain and shame. The parties mocked were God's saints; the parties mocking were their persecutors and enemies, which sometimes proved to be their own brethren, of the same nation, language, kindred, religion. In short, these mockings issue out of contempt, and tend to the disgrace and dishonour of the party mocked; they make it their sport to abuse them. David saith, 'Reproach hath broken my heart,' Ps. lxxix. 20.

*Thirdly*, This should not move us either to open defection or partial declining, for these reasons:—

1. It is one of the usual evils wherewith the people of God are tempted. Now a Christian should be fortified against obvious and usual evils. Let no man that is truly religious think that he can escape the mockage and contempt of the wicked. Jesus Christ himself 'endured the contradiction of sinners,' Heb. xii. 3; and the rather, that we might not wax weary and faint in our minds. This is a part of his cross, which we must bear after him. The Pharisees derided his ministry: Luke xvi. 14, 'The Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and derided him.' They flouted at him when he hung on the cross: Mat. xxvii. 39–44, 'They that passed by him 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.' Likewise also the chief priests, mocking him with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, him-



self he cannot save: if he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him: he trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also which were crucified with him cast the same in his teeth.' So Acts xvii. 32, 'Some mocked, and said, What will this babbler say?' Well, then, since it is a usual evil which God's children have suffered, it should be the less to us. Little can the wicked say if they cannot scoff, and little can we endure if we cannot abide a bad word. There needs no great deal ado to advance a man into the chair of the scorner; if they have wickedness and boldness enough, they may soon let fly.

2. This, as well as other afflictions, are not excepted out of our resignation to God. We must be content to be mocked and scorned, as well as to be persecuted and molested. It is mentioned in the beatitudes, Mat. v. 11, 'Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil falsely against you for my sake.'

3. Railing and calumniating will never prevail with rational and conscientious men to cause them to change their opinions. To leave the truth because others rail at it, is to consult with our affections, not our judgments. Solid reasoning convinceth our judgments, but raillery is to our affections; and a rational conscientious man is governed by an enlightened mind, not perverse and preposterous affections: Eph. v. 17, 'Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.' Therefore an honest man will not quit truth because others rail; no, he looketh to his rule and warrant. A man will not be railed out of errors; nay, often they are the more rooted because ill-confuted.

4. It is the duty of God's children to justify wisdom: Mat. xi. 19, 'Wisdom is justified of her children.' What is it to justify wisdom? Justification is a relative word, opposed to crimination, so to justify is the work of an advocate; or to condemnation, so it is the work of a judge. The children of wisdom discharge both parts; they plead for the ways of God, and exalt them: so much as others deny them, they value them, esteem them, hold them for good and right. When they are never so much condemned and despised, the more zealous the saints will be for them: 'I will yet be more vile.'

5. Carnal men at the same time approve what they seem to condemn; they hate and fear strictness: Mark vi. 20, 'Herod feared John, because he was a just man and an holy, and observed him.' They scoff at it with their tongues, but have a fear of it in their consciences; they revile it while they live, but what mind are they of when they come to die? Then all speak well of a holy life, and the strictest obedience to the laws of God: Num. xxiii. 10, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;' Mat. xxv. 8, 'Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.' Oh, that they had a little of that holiness and strictness which they scoffed at whilst they were pursuing their lusts! How will men desire to die? as carnal and careless sinners, or as mortified saints? Once more, they approve it *in thesi*, and condemn it *in hypothesis*. All the scoffers at godliness within the pale of the visible church have the same Bible, baptism, creed, pretend to believe in the same God and Christ, which they own with

those whom they oppose. All the difference is, the one are real Christians, the other are nominal; some profess at large, the others practise what they profess; the one have a religion to talk of, the others to live by. Once more, they approve it in the form, but hate it in the power. A picture of Christ that is drawn by a painter they like, and the forbidden image of God made by a carver, they will reverence and honour and be zealous for; but the image of God framed by the Spirit in the hearts of the faithful, and described in the lives of the heavenly and the sanctified, this they scorn and scoff at.

6. Their judgment is perverse, not to be stood upon. They count the children of God foolish and crack-brained. The crimination may be justly retorted; their way is folly and madness, for they go dancing to their destruction. Though there be a God by whom and for whom they were made, and from whom they are fallen, and that they cannot be happy but in returning to him again, yet they carry it so as if there were no misery but in bodily and worldly things, no happiness but in pleasing the senses. The beginning, progress, and end of their course is from themselves, in themselves, and to themselves. They pour out their hearts to inconsiderable toys and trifles, and will neither admit information of their error, nor reformation of their practice till death destroy them. They neglect their main business, and leave it undone, and run up and down, they know not why, like children that follow a bubble blown out of a shell of soap, till it break and dissolve. Now should those that are flying from wrath to come, and seeking after God and their happiness, be discouraged because these mad and merry worldlings scoff at them for their diligent seriousness? Surely we should deride their derisions and contemn their contempt, who despise God and Christ and their salvation. Should a wise man be troubled because madmen rail at him? If they 'glory in their shame,' Phil. iii. 19, we must not be ashamed of our glory, nor ashamed to be found praying rather than sinning. If they think you fools for preferring heaven before inconsiderable vanities, remember they can no more judge of these things than a blind man of colours.

7. If some dishonour, others will honour us, who are better able to judge: Ps. xv. 4, 'In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.' Some have as low an opinion of the world as the carnal world hath of the certainty of God's word. They who labour to bring piety and godliness into a creditable esteem and reputation will pay a hearty honour and respect to every good and godly man: 2 Cor. vi. 8, 9, 'By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report, as deceivers, yet true; as unknown, yet well known; as dying, but behold we live; as chastened and not killed;' contumeliously used by some, and reverently by others; vilified and contemned, counted deceivers by some, yet owned by others as faithful dispensers of the truth of God; not esteemed and looked on by some, by others owned and valued: thus God dispenseth the lot of his servants.

8. A Christian should be satisfied in the approbation of God, and the honour he puts upon him: John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?' If God hath taken him into his family, and hath put his image upon him, and admitted him into present communion

with him, and giveth him the testimony of his Spirit to assure him of his adoption here, and will hereafter receive him into eternal glory, this is enough, and more than enough, to counterbalance all the scorn of the world and the disgrace they would put upon us. If God approve us, should we be dejected at the scorn of a fool? Is the approbation of the eternal God so small in our eyes, that everything can weigh it down, and cast the balance with us? Alas! their scorning and dishonouring is nothing to the honour which God puts upon us.

9. There is a time when the promised crown shall be set upon our heads, and who will be ashamed then—the scoffer or the serious worshipper of Christ? God is resolved to honour Christ's faithful servants: John xii. 26, 'He that honoureth me, him shall my Father honour.' He will honour us at death, that is our private entrance into heaven; but he will much more honour us publicly, at the day of judgment, when we shall be owned: Rev. iii. 5, 'I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels;' and Christ shall be admired for the glory he puts upon a poor worm: 2 Thes. i. 10, 'When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.' The wicked shall be reckoned with, called to an account by Christ: Jude, 14, 15, 'The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodlily committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him;' yea, judged by the saints: 1 Cor. vi. 2, 'Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?' Ps. xlix. 14, 'The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;' that is, in the morning of the resurrection the saints shall be assumed by God to assist in judicature, and shall arise in a glorious manner, when the earth shall give up her dead. If this be not enough for us to counterbalance the scorn of the world, we are not Christians.

*Use.* To persuade us to hold on our course, notwithstanding all the scorns and reproaches which are cast upon the despised ways of God. Now, to this end I shall give you some directions.

1. Be sure that you are in God's way, and that you have his law to justify your practice, and that you do not make his religion ridiculous by putting his glorious name upon any foolish fancies of your own. A man that differs from the rest of Christians had need of a very clear light, that he may honour so much of Christianity as is owned, and may be able to vindicate his own particular way wherein he is engaged. The world is loath to own anything of God, and needless dissents justify their prejudice. I know a Christian is not infallible; besides his general godly course, he may have his particular slips and errors; yet because the world is apt to take prejudice, we should not but upon the constraining evidence of conscience, enter upon any ways of dissent or contest, lest we justify their general hatred of godliness by our particular error.

2. Take up the ways of God without a bias, and look straight forward in a course of godliness: Prov. iv. 25, 'Let thine eyes look right on, and thine eyelids straight before thee;' that is, look not askint upon any secular encouragements, but have thine eye to the end of the journey; make God as thy witness, so thy master and judge.

3. Take heed of the first declinings. God's saints may decline somewhat in an hour of temptation, and yet be sincere in the main. Now evil is best stopped in the beginning: Heb. xii. 3, 'Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.' Weariness is a lesser, and fainting a higher degree of deficiency. I am weary before I faint, before the vital power retireth, and leaveth the outward part senseless.

4. Since the proud scoff, encounter pride with humility. Mocking is far more grievous to the proud, who stand upon their honour, than to the lowly and humble. Therefore be not too desirous of the applause of men, especially of the blind and ungodly world; make no great matter of their contempt, and scorn, or slander.

### SERMON LVIII.

*I have remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord; and have comforted myself.*—VER. 52.

THE man of God had complained in the former verse that the proud had him greatly in derision. His help against that temptation is recorded in this verse; where observe—

1. David's practice, *I have remembered thy judgments of old.*

2. The effect of that meditation, *and have comforted myself.*

The explication will be by answering two questions:—

1. What is meant by *mishphatin*, *judgments*? The word is used in scripture either for laws enacted, or judgments executed according to those laws. The one may be called 'the judgments of his mouth,' as Ps. cv. 5, 'Remember the marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;' the other, the judgments of his hand. As both will bear the name of judgments, so both may be said to be 'of old.' His decrees and statutes, which have an eternal equity in them, and were graven upon the heart of man in innocence, may well be said to be 'of old;' and because from the beginning of the world God hath been punishing the wicked, and delivering the godly in due time, his judiciary dispensations may be said to be so also. The matter is not much whether we interpret it of either his statutes or decrees, for they both contain matter of comfort, and we may see the ruin of the wicked in the word if we see it not in providence. Yet I rather interpret it of those righteous acts recorded in scripture, which God as a just judge hath executed in all ages, according to the promises and threatenings annexed to his laws. Only in that sense I must note to you, judgments imply his mercies in the deliverance of his righteous servants, as well as his punishments on the wicked; the seasonable interpositions of his relief for the one in their greatest distresses, as well as his just vengeance on the other, notwithstanding their highest prosperities.

2. What is meant by comfort? Comfort is the strengthening the heart against evil, when either—(1.) Faith is confirmed; (2.) Love to God increased; (3.) Hope made more lively.

Now these providences of God, suited to his word, comforted David, had more power and force to confirm and increase these graces, than all their theistical scoffs to shake them; for he concluded from these instances, that though the wicked flourish they shall perish, and though the godly be afflicted they shall be rewarded; and so his faith, and hope, and love to God, and adherence to his ways was much encouraged. Comfort is sometimes spoken of in scripture as an impression of the comforting Spirit, sometimes as a result from an act of our meditation; as here, 'I comforted myself.' These things are not contrary but subordinate. It is our duty to meditate on God's word and providence, and God blesseth it by the influence of his grace; and the Spirit may be said to comfort us, and we also may be said to comfort ourselves.

*Doct.* That the remembrance of God's former dealings with his people, and their enemies in all ages, is a great relief in distress.

The man of God is here represented as lying under the scorn and oppressions of the wicked. What did he do to relieve himself? 'I remembered thy judgments of old, and have comforted myself.' So elsewhere, this was his practice: Ps. lxxvii. 5, 'I considered the days of old, the years of ancient times;' again in the 11th and 12th verses, 'I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy works of old: I will meditate also of all thy works, and talk of thy doings;' yet again, Ps. cxliii. 5, 'I remember the days of old, I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the works of thy hands.' Thus did David often consider with what equity and righteousness, with what power and goodness, God carried on the work of his providence toward his people of old. The like he presseth on others; Ps. cv. 5, 'Remember the marvellous works which he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth.' Surely it is our duty, and it will be our comfort and relief.

I shall despatch the point in these considerations:—

1. That there is a righteous God who governeth the world. All things are not hurled up and down by chance, as if the benefit we receive were only a good lit, and the misery a mere misfortune. No; all things are ordered by a powerful, wise, and just God; his word doth not only discover this to us, but his works: Ps. lviii. 11, 'So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily there is a God that judgeth the earth;' that is, many times there are such providences that all that behold them shall see, and say that godliness and holiness are matters of advantage and benefit in this world, abstracted from the rewards to come, and so an infallible evidence that the world is not governed by chance, but administered by an almighty, all-wise, and most just providence. So elsewhere: Ps. ix. 16, 'The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth;' by some eminent instances God sheweth himself to be the judge of the world, and keepeth a petty sessions before the day of general assizes. Upon this account the saints beg the Lord to take off the veil from his providence, and to appear in protecting and delivering his children, and punishing their adversaries: Ps. xciv. 1, 2, 'O thou judge of the earth, show thyself.' He is the supreme governor of the world, to whom it belongeth to do right.

2. This righteous God hath made a law according to which he will govern, and established it as the rule of commerce between him and his creatures. The precept is the rule of our duty, the sanction is the rule of his proceedings; so that by this law we know what we must do, and what we may expect from him. Man is not made to be lawless and ungoverned, but hath a conscience of good and evil, for without the knowledge of God's will we cannot obey him; nor can we know his will, unless it be some way or other revealed. No man in his wits can expect that God should speak to us immediately and by oracle; we cannot endure his voice, nor can we see him and live. Therefore he revealed his mind by the light of nature and by scripture, which giveth us a clearer and more perfect knowledge of his will. Certainly those that live under that dispensation must expect that God will deal with them according to the tenor of it. The apostle telleth us, Rom. ii. 12, 'As many as have sinned without the law, shall perish without the law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.' God hath been explicit and clear with them, to tell them what they should do and what they should expect.

3. In the course of his dispensations he hath showed from the beginning of the world unto this day that he is not unmindful of this law, that the observance of this rule bringeth suitable blessings, and the violation of it the threatened judgments: Rom. i. 18, 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.' The impious and the unrighteous are breakers of either table, and the wrath of God is denounced and executed upon both, if there be any notorious violation of either; for in the day of God's patience he is not quick and severe upon the world: Heb. ii. 2, 'Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;' thereby his word is owned. Execution, we say, is the life of the law; it is but words without it, and can neither be a ground of sufficient hope in the promises, nor fear in the comminations. When punishments are inflicted it striketh a greater terror: when the offenders are punished, the observers rewarded, then it is a sure rule of commerce between us and God.

4. That the remembrance of the most illustrious examples of his justice, power, and goodness, should comfort us, though we do not perfectly feel the effects of his righteous government.

[1.] I will prove we are apt to suspect God's righteous administration when we see not the effects of it. When the godly are oppressed with divers calamities, and the wicked live a life of pomp and ease, flourishing in prosperity and power, according to their own heart's desire, they are apt to think that God taketh no care of worldly affairs, or were indifferent to good and evil, as those profane atheists, Mal. ii. 17, 'Every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in him, or where is the God of judgment?' as if God took pleasure in wicked men, and were no impartial judge, or had no providence at all, or hand in the government of the world. Temptations to atheism begin ordinarily at the matter of God's providence. First men carve out a providence of their own, that God loveth none but whom he dealeth kindly with in the matters of the world; and if his dispensations be cross to their apprehensions, then his providence is

not just. Nay, the people of God themselves are so offended that they break out into such words as these, Ps. lxxiii. 11–13, ‘How doth God know? is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.’ They dispute within themselves, Doth God indeed so discern and take notice of all this? How cometh it about that he permitteth them? for it is visible that the wicked enjoy the greatest tranquillity and prosperity, and have the wealth and greatness of the world heaped upon them: then what reward for purity of hearts or hands, or the strict exercise of godliness? Till God doth arise, and apply himself to vindicate his law, these are the thoughts and workings of men’s hearts; at least, it is a great vexation and trouble even to the godly, and doth tempt them to such imaginations and surmises of God.

[2.] I shall prove that the remembrance of his judgments of old is one means to confirm the heart, for so we are enabled to tarry till God’s judgments be brought to the effect. We see only the beginning, and so, like hasty spectators, will not tarry till the last act, when all errors shall be redressed. We shall make quite another judgment of providence when we see it altogether, and do not judge of it by parts. Surely then they shall see ‘there is a reward for the righteous; there is a God that judgeth the earth.’ At first none seem so much to lose their labour, and to be disregarded by God as the righteous, or to be more hardly dealt withal; but let us not be too hasty in judging God’s work, while it is a-doing, but tarry to the end of things. In the word of God we have not only promises which are more firm than heaven and earth, but instances and examples of the afflictions of the righteous and their deliverance; therefore let us but suspend our censure till God hath put his last hand unto the work, and then you will see that if his people seem to be forsaken for a while, it is that they may be received for ever. All is wont to end well with the children of God, let God alone with his own methods; after a walk in the wilderness, he will bring his people into a land of rest.

But more particularly why his judgments of old are a comfort and relief to us.

1. It is some relief to the soul to translate the thoughts from the present scene of things, and to consider former times. One cause of men’s discomfort is to look only to the present, and so they are overwhelmed; but when we look back, we shall find that others have been afflicted before us, it is no strange thing, and others delivered before us upon their dependence on God, and adherence to him. You were not the first afflicted servants of God, nor are likely to be the last. Others have been in the like case, and after a while delivered and rescued out of their trouble: Ps. xxii. 4, 5, ‘Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them; they cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.’ In looking back we see two things—the carriage of the godly, and their success, or the salvation of God: ‘The patience of Job and the end of the Lord,’ James v. 11. They trusted God, and trusted him patiently and constantly in all their troubles. At last this trust was not in vain; they were delivered, and not confounded;

depending on God for rescue and deliverance, they never failed to receive it. Now, in looking back we look forward, and in their deliverance we see our own; at least, you are fortified against the present temptation, whilst you see his people in all ages have their difficulties and conflicts, and also their deliverances; so that you will not miscarry, nor be over-tempted by the present prosperity of the wicked: Ps. lxxiii. 17, 'I went into the sanctuary, and there understood I their end;' that is, entering into a sober consideration of God's counsels and providences, we may easily discern what is the ordinary conclusion of such men's felicities at last; they pay full dear for their perishing pleasures.

2. Because these are instances of God's righteous government, and instances do both enliven and confirm all matters of faith. Here you see his justice. God hath ever been depressing the proud and exalting the humble, gracious to his servants, terrible to the wicked. These examples also of rescuing others who have been in like condition before us show us what the wisdom and omnipotency of God can do in performing promises. When the performance of them seemeth hopeless, and all lost and gone, then they are infallible evidences of his tenderness, care, and fidelity towards all that depend upon him. Now, though we have nothing of our own experience to support us, yet the remembrance of what hath been done for others, the experiences of the saints in scripture, are set down for our learning, for the support of our faith and hope. They trusted in God, and found him a ready help; why may not we? God is the same that he was in former times, and carrieth himself in the same ways of providence to righteous and unrighteous as heretofore; still promises are fulfilled, and threatenings are executed. They on whose behalf God showed himself so just, powerful, wise, good, and tender, had not a better God than we have, nor a more worthy Redeemer, nor a surer covenant. If they had a stronger faith, it is our own fault, and we should labour to increase it: the saints are as dear to God as ever. And as to the wicked, they that inherit others' sins shall inherit others' judgments. • It is true, we live not in the age of wonders; but God's ordinary providence is enough for our turn, and those very wonders show that he hath power and love enough to protect and deliver us. Well, then, these are instances of his righteous government, and instances which concern us, which is my second reason.

3. By these judgments of old you see the exact correspondency between his word and works. Where his voice is heard, but his hand not seen, his word is coldly entertained; but by his providence he establisheth the authority of his law. The word spoken by angels was *λόγος βέβαιος*, 'a steadfast word,' Heb. ii. 2. A word may be said to be steadfast either in respect of the unalterable will of the lawgiver, or in respect of execution, or with respect to the party to whom it is given, who firmly and certainly believeth it. The one maketh way for the other. God is resolved to govern the world by this rule, therefore he doth authorise it, own it by the dispensations of his providence; accordingly the world learneth to reverence it: Hosca vii. 12, 'I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.' God's word against sin and sinners will at last take effect, and end in sad chastisements;



and they that would not believe their danger are made to feel it. Now his promises will have their effect as well as his threatenings: Micah ii. 7, 'Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?' The word of God doth not only speak good, but do good. The word's saying of good, is indeed doing of good. The performance is so certain, that when it is said it may be accounted done. We are apt to despise the word of God as an empty sound. No; it produceth notable effects in the world. The sentences that are there, whether of mercy or judgment, are decrees given forth by the great judge of the world; whereupon execution is to follow, as is foretold. Now, when we see it done, and can compare the Lord's word and work together, it is a mighty support to our faith, whether it be in our or in former ages. For you see the word is not a vain scarecrow in its threatenings, nor do we build castles in the air, when we do depend upon its promises: the judgments of his mouth will be the judgments of his hand, and providence is a real comment upon and proof of the truth of his word.

4. God's judgments of old, or his wonderful works, were never intended only for the benefit of that age in which they were done, but the benefit of all those who should hear of them by any credible means whatsoever. Surely God never intended they should be buried in dark oblivion, but that after-ages may be the better for the remembrance of them. Witness these scriptures: Ps. cxlv. 4, 'One generation shall praise thy works unto another, and remember thy mighty acts;' Joel i. 3, 'Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.' So Ps. lxxviii. 3-7, 'That which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us, we will not hide them from their children; showing the generations to come the praises of the Lord, and his wonderful works which he hath done: for he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children to come, which should be born; who should arise and declare to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of the Lord, but keep his commandments, and might not be as their fathers,' &c. From all which places and many more I observe—

[1.] That we should tell generations to come what we have found of God in our time, and that we should use all ways and means to transmit the knowledge of God's notable and wondrous providences for his people to posterity.

[2.] That this report of God's former works is a special means of edification, for therefore God would have them recorded and told for the special benefit of the ages following.

[3.] And more particularly that this is a great means and help of faith. For in one of the places it is said 'that they may set their faith and hope in God;' and from all we may conclude that, by remembering God's judgments of old, we may be much comforted; as in remembering God's works when the church was first reformed in Luther's time, the delivering of England from the Spanish invasion, gunpowder-treason, &c., for the confirming our faith and confidence in God. All God's judgments that were done in the days of our fore-

fathers, and in all generations, if they come to our knowledge by a true report, or record, are of use to warn us and comfort us; yea, the bringing Israel out of Egypt and Babylon, or any notable work done since the beginning of the world till now.

*Use.* The use is to press us to take this course as one remedy to comfort us in our distresses. In distresses of conscience the blood of Christ is the only cure; but in temptations arising from the scorn and insultation of enemies, remember what God hath done for his people of old, and let his providence support our faith: Ps. xxiii. 4, 'Thy rod and thy staff comfort me.' *Pedum pastorale*—for the protection and guiding of the sheep and driving away the wolf, the rod and staff are the instruments of the shepherd. More particularly consider—

1. What is to be observed and remembered. All the eminent passages of God's providence, when acts of power have been seasonably interposed for the rescue of his people, judgments of all kind, public, universal, private and personal, our own experiences: 2 Cor. i. 10, 'Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.' The experiences of others, not in one, but in every age; for in every place and age God delighteth to leave a monument of his righteousness, and all is for the consolation and instruction of the church. Judgments in our time, judgments in former times, blow off the dust from old mercies, and the inscription of them will be a kind of prophecy to your faith. But especially cast your eye often upon the Lord's manner of dealing with his saints in scripture, their consolations and deliverances received after trouble; partly because the word of God is a rich storehouse of these instances and examples, and partly because of the infallibility of the record, where things are delivered to us with so much simplicity and truth; partly also because of the manner and ends in which and for which they are recorded. But if I would have recourse to scripture, should I not rather make use of the promises? *Ans.* We must not set one part of scripture against another; but examples do mightily help us to believe promises, as they are a pledge of the justice, faithfulness, care and love of God towards his people; and—I know not by what secret force and influence—invite us to hope for what God hath done for others of his servants.

2. How they must be considered. Seriously, as everything that cometh from God. A slight consideration will not draw forth the profitable use of them. When they are looked on cursorily, or lightly passed by, the impression of God upon his works cannot be discerned, therefore they must be well considered, with all their circumstances: Ps. cxliii. 2, David sufficed not to say, 'I remember thy works of old,' but 'I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the works of thy hands;' Ps. lxxvii. 12, 'I remember thy works of old; I will meditate also of all thy works.' And surely this should be a delightful exercise to the children of God, as it is for the son of a noble and princely father to read the chronicles where his father's acts are recorded, or the famous achievements of his ancestors: Ps. cxi. 2, 'The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.' Some works of God have a large impression of his power and goodness, and they are made to be remembered, as it after fol-

loweth there. He is ready to do the like works when his church standeth in need thereof. Now they must be sought out, for there is more hid treasure and excellency in them than doth at first appear. He that would reap the use and benefit of them should take pleasure to search out matter of praise for God and trust for himself. Of all other study, this is the most worthy exercise and employment of godly men, to study and find out the works of God in all their purposes and designs; there is more pleasure in such meditations than in all other the most sensual divertisements.

3. The end is to be strengthened and confirmed in the way of our duty, in dependence upon God, and adherence to him; or that faith may be strengthened in a day of affliction, and our hearts encouraged in cleaving to the ways of God.

[1.] Dependence upon God, which implieth a committing ourselves to his power, a submitting ourselves to his will, and a waiting his leisure; all these are in trust, and all these are encouraged by remembering his judgments of old.

(1.) Committing ourselves to his power is trust and dependence: 'Our God is able to deliver us' from the fiery furnace, Dan. iii. 17; Rom. iv. 21, 'Being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform.' Now this is abundantly seen in his judgments of old: Isa. li. 9, 'Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art not thou he which hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon; which hast dried the sea, and the waters of the great deep?' If God will but take to himself his great power, and bestir himself as in ancient days, what should a believer fear?

(2.) Submitting ourselves to God's will is a great act of dependence, submitting before the event. Now, how may a believer acquiesce in God's providence, and enjoy a quiet repose of heart? He knoweth not what God will do with him, but this he knoweth, he hath to do with a good God, who is not wont to forsake those that depend upon him; he hath wisdom and goodness enough to deliver us, or to make our troubles profitable to us. Now his judgments of old do much help to breed this composedness of mind: Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.' They that know anything of God's wont, and have learned from others, or experimented themselves, or by searching into the records of time have found with what wisdom and power, justice and mercy, God governeth the world, will be firmly grounded in their trust and reliance on these, without applying themselves to any of the sinful aids or policies of the world for succour, or troubling themselves about success; for God never forsook any godly man in his distress, that by prayer and faith made his humble and constant applications to him.

(3.) If you take in the third thing, tarrying or waiting God's leisure; for 'he that believeth will not make haste,' Isa. xxvi. 16. God will tarry to try his people, to observe his enemies, till their sins are full, and tarry to bring about his providences in the best time: 1 Peter v. 6, 'Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you,' i.e. deliver you, 'in due time.' It may

be he will not at all afford temporal deliverance, but will refer it to the time when he will 'judge the world in righteousness,' Acts xvii. 31. Now, what will relieve the soul, engage it to wait? His judgments of old; at the long run the good cause hath prevailed, the suppressed truth hath got up, the buried Christ hath risen again, and after labours and patience the fruit sown hath been reaped; therefore in due time he will look upon our afflictions; in the sanctuary we understand the end of things: the beginnings are troublesome, but the end is peace.

[2.] Adherence to God; this followeth necessarily from the former, for dependence begets observance. Till a man trusts God he can never be true to him; for the 'evil heart of unbelief' will 'draw us from the living God,' Heb. iii. 12; but if we can depend upon him, temptations have lost their force. The great cause of all defection is the desire of some present sensible benefit, and we cannot tarry God's leisure, nor wait for his help in the way of our duty. Now, if God's people of old have trusted, and were never confounded, it is a great engagement in the way of his judgments to wait for him without miscarrying.

A case of conscience may be propounded: How could David be comforted by God's judgments, for it seemeth a barbarous thing to delight in the destruction of any? It is said, Prov. xvii. 5, 'He that is glad of calamities shall not be unpunished.'

*Ans.* 1. It must be remembered that judgment implies both parts of God's righteous dispensation—the deliverance of the godly and the punishment of the wicked. Now, in the first sense, there is no ground of scruple; for it is said, Ps. xciv. 15, 'Judgment shall return to righteousness;' the sufferings of good men shall be turned into the greatest advantage; as the context sheweth that God will not cast off his people, but judgment shall return unto righteousness.

*Ans.* 2. Judgment, as it signifieth punishment of the wicked, may yet be a comfort, not as it importeth the calamity of any, but either—

1. When the wicked are punished, the snare and allurements to sin is taken away, which is the hope of impunity; for by their punishments we see it is dangerous to sin against God: Isa. xxvi. 9, 'When thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness,' the snare is removed from many a soul.

2. Their derision and mockage of godliness ceaseth; they do no longer vex and pierce the souls of the godly, saying, 'Aha! aha!' Ps. xl. 15, 'It is as a wound to their heart when they say, Where is your God,' Ps. xlii. 10.

3. The impediments and hindrances of worshipping and serving God are taken away: when the nettles are rooted up the corn hath more room to grow.

4. Opportunity of molesting God's servants is taken away, and afflicting the church by their oppressions, and so way is made for the enlarging of Christ's kingdom.

5. As God's justice is manifested: Prov. xi. 10, 'When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth; but when the wicked perish, there is shouting;' Ps. lii. 6, 'The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him: Lo! this is the man that made not God his portion;' Rev. xviii. 20, 'Rejoice over Babylon, ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.' When the word of God is fulfilled, surely then we may rejoice that his justice and truth are cleared.

## SERMON LIX.

*Horror hath taken hold on me, because of the wicked which forsake thy law.*—VER. 53.

THE man of God in the former verse had showed what comfort he took in remembering God's judgments of old, meaning thereby his righteous dispensations in delivering the godly, and punishing the wicked. He now showeth that, seeing God's horrible judgments on the wicked, he was seized and stricken with a very great fear.

In the words observe—

1. A great passion described.

2. The cause of it assigned.

1. A great passion described, *horror hath taken hold on me*. The word for horror signifieth also a tempest or storm. Translations vary; some read it, as Junius, a storm overtaking me; Ainsworth, a burning horror hath seized me, and expoundeth it a storm of terror and dismay; the Septuagint, ἀθυμία κατέσχε με, faintness and dejection of mind hath possessed me; our old translation, I am horribly afraid. All translations, as well as the original word, imply a great trouble of mind, and a vehement commotion like a storm. It was matter of disquiet and trembling to David.

2. What is the matter? The reason is given in the latter clause, *because of the wicked which forsake thy law*. Now this reason may be supposed to be—

[1.] Either because of the storm of trouble raised by them, or persecution from them; and so it would note the outrageousness of those who have cast off the yoke, all fear of God, and respect to his law; and so also the imbecility and weakness of the saints, who are not able to stand against violent evils and assaults of temptation. But this is not so consistent with David's constancy and comfort, asserted in the former verses.

[2.] Because of the detriment and loss which might accrue to the public; they bring on common judgments and calamities. It is a Jewish proverb that two dry sticks will set a green one afire: 'One sinner destroyeth much good,' Eccles. ix. 18, much more mercy.<sup>1</sup> Now the godly, which believe God's word, are troubled when they see wickedness increaseth; they know this will turn to loss and ruin in the issue; therefore it causeth a grievous horror and indignation to seize upon them, for they have a tender and public spirit.

[3.] Besides the common calamities which they might bring upon others, the sore punishment which they would bring upon themselves was a horror to him, which showeth a charitable affection to enemies. The punishment, which had not as yet seized upon them, nor did they think of it, yet being prepared for their wickedness by the justice of God, was a grief and trouble to David, as it is to all good men, to see the wicked run on to their own destruction and condemnation. These two last senses I prefer.

*Doct.* It argueth a good spirit to be grieved to see God's laws broken, and to be stricken with fear because of those judgments which come

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'many'?—Ed.

from God by reason of the wickedness of the wicked. The reasons are :—

First, Here is matter of great commotion of spirit to any attentive and serious beholder ; for the cause assigned in the text is, ‘because they forsake thy law.’ There are two things in the law—the precept and the sanction, by penalties and rewards. Now, they that forsake the law violate the precept and slight the sanction ; and so two things grieve the godly—their sin and their punishment, how grievously they sin, and what grievous punishments they may expect !

1. That the law is violated, that they should forsake God, and all thoughts of obedience to him, andso make light of his law. ‘Sin is ἀνομία, 1 John iii. 4, the transgression of the law ;’ a contempt of God’s authority. If we consider the intrinsic evil of sin, we shall see that it is not a small thing, but a horrible evil in itself ; a thing not to be laughed at, but feared, whether our own or others.

[1.] There is folly in it, as it is a deviation from the best rule which the divine wisdom hath set unto us. If we should look upon the law of God as a bare direction or counsel given us by one that is wiser than we, it is a contempt of the wisdom of God, as if he knew not how to govern the world, and what is good and meet for man, so much as he himself ; and so a poor worm is exalted above God : Micah vi. 8. ‘He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.’ Now shall we slight his direction, and in effect say our own way is better ? Reason requireth that they who cannot choose for themselves should obey their guides, and since they are not wise for themselves, content themselves with the wisdom of others who see farther than they do, as Elymas the sorcerer, when he was struck blind, ‘sought about for somebody to lead him by the hand,’ Acts xiii. 11. Can a blind man feel out his way better than another who hath eyes to choose it for him ? God is wiser than we, and all who would not condemn their creator should think so. He hath reduced the sum of our duty into a holy law ; now for us after all this to run of our heads, and to consult with our foolish lusts and the suggestions of the devil, who is our worst enemy, is extreme folly and madness, and so doth every one who breaketh the laws of God.

[2.] Laws are not only to direct, but have a binding power and force from the authority of the lawgiver. God doth not only give us counsel as a friend, but commandeth us as a sovereign ; and so the second notion whereby the evil of sin is set forth, is that of disobedience and rebellion ; and so it is a great injury done to God, because it is a depreciation and contempt of his authority. As Pharaoh said, Exod. v. 2, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice ?’ or those rebels, Ps. xii. 4, ‘Our tongues are our own ; who is Lord over us ?’ We will speak and think and do what we please, and own no law but our own lusts. Now, though sinners do not say so in so many direct and formal words, yet this is the interpretation of their sinful actions. Whenever they sin, they despise the law which forbiddeth that sin, and so by consequence the authority of him that made it : 2 Sam. xii. 9, 10, ‘Wherefore hast thou sinned in despising the commandment ?’ Tush ! I will do it ; it is no matter for the law of God that standeth in the way, is the language of the corrupt and obstinate heart. Now no man can endure to have his will crossed by an inferior, and will

God take it at their hands? And therefore the children of God, who have a great reverence of God's authority, when they see it so openly violated and contemned, are filled with horror. Will not God be tender of his power and sovereignty? will he see his authority so lightly esteemed, and take no notice of it?

[3.] It is shameful ingratitude. Man is God's beneficiary, from whom he hath received life and being, and all things, and therefore is bound to love him and serve him according to his declared will. We continually depend upon him every moment: 'In him we live, and move, and have our being,' Acts xvii. 28; and surely dependence should beget observance, and therefore men should be loath to break with God, or careful to reconcile themselves to him on whom they depend every moment: Acts xii. 20, 'Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon; but they came with one accord to him, and having made Blastus, the king's chamberlain, their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.' Therefore it is extreme unthankfulness, stupidity, and brutishness for them to carry themselves so unthankfully towards God, who giveth them life and being, and all things. The brutes themselves, who have no capacity to know God as the first cause of all being, yet take notice of the next hand from whence they receive their supplies: Isa. i. 3, 'The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib;' and in their kind express their gratitude to such as feed them, and make much of them; but wicked men take no notice of the God who hath made them, and kept them at the expense and care of his providence, and hath been beneficial to them all their days; but as they slight their lawgiver, so they requite their great benefactor with unkindness and provocation.

[4.] It is a disowning of his propriety in them, as if they were not his own, and God had not power to do with his own as he pleaseth. The creature is absolutely at God's dispose, not only as he hath a jurisdiction over us as our lawgiver and king over his subjects, but as a proprietary and owner over his goods. A prince hath a more absolute power over his lands and goods than over his subjects. God is not only a ruler but an owner, as he made us out of nothing, and bought us when worse than nothing, and still keepeth us from returning into our original nothing; and shall those who are absolutely his own withdraw themselves from him, and live according to their own will, and speak and do what they list? What is this but a plain denial of God's propriety and lordship over us? as those, Ps. xii. 4, 'Who have said, With our tongues will we prevail, our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?' Surely it should strike us with horror to think that any creatures should thus take upon them. Sin robbeth God of his propriety in the creatures. If we consider his natural right, sin is such an injury and wrong to God as theft and robbery. If we consider our own covenant, as we voluntarily acknowledge God's propriety in us, so it is adultery, breach of marriage vow; and with respect to the devoting and consecrating ourselves to him, so it is sacrilege.

[5.] It is a contempt of God's glorious majesty. What else shall we make of a plain contest with him, or a flat contradiction of his holy will? For whilst we make our depraved will the rule and guide of our actions against his holy will, we plainly contend with him whose will

shall stand, his or ours, and so jostle him out of the throne, and pluck the crown off his head and the sceptre out of his hands, and usurp his authority; and so slight the eternal power of this glorious king, as if he were not able to avenge the wrong done to his majesty, and we could make good our party against him: 1 Cor. x. 22. 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?' Isa. xlv. 9. 'Woe to him that striveth with his Maker; let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth.' Surely they that strive with their Maker will find God too hard for them. Now all these and many more considerations should make a serious Christian sensible, when he considereth how God is dishonoured in the world.

2. Their punishment. This relateth to the sanction by penalties and rewards. They that forsake the law have quite divested themselves of all hope, and cast off all dread of him. The law offereth death or life to the transgressors and observers of it: Deut. xxx. 15. 'Behold, I have set before you good and life, death and evil.' Now this is as little believed as the precept is obeyed; and thence cometh all their boldness in sinning and coldness in duty.

[1.] God allureth us to obedience by promises of this world and the next, which, if they were believed, men would be more forward and ready to comply with his will. As to the promises of the next world, he hath told us of eternal life. Surely God meaneth as he speaketh in his word, he will make good his word to the obedient; but the sinner thinketh not so, and therefore is loath to undergo the difficulties of obedience, because he hath so little sense and certainty of fulfilling the promise. The apostle telleth us, Heb. xi. 6, 'That without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently serve him;' implying that if the fundamental truths of God's being and bounty were believed, we could not be so careless as we are, not so barren and unfruitful as we are; but unbelief lieth at the bottom of all our carelessness: 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' They that know what a reward is prepared for the righteous, cannot but be serious and diligent themselves, and pity others, and be troubled at their neglect. Oh! what a good God they deprive themselves of, and throw away their souls for a trifle! But because the Lord knoweth how apt we are to be led by things present to sense, that work strongly upon our apprehensions; and that things absent and future lie in another world, and wanting the help of sense to convey them to our minds, make little impression upon our hearts; therefore God draws us to our duty by present benefits. Even carnal nature is apt to be pleased with these kinds of mercies, protection, provision, and worldly comforts: Ps. cxix. 56, 'This I had, because I kept thy precepts:' Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added to you;' 1 Tim. iv. 8. 'Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' But alas! the naughty heart cannot depend on God for the effects of his common goodness. Men distrust providence, and therefore take their own course, which is a grief and trouble



to a gracious heart, to see they cannot depend on God for things of a present accomplishment.

[2.] The other part of the sanction is his threatenings and punishments. Now in what a direful condition are all the deserters of God's law! Besides the loss of heaven, there is eternal fire, which is the portion of the wicked: Ps. xi. 6, 'Upon the wicked he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup.' They may flourish for a time, yet at length sudden, terrible, and irremediable destruction shall be the portion of their cup. God's judgments are terrible and unavoidable, both here and hereafter: Eph. v. 6, 'For these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience;' Rom. ii. 9, 'Tribulation, wrath, and anguish upon the soul of man that doth evil.' Alas! these things are slighted by wicked men, or else they would not venture as they do; you cannot drive a dull ass into the fire that is kindled before him: Prov. i. 17, 'In vain is the snare laid in the sight of any bird;' and would a reasonable creature wilfully run into such a danger if he were sensible of it, and venture upon so dreadful threatenings if he did believe them? No; they think it is but a vain scarecrow, a deceitful terror, or a false flash of fire, and therefore embolden themselves in their rebellion. But God's people, that know the certainty of these things, they cannot but conceive a great horror at it when they think of the end of these men, their judgments in this world, but especially their eternal condemnation in the world to come. Well, then, forsaking the law, despising the precept, and slighting the sanction, should be a matter of great horror to a tender and gracious spirit.

Secondly, It argueth that they have a due sense of things, though others have not.

1. They have a due sense of the evil of sin: Prov. xiv. 9, 'Fools make a mock of sin;' they sport at it, and jest at it, and count it nothing; but gracious and tender hearts have other apprehensions; they know that this is a violation of the holy and righteous and good law of God, and that it will be bitter in the issue, and that they which had pleasure in unrighteousness shall be damned. They look upon it with sad hearts, though it be committed by others, that the wicked go dancing to hell, and are angry with those who mourn for them, and dislike that vain course which they affect.

2. They have a due sense of the wrath of God. The prophet that threatened it saith, that 'rotteness entered into his bones, and his bowels quivered,' Hab. iii. 16. A lion trembleth to see a dog beaten before him. It is a trouble to the godly to think of the horrible punishments of the wicked, which they dread not, nor dream of; but the saints have a reverence for their Father's anger. Search the scriptures, and you shall find that the godly are more troubled at God's judgments than the wicked themselves who are to feel them: Dan. iv. 19, 'Daniel was astonished for an hour, and his thoughts troubled him,' when he was to reveal God's judgments against Nebuchadnezzar. So the prophet, Jer. iv. 19, 'My bowels, my bowels; I am pained at the very heart;' ver. 22, 'But my people are foolish, they are sottish children;' they, that brought the evil upon themselves, are senseless and stupid: Ps. xc. 11, 'Who knows the power of thine anger? according

to thy fear, so is thy wrath.' Few lay to heart the terrible effects of God's heavy wrath; but the righteous do; they are truly affected with it, and with the cause of it, which is sin. God's wrath affects men according to the reverence and fear wherewith they entertain it, but to the wicked it is but a vain and empty terror.

3. The certainty of the threatenings. God's people see wrath and judgment in the face of sin, whereas those who are drowned in sensuality and carnal delights scoff at God's menaces and jest at his judgments, neither crediting the one nor expecting the other, as if it were but a mere mockery: Isa. v. 19, 'Come, say they, let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it.' In their security they will believe nothing but what they feel.

4. The bane which cometh to communities and societies from the increase of the wicked, especially when their wickedness groweth to an height; that is, when it is committed with boldness: Isa. iii. 9, 'They declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not;' when men have lost all shame and modesty, and will not be restrained by any law. Surely if we know the evil of sin, the terribleness of God's wrath, believe the truth of his threatenings, and then consider the danger that will come to our dearest country, we cannot but be greatly moved. If a man were sailing in a bark, and see it guided so that it must necessarily run against a rock and suffer shipwreck, he would be sorry and deeply affected.

Thirdly, It cometh from a good cause.

1. In the general it argueth a good constitution of soul: 2 Peter ii. 8, 'For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.' Passively he was vexed with the impurity of the Sodomites, and actively he vexed himself. So far as we are carnal we are pleased with sin, so far as we are spiritual we are vexed with it: Isa. lxiii. 10, 'They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit.' The better any are, the more affected with public sins and judgments. Christ weepeth over Jerusalem for their impenitency and approaching desolation: Luke xix. 41, 42, 'As he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.' This was in the midst of the acclamations and hosannahs of the multitude, when he was welcomed with a triumph. Paul telleth the Corinthians, 2 Cor. xii. 21, 'I am afraid, when I come among you, my God will humble me, and I shall bewail many which have not repented of the fornication, lasciviousness, and uncleanness which they have committed.' The more holy any one is, the more he is affected and struck at heart with the sins of others.

2. A deep resentment of God's dishonour. When his glory is obscured, it is a wound to the hearts of his children; as a child cannot endure to hear or see his father disgraced. Surely God's glory is dear to the saints: Ps. lxxix. 9, 'The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.' Injuries done to God and religion affect them no less nearly than personal injuries which are done to themselves. So affectionately zealous are they for God's honour, which is obscured by the wickedness of the wicked, who forsake the perfect

righteous law of God, and, usurping God's authority, make a new law to themselves.

3. Compassion to men. Though they are wicked men, yet they are men, made after God's image, remotely capable to know and love God, and live with him for ever, whom they should otherwise embrace as brethren; to see them treasure up wrath against the day of wrath should be a grief and a trouble to us; to think of the everlasting destruction which they will bring upon themselves should afflict us. Thus the apostle: Phil. iii. 18, 19, 'Of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction.' To see men go by droves to hell, it should work on our bowels. If this brought Christ out of heaven to die for sinners, surely this should make us sadly resent their condition.

4. This produceth good effects; it is a disposition of great use and profit to us.

[1.] It deterreth us from sinning ourselves, and so we are kept from being tainted with the contagion of evil examples; for what we mourn for in others we will not commit ourselves. The heart is made more averse from sin every day by this practice, whereas those that take pleasure in the sins of others do the same things, Rom. i. 32, consent with them to dishonour God, and so howl among the wolves, as the Latin proverb is; but when this is a trouble to us, it maketh us avoid their example, notwithstanding terrors and allurements to the contrary; terrors from the angry world, who cannot endure that any should part company; and allurements from our commodious living among the offenders. Thus Lot escaped in Sodom, because 'his righteous soul was vexed;' and Noah 'was upright in his generation,' because he reprov'd the deeds of the wicked.

[2.] When we see their punishment in their sin, and fear a storm when the clouds are gathering, it puts us upon mourning and humiliation, which is a necessary duty in evil times: Jer. xiii. 17, 'If you will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.' None do so feelingly bewail the sins of the times as those who have a tender holy heart, affected with God's dishonour, and compassion over the souls of men. Others do personate a mourning, and act a part in a fast, as the mourning women among the Jews did at funerals, or as the boys in the streets would act their festivities and lamentations: Mat. xi. 16, 17, 'Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the market, and calling to their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.' Therefore it is of great use to us to get this frame of spirit.

[3.] It maketh us more careful to reform others, so far as it lieth within our power. Certainly without this disposition a man will never seek the conversion of souls for which Christ died; but have it once, and then you will take all occasions to do good to the souls of your children, and relations, and neighbours. When Paul was stirred in spirit, *παρωξύνετο τὸ πνεῦμα*, exasperated within himself, because he saw the whole city given to idolatry, 'He disputed with them daily in the market-place,' and took all occasions to reclaim them. So if you were affected with the evil of sin, horribleness of wrath, certainty of

the word of God, and the bane that cometh to any society by having the wicked amongst them, would you let your children, and servants, or friends go on in a damning course? Would you not have compassion on them, and pluck them out of the fire? Surely this should be the temper of every minister when he hath to do with sinners, that his ministry may not be a sleepy ministry; of every parent and householder, that all under his roof may be found in the way of the Lord; of every Christian towards his friends.

[4.] It justifieth our zeal in reproving. Surely reproof had need to be managed with great tenderness and compassion, that it may not seem to flow from hatred and ill-will to the persons reproved, nor from petulancy of spirit, nor a desire of venting reproaches, but from pure zeal to the glory of God, grief to see him dishonoured, souls in danger to be lost, or hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; therefore holy men, in their sharpest invectives against sin, or oppositions of it, have always mingled compassion: Mark iii. 5, 'Our Lord looked about with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.' There was more of compassion than passion in our Lord Jesus Christ; he was angry, but grieved. So Paul, when he disputed earnestly against the Jews, yet telleth us, Rom. ix. 2, 'I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart;' as much love to the persons of his countrymen as zeal against their errors. So *fleus dico*, 'I tell you weeping, they are enemies to the cross of Christ,' Phil. iii. 18. Though he discovereth them to be enemies to the cross of Christ, yet he wept for their sakes and the church's sake.

[5.] Those that are grieved and troubled even to some degree of horror and trembling of heart, for the prevailing of iniquity in those places and persons among whom they live, are delivered from the common judgment. So 2 Peter ii. 7, 'He delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked;' and 'those that mourned and sighed for all the abominations which were committed in the midst of the land,' were marked out for preservation. The Lord hath a special care of them in times of public calamity.

Use 1. Of reproof; it condemneth—

1. Them that take pleasure in nothing so much as in the company of the ungodly, where they hear God dishonoured, his laws broken: if they were horribly afraid of the wicked which forsake God's law, how could this be? All conversation with the wicked is not forbidden, for then we must go out of the world; and to some we are bound by the law of necessity, or some civil and religious or natural bond; yet we are to eschew all unnecessary and voluntary fellowship and familiarity with them: Ps. xxvi. 4, 'I have not sat with vain persons, nor gone in with dissemblers.' So Prov. xxii. 24, 25, 'Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a froward man thou shalt not go; lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.' Certainly we are not to delight in the openly wicked as the only company that is pleasant to us, for what can a tender Christian get among them but a wound to his soul?

2. Those that are not affected with their own sins, much less with the sins of others. It is but a deceit of heart to declaim against the sins of the times, and not to mourn bitterly for our own sins: this is to translate the scene of our humiliation, and to put it far off from our-

selves. Surely that grief will be most pungent and afflicting which doth most concern ourselves, and we know more by ourselves than possibly we can by other men; therefore we should often think of the merit of our own sins, their heinous nature, their dreadful consequences, if God be not the more merciful to keep us humble and thankful.

*Use 2.* To persuade us to be of this temper, to be deeply affected when we see God's laws broken. It requireth—

1. The general grace of a soft heart, which must be asked of God: 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27, 'Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself, when thou heardest the words of the Lord against this place.' There was a high peace and calm at that time, but a tender heart relenteth at the threatenings. Beg of God to soften thy heart.

2. There needeth eminent holiness for such a frame, that we shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, Phil. ii. 15. The mourners must not be infected and tainted themselves, but save themselves from an untoward generation, condemn the sins of the times by their conversation.

3. We must have a fear animated by faith: 'By faith Noah was moved by fear' concerning things unseen, Heb. xi. 7. The danger of the flood was unseen as yet, and they married and gave in marriage. We must not judge of things by the present, or by carnal appearance: there is a righteous judge in heaven. Faith in his word will show us our danger, for God's threatenings are all fulfilled, and the more we seek to establish ourselves by carnal means, the more our ruin is hastened.

4. There must be a grief set awork by a love to God and the souls of men. In calamities the true temper for humiliation is a due sense of our Father's anger, and brethren's miseries: in sins our Father's dishonour, and man's destruction; those who are the same flesh with ourselves. Now it should trouble us to see them in the way to eternal ruin: 'Of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted with the flesh,' Jude 22, 23.

## SERMON LX.

*Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.—*

VER. 54.

DAVID had in the former verse expressed his great trouble, because of the increase of the wicked, and their defection from the law of God. Now he sheweth what comforted him: the children of God have a great deal of divine consolation from the word in the midst of all their sorrows and evils of the present life. David's comfort is here expressed—

1. By the matter or object of it, *thy statutes*.

2. The degree of his rejoicing, intimated in the word *songs*. The effect is put for the cause, joy and mirth, which usually break forth into singing, or the sign and indication for the thing signified.

3. The place where he rejoiced, *in the house of his pilgrimage*; ἐν τόπῳ παροικίας μου, wheresoever I sojourn.

1. By God's 'statutes' is meant his word in general, more especially the precepts and promises: in the one we have the offer of life; in the other, the way and means how to attain it. In the word is both our charter and our rule; in both regards it is matter of rejoicing: Ps. xix. 8, 'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the soul.' Nothing is commanded there but what is equitable in itself, and profitable to us.

2. By 'songs,' a metonymy of the effect for the cause, or the sign for the thing signified; such pleasure, joy, and contentment as other men had in songs, David had in the word of God. Travellers use to lighten and ease the tediousness of the way by songs: Thy word doth comfort me wonderfully. Or you may take it literally, the themes and arguments of his singing. Profane spirits must have songs suitable to their mirth; as their mirth is carnal, so the songs of carnal men are obscene, filthy and fleshly: but a holy man, his songs suit his mirth and joy; he rejoiceth in the Lord, and therefore his songs are divine: 'Thy statutes are my songs.' Singing of psalms is a delectable way of edification, which God hath not only instituted in the scriptures, but heathens saw a use of it by the light of nature. Ælian, lib. iii. Nat. Hist. cap. 39, telleth us of the Cretans, τοὺς παῖδας τοὺς ἐλευθέρους μανθάνειν τοὺς νόμους μετὰ τινος μελωδίας. It is a spiritual channel wherein our mirth may run: James v. 13, 'Is any merry? let him sing psalms,' ἐνθυμεῖ τις;—there is the harmony, that is a natural delight; the matter, that is a spiritual comfort. I cannot exclude this, because it is one way of expressing that delight which we take in the word; but I prefer the former, for David speaketh of the comfort he took in keeping God's precepts when they were violated by others.

3. 'In the house of my pilgrimage.' You may take it literally for the time of David's exile, when banished by Saul, or driven from his palace by Absalom: when he fled from place to place, and wandered up and down in great distress, then God's statutes, by which his life was directed, innocency vindicated, hopes confirmed both of present support and seasonable deliverance, were as songs to him, his real and cordial solaces. Wheresoever the believer is, or whatsoever his case and condition be, he hath still matter of rejoicing in the word of God. So had David when he was exposed to continual wanderings, without any fixed habitation. Indeed the children of God in Babylon say, Ps. cxxxvii. 4, 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' The meaning is not to exclude their own spiritual delight and solace; but they would not gratify the carnal pleasure of their enemies with a temple song, or subject religion to their sportive fancies and humours. Rather metaphorically for the whole course of his life, whether spent in the palace, or in the wilderness; in whatsoever place he was, he was still in the house of his pilgrimage: so he accounted his best and his worst condition; compare ver. 19, 'I am a stranger in the earth,' and Ps. xxxix. 12, 'I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were;' with 1 Chron. xxix. 15, 'We are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers.' Not only when hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, but also when he was at rest, and

able to offer so vast a quantity of treasure for the building of the house of God.

Two points are observable:—

*Doct.* 1. That the godly count this world, and their whole estate therein, the house of their pilgrimage.

*Doct.* 2. That during this estate, and the inconveniences thereof, they find matter of rejoicing in the word of God.

*Doct.* 1. That the godly count, this world and their whole estate therein, the house of their pilgrimage.

I shall not handle this doctrine in its full latitude, having spoken largely thereof in the 19th verse; only now a few considerations.

1. Here is no fixed abode; there where we live longest we count our home and dwelling; not an inn which we take up in our passage, but the place of our constant residence in this world. We are only in passage, and so should consider it: Heb. xiii. 14, ‘Here we have no abiding city, but we look for one to come, whose builder and maker is God.’ Here we stay but a little while, passing through to a better country. The mortality of the body and the immortality of the soul sheweth that we are all strangers here; for if here we do not live for ever, and yet we have souls that will live for ever, there must be some other place to which we are tending. The body is dust in its composition and resolution: Eccles. xii. 7, ‘Then shall the body return to the earth as it was.’ Nature may teach us so much, but faith, that assureth us of the resurrection of the dead, doth more bind this consideration upon us. We are mortal, and all things about us are liable to their mortality; and therefore here we must be still passing to another place.

2. Here we have no rest: Micah ii. 10, ‘Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest;’ that is hereafter; Heb. iv. 9, ‘There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God.’ Our home we count the place of our repose. Now there is no rest and content in this world, which is a place of vanity, misery, and discomfort. Yea, to the children of God there are stronger motives than crosses to drive them from the world—daily temptations, and our often falling by them. Crosses are grievous to all, but sin is more grievous to the godly; and nothing makes them more weary of the world than the constant indwelling and frequent outbreaking of corruption and sin: Rom. vii. 24, ‘O miserable man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ The apostle was exercised with many crosses, but this doth make him complain in the bitterness of his soul, not of his misery, but of his corruption, which he found continually rebelling against God. Many complain of their crosses that complain not of sin. To loathe the world for crosses alone, is neither the mark nor work of grace. A beast can forsake the place where he findeth neither meat nor rest; but because we are sinning here, whilst others are glorifying God, this is the trouble of the saints.

3. They believe and look for a better estate after this life is over: 2 Cor. v. 1, ‘We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’ No man can be a right sojourner on earth who doth not look for an abode in heaven; for that which doth

most effectually draw off the heart of man from this world is the expectation of a far better state in the world to come: 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' Heathens could call the world an inn, but they had only glimmering conceptions of another world. A Christian, that believeth it, and looketh for it on God's assurance, he is only the joyful stranger and the pilgrim. Common sense will teach us the necessity of leaving this world, but faith can only assure us of another; they are believers and expectants of heaven.

4. They do not only look for it, but seek after it. We read of both looking and seeking: Heb. xi. 14, 'They declare plainly that they seek a country;' Heb. xiii. 14, 'Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.' Seeking implieth diligence in the use of means. All the life of a Christian is nothing but the seeking after another country, every day advancing a step nearer to heaven; and therefore their *πολίτευμα*, their 'conversation' is said to be 'in heaven,' Phil. iii. 20. This is their great business upon earth, to do all to eternal ends: all other works and labours are but upon the bye, and subordinate to this. Their main care is to obtain this blessed condition; therefore they use word and sacraments, that they may grow in grace, faith, repentance, new obedience. Every degree in grace is another step towards heaven: Ps. lxxxiv. 5, 'Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose hearts are the ways of them;' ver. 7, 'They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.' Some of the saints are *in patria*, others *in via*, still bending homeward.

5. Because they are so, the children of God are dealt with as strangers. Difference of scope and drift will procure alienation of affection: 1 Peter iv. 4, 'Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you;' and John xv. 19, 'If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' Other cannot be expected but that the servants of the Lord should be ill rewarded and treated here, not only out of the world's ignorance—they know not our birth, breeding, expectations, hope: 1 John iii. 2, 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is'—but enmity, as the different carriage of the one puts a disgrace upon the course of life which the other doth affect; the one fixeth their home here, the other looketh for it elsewhere; and the world is sensible this is an excellency, and therefore those that are at the bottom of the hill, envy and malign those that are at the top.

*Use.* Are we thus minded? There are two sorts of men in the world—the one is of the devil and the other is of God; for all men seek their rest and happiness on earth, or rest in heaven. Naturally men were all of the first number, for the rational soul without grace accommodateth itself to the interests of the body; but when sublimated and transformed by grace, the world cannot satisfy it, and it can find



nothing there which may finally quiet its desires, for the new life infused hath other aims and tendencies. As saints are new-born *from* heaven, so *for* heaven; and therefore the new nature cannot satisfy itself in the enjoyment of the creature, with the absence of God. The apostle saith, 'While at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord,' 2 Cor. v. 6, 7. In this life we are not capable of the glorious presence of God; it is not consistent with our mortality; and our being present with him in the spirit is but a taste that doth provoke rather than cloy the appetite: Rom. viii. 23. 'Ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.' These tastes do but make us long for more; they are sent down from heaven to draw us up to that place of our rest where this glory and blessedness is in fulness. Now which sort are ye of? the city of God, or under the dominion of Satan and the power of worldly lusts?

1. There are some that take up here, and never consider whence they are, nor whither they are going; as Christ saith, 'I know whence I am, and whither I go.' They look altogether for the present, and if they be well for the present, they are contented. Alas! in what a miserable case are these men, though they mind it not! they seem to me to be like men that are going to execution. A man that is going to the gallows for the present is well, hath a great guard to attend him, an innumerable multitude of people to follow him: you would think that hardly could a man be such a sot and fool as to think all this should be done for his honour, and not for his punishment, and should only consider how he is accompanied, but not whither he goeth. Many such fools there are in the world, that only consider how they are attended and provided for, but never consider whither they are going. O wretch! whither goest thou? may we say to one that should pride himself in the resort of company to his execution. Dost thou not see thou art led to punishment, and after an hour or two these will leave thee hanging and perishing infamously as the just reward of thine offences? So many that shine now in the pomp and splendour of worldly accommodations, and are merry and jocund as if all would do well, alas! poor creatures, whither are they going? Job xxi. 12, 13. 'They take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ; they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down into hell.' Ye still live, and are going to punishment, but mind it not; but your wealth, and honours, and servants, and friends will all leave you to your own doom; and yet you are merry and jocund as if your journey would never end, or not so dismally; as if you were hastening to a kingdom, and not to an eternal prison: one moment puts an end to all their joy for ever.

2. There are others that wean their hearts from this world, and make it their care that they may carry themselves becoming their celestial extraction. As their souls were from above by creation, so all their hopes, and desires, and endeavours are to attain to that region of spirits; much more as being renewed by grace do they aim at the perfection and accomplishment of that life which is begun in them; and so being 'made partakers of the divine nature, do they escape the corruption that is in the world through lust,' 2 Peter i. 4.

they are convinced of a better estate than the world yieldeth, and believe it, and look for it, and long for it, and labour for it. Now of which number are you? or, if you cannot decide that—because more goeth to the assuring of our interest than the world usually taketh to be necessary for that end and purpose—of which number do you mean to be? Will you be at home in the world, or seek the happiness of the world to come? that is, in other terms, do you mean to be pagans under a Christian name, or Christians indeed? You have but the name if you be not strangers and pilgrims here upon earth. All Christ's disciples indeed are called to sit loose from the world, and to have a high and deep sense of the world to come. As to the other world, they are 'no mere strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,' Eph. ii. 19. They are of a family, part of which is in heaven and part on earth: Eph. iii. 15, 'Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.' Some of their brethren have got the start of them, and are with God before them, but the rest are hastening after as fast as they can. They are sufficiently convinced that the earth is no place for them; they are strangers there, and the contentments thereof uncertain and perishing; but they are no strangers to heaven and the blessed society of the saints, whose privileges they have a full right to now, and hope one day to have as full a possession, and an intimate communion with their Father and all their brethren.

Now, that you may resolve upon this, and carry yourselves suitably, I shall—

1. Give you some motives.

2. A direction or two.

1. Motives.

[1.] He that taketh up his rest in this world, or any earthly thing, is but a higher kind of beast, and unworthy of an immortal soul. The beasts have an instinct that guideth them to seek things convenient for that life which they have, and therefore a man doth not follow the light of reason that seeketh to quiet his mind with what things the world affordeth, and only relisheth the contentments of the carnal and bodily life, that is satisfied with his portion here, Ps. xvii. 14. All their business and bustle is to have their wills and pleasure for a little while, as if they had neither hopes nor fears of any greater things hereafter: Ps. xlix. 20, 'Man, that is in honour, and void of understanding, is as the beast that perisheth,' because he merely inclineth to present satisfactions; for reason is as a middle thing between the life of faith and the life of sense. It were no great matter whether you were men or dogs or swine, if reason be only given you for the present world and present satisfactions; all your sense of the world to come and conscience is as good as nothing.

[2.] None are of so noble and divine a spirit as those that seek the heavenly kingdom. Amongst men, the ambitious who aspire to crowns and kingdoms, that aim at perpetual fame by their virtues and rare exploits, are judged persons of greater gallantry than covetous muck-worms and brutish epicures; yet their highest thoughts and designs are very base in comparison of Christians, 'who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for life, glory, and immortality,' Rom.

ii. 7, and whom nothing less will content than the enjoyment of God himself. Their desires are after him : Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and who is there on earth I desire besides thee ?' So that as man, being immortal, should provide for some place of perpetual abode, so herein the Christian excelleth other men, that nothing less will satisfy him than what God hath promised his people hereafter. The threshold will not content him—nothing but the throne.

[3.] What a sorry immortality, mock eternity, do they choose, instead of the true one, when they neglect the pursuit of this heavenly country ! If they look no higher than this world, all that they can rationally imagine is perpetuating themselves, and their names, and posterity, by successive generations : Ps. xlix. 11, 'Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations ; they call their lands by their own names.' This is styled *nodosa eternitas*, when they live in their children after death. But alas ! to how few men's share can this fall ! and those who may in likelihood expect it, who are lords of fair rents, fair lands, houses and heritages, how often are they disappointed ! But if their hopes should succeed, and they should make themselves this way eternal, yet when the pageantry of this world is over, the great ungodly men of the world, who have names, lands, families in the general resurrection shall be poor, base, contemptible ; whereas he that made it his business to look after the world to come shall be glorious for ever.

[4.] When once our qualification is clear, every step of our remove out of this world is an approach to our abiding city : Rom. xiii. 11, 'Our salvation nearer than when we first believed ;' and 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.'

[5.] Every degree of grace makes your qualification clearer : Col. i. 12, 'Giving thanks to the father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light ;' and 1 Tim. vi. 19, 'Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life.' Evidences are increased when ripening for heaven more and more.

2. Let us carry ourselves as such as count our best estate in this world as the house of our pilgrimage.

[1.] Let us with great joy and delight of heart entertain the promises of the life to come, resolving to hold and hug them, and esteem them, and make much of them till the performance come : Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.'

[2.] Let us take heed of what may divert us and besot us, and hinder us in our heavenly journey : 1 Peter ii. 11, 'Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' A relish of the pleasures that offer themselves in the course of our pilgrimage spoileth the sense that we have of the world to come, and weakens our care and pursuit of it.

[3.] Let us be contented with those provisions that God in his pro-

vidence affordeth us by the way, though they be mean and scanty : 1 Tim. vi. 8, 'Having food and raiment, let us be content, for we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.' We came into the world contented with a cradle, and must go out contented with a grave ; therefore, if we want the pomp of the world, let it not trouble us : we have such allowance as our heavenly Father seeth necessary for us till our great inheritance cometh in hand.

[4.] If the world increase upon us, we should take the more care that we may have the comfort of it in the world to come : Rev. xiv. 13, 'Their works follow them ;' Luke xvi. 9, 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations.' There is no other way to show our weanedness in a full estate, nor to keep our hearts clean, or to express our deep sense of the world to come, but this.

*Doct. 2.* That during this estate, and the inconveniences thereof, God's children find matter of rejoicing in his word.

1. Let us consider how this point lieth in this text.

[1.] The Psalmist had a sufficient sense of the inconveniences of the house of his pilgrimage, his absence from God, for therefore he counts it a pilgrimage ; the many affronts and dishonours that are done to God in the world, which go near to a gracious heart who espouseth God's quarrel and interest ; therefore he saith, 'Horror hath taken hold upon me, because men keep not thy law.' Nay, and possibly his own afflictions and troubles, for many interpreters suppose him now expelled from Jerusalem, and driven to wander up and down in the forests and wildernesses ; yet then could he comfort himself in God, and pass over his time in meditating on his precepts and promises. The troubles and inconveniences of our pilgrimage are easily disregarded by them that have no sense of them, or are slight-hearted, or whose time of trial is not yet come ; but then is strength of grace seen when we can overcome sense of trouble by the encouragements which the bare naked word of God offereth. If David were now in exile, it was a trouble to him not to enjoy the ordinances and means of grace with the rest of God's people ; but to deceive the tediousness of it by God's word, that is the trial. If we can depend upon the promise, when nothing but the promise is left us, there are no difficulties too great for the comfort of God's word to allay.

[2.] The Psalmist speaketh not of what he would do, but what he had done : 'Thy statutes have been my songs.' Experience of the comfort of the word is more than a resolution to seek it there. In his resolution he would have been a pattern of duty, but now he is a precedent of comfort. That which hath been may be ; God, that hath given a promise and comfort to his saints before, will continue it in all ages.

[3.] The Psalmist speaketh not of an ordinary joy, but such as was ready to break out into singing, which noteth the heart is full, and can hold no longer without some vent and utterance ; as Paul and Silas were so full of joy that they sang at midnight in the stocks.

2. Now I come to the reasons why God's pilgrims find matter of rejoicing in his word during the time of their exile and absence from God, and all the inconveniences that attend it.

[1.] Some on the word's part.

[2.] Some on the part of him that rejoiceth.

[1.] On the word's part, God's pilgrims can rejoice in it.

(1.) There they have the discovery and promise of eternal life. It telleth them of their country. A firm deed and conveyance is a comfort to us before we have possession: 2 Peter i. 4, 'To us are given exceeding great and precious promises, that being made partakers of the divine nature, we may escape the corruptions that are in the world through lust.' In the word there are promises neither of small things, of things of a little moment, nor of things that we have nothing to do with, but of great moment and weight, and given to us. The promises make the things promised certain to those to whom they do belong, though they be not yet actually in their possession; and therefore the children of God are delighted in them, and so far as that their hearts are drawn off from worldly things. They that adhere to them, and prize the comfort which they offer, have something in them above natural men, or the ordinary sort of those that live in the world.

(2.) There they have sure direction how they may attain this blessedness which the promises speak of, and that is a great comfort in the midst of the darkness and uncertainty of the present life. The word of God is said to be 'a light that shineth to us in a dark place,' 2 Peter i. 19. The love of the world will mislead us, our own reason will often leave us comfortless, the examples of the best are defective, but the word of God will give comfortable direction to all that follow the direction of it, under all their crosses, confusions and difficulties: Ps. cxix. 105, 'Thy word is a light unto my feet, and a lantern to my paths.' Light is comfortable; it is no small satisfaction that I am in God's way, and have his word for my warrant.

(3.) It propoundeth the examples of their countrymen, and sets forth their heroic acts, and encourageth us to imitate their fortitude and self-denial: Heb. vi. 12, 'Be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises;' many things are to be done and suffered before we attain the end. Now, it is a great comfort to trace the footsteps of the saints all along in the way in which we go: Heb. xii. 1, 'Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.' If God did call us to walk in an untrodden path, it might be cumbersome and solitary. Now it is very obliging and encouraging to consider in what way they have been brought to heaven before us.

(4.) It hath many seasonable cordials against fainting by the way. Alas! when we are in deep pressures, our hearts are apt to sink; but the word assurcth us that we shall have all things necessary for us, that our heavenly Father seeth what is best for us, and that if we faithfully wait upon him, our afflictions and rubs in the way shall be a means to bring us to our journey's end: 2 Cor. iv. 17, 'Our light affliction, that is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;' and that for the present our trials are not inconsistent with his love.

[2.] On the believer's part there are reasons of this comfort and rejoicing.

(1.) There needeth a spiritual frame of heart, for a carnal man's rejoicings and relishes are suitable to the constitution of his mind: Rom. viii. 5, 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit.' It is an infallible rule to the world's end. Every one cannot say, 'Thy statutes are my songs.' No; they must have other solaces; and a man's temper is more discerned by his solaces than by anything else. They that have not purged their taste from the dregs of sense, the trash of the flesh-pots of Egypt will ever be pleasing to them in the heavenly pilgrimage; and being inveigled with the baits of the flesh, the promises are like withered flowers to them, or as dry chips; it is the spiritual heart that is refreshed with spiritual songs.

(2.) This word must be received by faith, for it is faith that enliveneth our notions of things, and maketh them work with us: Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon the earth.' Our affections follow persuasion: 1 Peter i. 8, 'Whom having not seen we love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;' Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.'

(3.) This word must be improved by reading and hearing, but especially by meditation and singing.

(1st.) Meditation, when it is sweet and lively, stirreth this joy. Delight begets meditation, and meditation begets delight. There is a *κυκλογένησις* in moral as well as natural things: Ps. i. 2, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night;' and Ps. cxix. 97, 'Oh, how love I thy law! it is my meditation day and night;' and ver. 15, 16, 'I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways: I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy words.' These follow one another. Affections are not excited but by deep and pondering thoughts.

(2d.) By singing psalms we draw forth this delight: Col. iii. 16, 'Let the word of God dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord;' Eph. v. 18, 19, 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.' Drunkards, when filled with the spirit of wine, sing wanton songs; and those who are filled with the wine of the Spirit will praise God with spiritual songs. This is a duty of importance, a delightful way of being instructed by our refreshment. God would give us strength, but this is neglected, or cursorily performed by Christians. We will complain of the want of a spirit in prayer; we should do so in singing. Coldness in this holy exercise argueth a deadness of faith and a coldness in true religion. We should express our joy this way.

(4.) Above all, this comfort is found in ready practice and obedience. There is a comfort, I confess, in speculation, but not so deep and intimate as in practice. The one is but a taste inviting to the other, which giveth us a fuller draught. The bare contemplation and view

of any concerning and weighty truth is very ravishing to those that bend their minds to knowledge: 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 to thy soul.' Every truth is *objectum intellectus*, much more divine truth; but now in practice the impression is doubled: we get comfort and joy raised in our consciences; our lives and light do not jar; we are at full quiet in our minds, apprehending ourselves to be in God's way: Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches.'

Use 1. To show you that the people of God need not envy the wicked for their delights and pleasures; they have chaster and sweeter delights; God's statutes are their songs. Where the heart is spiritual, they can find delight enough in the word, both as their charter and their rule, and need not turn aside to vain mirth; a portion in the promises will yield pleasure enough: ver. 111, 'Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.'

2. To reprove those that reckon these things a burthen. The holy talking of heaven and godliness maketh worldly men ever heavy and out of humour; it is not their delight. But it should not be so with the children of God. A child of God should only be heavy when he displeases God, but delight in all the means that enable him to live to God.

3. When we are saddened by the evil of the present world, let us make use of this remedy; let us meditate on God's statutes. We shall find ease and refreshing by exercising ourselves to know God in Christ.

4. To refute the vain conceit which possesseth the minds of men, that the way of godliness is a gloomy way. As soon as a man beginneth to think of salvation, or the change of his life, or the leaving of his sins, embracing the service of God, presently his mind is haunted with this thought: Seest thou not how those that serve God are melancholy, afflicted, sorrowful, never rejoice more? and wilt thou be one of them? This is the opinion of the world, that they can never rejoice nor be merry that serve God. But certainly it is a vain conceit. No men do more and more truly rejoice than they which serve God. Consult the scriptures, who have more leave, shall I say, or command, to rejoice? Ps. xxxvii. 4, 'Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart;' Phil. iv. 4, 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.' Ask reason who have more cause or matter to rejoice than they that have provided against the fears or doubts of conscience by reason of sin? What is more satisfactory to a soul in doubts and fears than the knowledge of pardon and reconciliation with God? For the satisfaction of the desires of nature which carry us after happiness, who have a more powerful exciter of joy than the Holy Ghost? Acts xiii. 52, 'The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.' Who more qualified with joy than those who have a clear right to the pardon of sin, and so can see all miseries unstinged? Rom. v. 1-3, 'Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein

we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulation also.' How joyful are those that see themselves prepared for everlasting life! 2 Cor. v. 1, 'For we know that if our earthly tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Yea, when a Christian knoweth his duty, his way is plain before him; it is a mighty satisfaction: Ps. xix. 8, 'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.' Look into the lives and examples of the saints; who have more true joy than they? The disciples esteem the grace of the gospel such a great treasure, that though they suffer persecution for it they are filled with joy: Acts viii. 8, 'And there was great joy in that city;' 1 Thes. i. 6, 'Having received the word with much affliction and joy in the Holy Ghost;' 2 Cor. vii. 4, 'I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.' Preachers, though with great hazard they perform their office, should be joyful: Acts xx. 24, 'Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy;' Phil. ii. 17, 18, 'Yea, and if I be offered for the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all; for the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me.' The world will reply—I know not what this spiritual consolation meaneth; it seemeth hard to relinquish that which I see, that which I feel, that which I taste, for that which I see not, and it may be shall never see.

*Ans.* 1. By concession, the joy of the saints is the joy of faith. God is unseen, Christ is within the heavens, great hopes are to come: 1 Peter i. 8, 'In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;' 2 Cor. v. 7, 'For we walk by faith, not by sight.'

2. Thus you see that the world cannot alway rejoice in those things which they take to be the proper objects of joy; they have alternative vicissitudes, now rejoice, now mourn; nor can it be otherwise, for they rejoice in things which cannot always last. If they rejoice when their worldly comforts increase, they are sad when they wither; if they rejoice when their children are born, they weep when they die: but a Christian hath always his songs, for he must always rejoice in the Lord, who is an eternal God: Phil. iv. 4, 'Rejoice in the Lord always;' in Christ, who 'hath obtained eternal redemption for us,' Heb. ix. 12; in the promises, which give an eternal influence: Ps. cxix. 111, 'Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.' The flesh cannot afford anything so delightful as a Christian hath; the word will hold good for ever.

3. We cannot altogether say that a Christian doth rejoice in that which he cannot see; for all that they see is their everlasting Father's wealth: 1 Cor. iii. 21, 'All are yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' If they look to heaven, they can rejoice and say, Glory be to thee, O Lord, who hast prepared this for our everlasting dwelling-place. If they look to the earth, Glory be to thee, O Lord, who dost not leave us destitute in the house of our pilgrimage. If they consider their afflictions, they rejoice that God is not unmindful of poor creatures, who are beneath his anger as well as unworthy of his love: Job vii. 17, 18, 'What is man that thou shouldst magnify him, and that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him, and that thou shouldst visit



him every morning, and try him every moment?—that God should trouble himself about us, that we may not perish with the ungodly world. The same love that sendeth them prosperity sendeth adversity also, which they find by the seasonableness of it.

## SERMON LXI.

*I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law.*—VER. 55.

WE often read and sing David's psalms, but we have little of David's spirit. A man's employment is as the constitution of his mind is, for all things work according to their nature. A man addicted to God, that is to say, one who hath taken God for his happiness, his word for his rule, his Spirit for his guide, and his promises for his encouragement, his heart will always be working towards God day and night. In the day he will be studying God's word; in the night, if his sleep be interrupted, he will be meditating on God's name; still entertaining his soul with God. The predominant affection will certainly set the thoughts awork. The man of God had told us in the former verse what was his chief employment in the day-time, and now he telleth us how his heart wrought in the night. Night and day he was remembering God and his duty to him. In the day the statutes of God were his solace, and as songs to him in the house of his pilgrimage; in the night the name of God was his meditation: 'I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law.' In which words observe—

1. David's exercise, *I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night.*

2. The effect and fruit of it, *and have kept thy law.*

The one may be considered as the means, the other as the next and immediate end. Remembering and thinking is but a subservient help and means to promote some higher work.

1. In the first branch you have—

[1.] The act of his soul, *I have remembered.*

[2.] The object about which it was conversant, *thy name, O Lord.*

[3.] The season, *in the night.*

[1.] For the act of his soul, 'I have remembered.' Remembrance is an act of knowledge reiterated, or a second agitation of the mind unto that point unto which it had arrived before. Or, more plainly, remembering is a setting knowledge awork, or a reviving those notions which we have of things, and exercising our thoughts and meditations about them.

[2.] The object was God's 'name;' that is, either God himself, as Ps. xx. 1, 'The name of the God of Jacob defend thee;' or that by which God is known, his wisdom, goodness, and power, especially those notions by which he hath manifested himself in the word.

[3.] The season, 'In the night.' Some take the night metaphorically for the time of trouble and affliction. It is often a dark time

with the people of God, a very dark night, and then it is comfortable to them to think of his name, according to that of the prophet, Isa. l. 10, 'He that walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him stay himself upon the name of his God.' I think it is meant literally; that the man of God took such pleasure in the name of God, that what time others gave to sleep and rest he would give to the contemplation of his glory. In the solitude and darkness of the night he sustained and supported his spirit with the thoughts of God, and thereby took up a courage and constancy of resolution to keep his law.

2. The other branch, 'I have kept thy law;' that is, with a good and sincere heart set himself to the keeping of it; this is spoken partly to intimate his own seriousness in this work, and partly God's blessing upon his endeavours therein.

[1.] His seriousness and sincerity in the work. There is a twofold remembrance of things:—

(1.) Notional and speculative.

(2.) Practical and affective.

The notional and speculative remembrance of things is when we barely think of them, without any further profit or benefit; but the practical, powerful and affective remembrance is to be affected with matters called to mind as the nature of them doth require: as when we remember God so as to love him, and fear him, and trust in him, and make him our delight, and cleave to him, and obey him. And we are said to remember his commandments, when our hearts are set upon the practice of them. *Verba notitiæ connotant affectus*: we must not think of God indifferently, and by the by, but we must be answerably affected, and act accordingly. Thus did David, 'I remembered thy name, and kept thy law.'

[2.] God's blessing upon his endeavours; for he presently addeth in the next verse, 'This I had, because I kept thy precepts.' Our heavenly Father, who 'seeth what is done in secret, will reward it openly,' Mat. vi. 6. And the blessing of time well-spent in secret, or a few serious thoughts of God in the night, will publicly appear in their carriage before men. If we be frequently and seriously with God when we are solitary, the fruit and benefit of it will be manifest by our holiness and heavenliness when we are in company. Your most private duties do not lose their reward. As a man's pains in study will appear in the accurate order, strength, and rationality of his discourse, so his converse with God in private will be seen in the fruits of it, in his holy, profitable and serious conversation.

The points are three:—

*Doct. 1.* Remembering God is an especial help to the keeping of his law.

*Doct. 2.* God is best remembered when his name is studied.

*Doct. 3.* Those that have spiritual affections will take all occasions to remember his name. 'I have remembered thy name in the night season,' saith holy David.

*Doct. 1.* That remembering God is an especial help to the keeping of his law.

First, What it is to remember God.

1. It supposeth some knowledge of God, for what a man knoweth

not he cannot remember. The memory is the cofferer and treasurer of the soul; what the understanding taketh in, the memory layeth up; and actually we are said to remember when we set the mind awork upon such notions as we have formerly received. And particularly to remember God is when we stir up in our minds clear and heart-warming apprehensions about his nature and will.

2. It supposeth some faith, that we believe him to be such as the word describeth him to be; for spiritual remembrance is the actuation of faith, or, in this case, the improvement of that wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, justice, and truth, which we believe to be in God. Otherwise, without faith, those thoughts which we have of the greatest matters affect us no more than a dream doth a sleeper.

These things are supposed in remembrance.

3. It expresseth a reviving of these thoughts, or an erection of the mind to think upon what we know and believe. Man, that hath an ingestive, hath also an egestive faculty, and can lay out as well as lay up, bring forth truths out of the mind when it is useful for us, and whet and inculcate them upon the heart; he may call to mind or ponder upon them.

4. Let us see the kinds of this remembrance.

[1.] I must repeat that distinction; it may be done notionally and speculatively, or else affectively and practically. Notionally, when men have a few barren notions, or dry sapless opinions or speculations about the nature of God; always men's remembrance is as their knowledge is, and faith is. Now there is *μόρφωσις της γνώσεως*, a form of knowledge, Rom. ii. 10, and 'dead faith,' James ii. 20. Affectively and practically we remember God when there are such lively and powerful impressions of his name upon our hearts as produce reverence, love, and obedience. It is not enough to grant the doctrine, own the opinions that are sound and orthodox concerning God, but we must have a reverential and superlative esteem of him. All men confess a God with their mouth, and think they believe in him; but 'the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,' Ps. xiv. 1. What testimony do their hearts and actions give? A man's course of life and conversation is like an eye-witness; his profession is as a testimony by report. Now one eye-witness deserves more credit than many by hearsay. *Plus valet unus oculatus testis, &c.* How would you walk if you believed there were no God? Could you be more neglectful of God, and careless and mindless of heavenly things, than you are? Now your transgressions speak louder than your professions in the eye of an understanding believer: Ps. xxxvi. 1, 'The transgression of the wicked saith within his heart that there is no fear of God before his eyes.' Practice belies profession: Titus i. 16, 'They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him.' Cold and dead opinions are easily taken up, and men talk by rote one after another, yea, and study to defend them, and yet count God an idol. Denial in works is the strongest way of denial, for actions are more weighty and deliberate than speeches.

[2.] There is a threefold remembrance of God for practical uses.

(1.) There is a constant remembrance. We should carry the thoughts

of God along with us to all our businesses and affairs, and ever walk as in his eye and presence : Prov. xxiii. 17, ' Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long ; ' not only in prayer, but at all times, in all our other occasions. Some graces, like the lungs, are always in use ; so Ps. xvi. 8, ' I have set the Lord always before me. ' He that liveth always in the sight of God cannot be so secure and senseless as others are. A drowsy inattentive mind is easily deceived into sin, but he that doth often remember God, his conscience is kept waking ; for he is all eye, and seeth all things ; all hand, and toucheth all things ; all foot, and walketh everywhere ; all ear, and heareth all things. *Sic agamus cum hominibus tanquam Deus videat ; sic loquamur cum Deo tanquam homines audiant.* The latter clause was the least that a heathen could think of ; but surely, if there be any weight in the former part of the direction, the latter is needless. Thus we should never forget God.

(2.) Occasional, when God is brought to mind either by some special occasion offered, or by some notable discovery of himself in his word or works. Occasion offered ; as when Ahasuerus could not sleep, Esther vi. 1, it was the providence of God he should read in the chronicles, and so come to the knowledge of Mordecai. So it befalleth God's children ; they cannot sleep sometimes, and so occasion is offered in the silence and solitude of the night to invite them to holy thoughts of God, which may be of great use and comfort : Job xxxvii. 7, ' He sealeth up the hand of every man, that all men may know his work. ' In deep snow or rain their work is hindered, that they, sitting at home, may have time to consider of God and his providence. Sometimes it falleth out so that we know not what to do with our thoughts, and it will look strangely in the review if we should prostitute them to vanity rather than give them to God, like the act of a spiteful man, that will rather destroy and waste a commodity than let another have it. Or when some notable discovery of God is in his ordinances and providences, word, or works ; we should always season our hearts with the thoughts of God, we should see him in every creature, and observe him in his daily providences. The name of God is upon all things that he hath made, but especially any notable providence that falleth out, which is an especial demonstration of his wisdom, justice, and power : Ps. cxi. 4, ' He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered. ' So in his ordinances, when God maketh any nearer approach to us by way of conviction, counsel, or comfort : 1 Cor. xiv. 25, ' And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. ' Many times our minds in reading or hearing are illustrated with a heavenly light, or our hearts touched with some delightful relish, and the word cometh in with more than ordinary authority and power upon the heart ; these are especial occasions which we must take to consider God and the great affairs of our souls.

(3.) Set and solemn, when from the bent, purpose, and inclination of our own hearts, without any outward impulsion, we set ourselves to remember the God that made us. From first to last there is great use of meditation and serious thoughts of God in the spiritual life.

Our first awaking is occasioned by them : Ps. xxii. 27, 'They shall remember and turn to the Lord.' For a great while we live without God in the world, till we recollect ourselves, and consider where we are and whither we are going. We are like men drunk or asleep, and do not make use of our reason and common principles that may be learned from the inspection of the creature and everything about us ; and when once we are brought into the communion of the life of God, and have grace planted in our hearts, it cannot be carried on unless we take time to remember God. Our faith, our love, our desires, our delight, they are all acted and exercised by our thoughts ; so that the spiritual life is but an imagination, unless we do frequently and often take time for serious meditation of him. It is not consistent with any of the three vital graces, faith, hope, and love, that a man should be a stranger to the remembrance of God : therefore God complaineth of it as a strange thing : Jer. ii. 32, 'My people have forgotten me days without number ;' do no more regard me than if they had never known me, Besides, the habits of grace are so weak, and our temptations so strong, and the difficulties of obedience so great, that I cannot see how we can keep afoot any interest of God in ourselves, if we seldom think of God, and do not sometimes sequester ourselves to revive this memorial upon our souls. Can a sluggish heart be quickened, or weak and inconstant resolutions be strengthened, or the sparks of love ever blown up into a flame, and fainting hopes cherished, unless we seriously set our minds awork to consider of God and our obligations to him? Will a sleepy profession, without constant and lively thoughts do it? It cannot be. Oh, no! If you mean to keep in the fire, you must ply the bellows and blow hard. Whet truths upon the understanding, and agitate your minds in this holy work.

Secondly, My next work is to show that this is a notable help to godliness; and that appeareth enough in that forgetting God is assigned as the cause of all mischief, and remembering God the engagement to all duty. We forget God, do not meditate upon his name, and so fall into sin : Ps. ix. 17, 'The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.' Some deny God, but most forget him ; they cast away the knowledge of God out of their minds. So Ps. l. 22, 'Consider this, all ye that forget God ;' that is the description of the wicked. So it is the charge upon Israel, as their great sin and cause of their defection : Deut. xxxii. 18, 'Thou art unmindful of the rock that begat thee ; thou hast forgotten the God that formed thee.' Oblivion is an ignorance for the time. Truths lose their efficacy when not remembered. On the other side, remembering God is made to be the immediate and next cause of our duty : Eccles. xii. 1, 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.' Youth would not miscarry so shamefully if they did oftener remember God, nor be led away by vain and sensual delights, if the thoughts of God did more dwell in their minds. So Deut. viii. 11, 12, 'Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments.' Our lives will declare whether we do remember God. Those that do often and seriously keep God in their thoughts, will be most careful to keep his commandments.

Thirdly, The reasons of the point.

1. It doth encourage us, and quicken us to diligence in our work. As soldiers fight best in their general's presence, and scholars ply their books when under their master's eye, so by living always in the sight of God we study to please him. The oftener we consider him the more we see no service can be holy and good enough for such a God as he is; a God not to be provoked and resisted, so not to be neglected and slighted: Mal. i. 14, 'Cursed be the deceiver that hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen;' implying that when they came with a sickly sacrifice, they did not remember his excellency and greatness. Either they had no or mean thoughts of God; but if they had remembered what an one he is, they would employ the best of their strength, time, and affection in his service.

2. The madness of our natures is bridled and restrained by thoughts of God: 3 John 11, 'He that doth evil hath not seen God.' 'Will he force the queen before my face?' Esther vii. 8. You will not sport with sin, nor play with the occasions of it, nor dare to venture upon God's restraints. It is said of an archangel, *οὐκ ἐτόλμησε*, 'he durst not bring against him a railing accusation,' Jude 9, because they beheld the face of God. So if we had a deep sense of God impressed upon our hearts, we would be more awe-ful. You make very bold with God when you dare knowingly venture upon the least sin. Will you affront God to his face? Children that are quarrelling or falling out, when the father or mother cometh, all is hush and silent.

3. It comforts and reviveth us in the midst of our faintings and discouragements, because of the evils of the present world: Jonah ii. 7, 'When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord.' When the burden of affliction presseth us sore, the stoutest hearts are broken and lose all courage; but when we come to ponder seriously what God is, or what he will be to his people, or hath at any time been to ourselves, it cheereth and reviveth the heart. So Ps. xlii. 6, 'O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee.' By this way the saints recover themselves, Ps. lxxvii. 10, 'And I said, This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.' So also, Mat. xvi. 9, 'Do ye not remember the five loaves of the five thousand, nor the seven loaves of the four thousand?'

*Use.* To press us to remember God more. When we will not look upon another, we take it to be a great sign of aversion and hatred. The devils, that are most opposite to God, abhor their own thoughts of God, for they 'believe and tremble.' God thinketh of us; he is not far from every one of us; why are we so far from him? We cannot open our eyes but one object or other will represent God to us. What dost thou see, hear, and feel, but the effects of his power and goodness? He is before thee, behind thee, within thee, round about thee; and shall he not find room in thy heart, when every trifle findeth room there? He that filleth every place, shall thy heart be empty of all thoughts of him? To press you to this—

1. Consider we are naturally apt to forget God, do not like to re-

tain him in our knowledge, Rom. i. 28, backward to any remembrance of him : Ps. x. 4, 'The wicked, through the pride of their countenance, will not seek after God ; God is not in all their thoughts.'

2. How much God hath done to put us in remembrance of him, by creatures, providences, ordinances, and his Spirit.

[1.] Creatures, all of them, sun, moon, stars, worms, grass, put us in mind of him : Ps. xix. 1, 2, 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork ; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.' The creatures have a double use—their natural use and their spiritual use. Their natural use is the special end for which they were made ; their spiritual use is to set forth God to us. We look upon them amiss if we look upon them as separated from and independent of God. Our food is not only to nourish nature, but that we may taste the sweetness and goodness of God in it. All the creatures bring this message to our consciences : Remember God that made us and all things else. They all read a divinity lecture to those that have a mind to hear it, and preach the goodness, power, and wisdom of God by a loud and audible voice. It is true we are deaf, but they cease not to cry to us : Job xii. 8, 'Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee ; and to the beasts of the field, and they shall declare to thee. Not only the shining heavens, but the dull earth, that heaviest and grossest element ; the brute creatures that have no reason, the mute fishes that can make no sound, we must ask them, parley with them by our own thoughts ; and so, though they have neither voice nor ears, they will answer us, and resolve our consciences the question we put to them, Is there a God ? Yea, and declare his excellent attributes, that he is eternal, infinite, wise, powerful, and good. We may easily make out these collections. Christ saith the stones would cry if these held their peace. We should hear the creature as we would hear God himself speaking to us. They speak to all countries in their own language. At first God spake to the world not by words but things. Thus hath God engraven his name upon his works, as those that make watches, or any curious pieces, write their names upon them ; as he that carved a buckler for Minerva had so curiously inlaid his own name that it could not be rased out without defacing the whole work. So the creatures are but a draught and portraiture of God's glory.

[2.] Providences, these do more awaken us. God's daily benefits should bring him to our remembrance : Acts xiv. 17, 'Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness ;' Deut. viii. 18, 'But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for he it is that giveth thee power to get wealth.' Especially the sanctified remembrance of God's dealing with his people is the way to keep the heart in the faith, love, and fear of God ; and the forgetting his works is the cause of all defection and falling off to carnal courses and confidences : Ps. lxxviii. 11, 'They forgot his works and wonders that he showed them,' Ps. cvi. 21, 'They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt ;' Judges viii. 34, 'And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them

out of the hands of their enemies on every side.' It is a base ingratitude not to remember, prize, and esteem God for all this.

[3.] Ordinances. Ministry was instituted to put you in remembrance, and give you still new and fresh occasions to think of God: 2 Peter i. 12, 'I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance.' Our business is not always to inform you of what you know not, but to inculcate and revive known truths, there being much forgetfulness, stupidity, and senselessness upon our spirits: 2 Peter iii. 1, 'That I may stir up your minds by way of remembrance.' The impressions of God on our minds are soon defaced; we need to quicken and awaken your affections and resolutions to choose and cleave to God: 1 Tim. iv. 6, 'If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ.' So sacraments are instituted to bring God to remembrance: 1 Cor. xi. 24, 'This do in remembrance of me;' that we may remember his love and our covenanted duty. The sabbath was instituted for a remembrance and memorial of his creating, redeeming goodness.

[4.] The great office and work of the Spirit is to bring to remembrance: John xiv. 26, 'He shall bring all things to your remembrance.' We are apt to forget God, and instructions, and rebukes in their season: the Holy Ghost is our monitor.

3. God will not forget them that remember him. He will remember them at every turn: Mal. iii. 16, 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name.' If he do not openly reward you with temporal deliverances, yet he taketh notice of every thought and every word you speak for him, and taketh pleasure in you. It is upon record; if you have not the comfort of it now, you shall have it in a little time. Because they thought of him they spake of him, and owned him in an evil time; and therefore God is represented as hearing and booking: and the books shall one day be opened, and then you shall have your public reward.

*Doct. 2.* God is best remembered when his name is studied.

First, When is his name studied? In the general, when we look upon him as he hath manifested himself in his word and works. More particularly, God is discovered sometimes by the name of his essence, sometimes by his attributes.

1. By the name of his essence. When Moses was very inquisitive to know his name—and God can best tell his own name—let us see what answer was made him: Exod. iii. 12, 13, 'When they shall say unto me, What is his name? and God said, I am that I am.' God was sending Moses upon a strange message; he was giving him commission to go and speak to a king to dismiss and let go six hundred thousand of his subjects, to lead them to a place which God should show. Now Moses thought for such a message he had need have good authority, therefore desireth a significant name. 'I am that I am.' The form of the words sheweth it was a wonderful incomprehensible name: 'Ask not my name, for it is Wonderful,' Judges xiii. 18. This is enough to satisfy sober inquiry, though not wanton curiosity, enough for faith to work upon: the great I AM hath sent me. It sheweth



his unsearchableness. It is our manner of speech when we would cover anything and not answer distinctly, we say, It is what it is; I have said what I have said. Finite understandings cannot comprehend him that is infinite, no more than you can empty the sea with a cockleshell. He is the great and only being, in comparison of whom all else is nothing: Isa. xl. 17, 'All nations before him are nothing, they are counted less than nothing and vanity.' You have not a true and full notion of God if you conceive him only as the most eminent of all beings: no being must appear as being in his sight and in comparison of him. As long as you only conceive God to be the best, you still attribute something to the creature, for all comparatives include the positive. The creature is nothing in comparison with God; all the glory, perfection, and excellency of the whole world do not amount to the value of a unit in regard of God's attributes: join never so many of them together, they cannot make up one number, they are nothing in his regard, and less than nothing. All created beings must utterly vanish out of sight when we think of God. As the sun doth not annihilate the stars, and make them nothing, yet it annihilates their appearance to our sight; some are of the first magnitude, some of the second, some of the third, but in the day-time all are alike, all are darkened by the sun's glory: so it is here; there are degrees of perfection and excellency if we compare one creature with another, but let once the glorious brightness of God shine upon the soul, and in that light all their differences are unobserved. Angels, men, worms, they are all nothing, less than nothing to be set up against God: this magnificent title, I AM, darkeneth all, as if nothing else were. God did not tell Moses that he was the best, the highest, and the most glorious, but 'I am, and there is none else besides me;' nothing that hath its being of itself, nothing that can be properly called its own. Thus the incomprehensible self-existence of God puts man into his original nothing: none but God can say, I am, because all things else are but borrowed drops of this self-sufficient fountain; other things are near to nothing. God most properly is, who never was nothing, never shall be nothing, who may always in all difference of time say, *I am*, and nothing else but God can say so. The heaven and earth six thousand years ago could not say, We are. Adam could once have said, *I am*, as to his existence in the compounded nature of man, but now he cannot say it. All the generations past were but are not, and the present is but will not be; and within a little while who of us can say, I am? No; our 'place will know us no more;' but God eternally saith, 'I am;' not, I have been, or I shall be, but 'I am.' Look a little backward, and you shall find man's beginning; step a little forward, and you shall overtake his dissolution. But God is still I am; he is one that is before all, after all, and in all. He beholdeth from the mount of eternity all the successions and changes of the creature, and there is no succession or mutation in his knowledge. Well, then, here is an answer for Pharaoh, and the Israelites, and all of you to study on, 'I am that I am.' I am the fountain of all being, that do unchangeably and eternally exist in myself, and from myself.

2. God hath described his name by his attributes. To go over all,

the compass of a sermon will not permit. I shall single out three from all the rest—his power, wisdom, and goodness; they are manifested in all that God doth.

[1.] In creation. Βασίλ, Ἐποίησεν ὡς ἀγαθὸς τὸ χρήσιμον, ὡς σοφὸς τὸ κάλλιστον, ὡς δυνατὸς τὸ μέγιστον—the goodness of God is seen in the usefulness of the creatures to man; the power of God in the stupendousness and wonderfulness of his works; his wisdom in the apt structure, constitution, and order of all things: first he createth, then distinguisheth, then adorneth. The first work was to create the heavens and earth out of nothing; there is his power: his next work is a wise destination and ordination of all things; he distinguisheth night from day, darkness from light, waters above the firmament from waters beneath the firmament, the sea from the dry land; there is his wisdom: then he decketh the earth with plants, and furnisheth it with beasts, and storeth the sea with fishes, the firmament with stars; there is his goodness. Let us examine these more particularly, beginning—

(1.) With his goodness. The creation is nothing else but an effusion of the bounty and goodness of God. He made the world, not that he might be happy, but that he might be liberal; he made the world not by necessity, but at his pleasure: Rev. iv. 11, ‘Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.’ God was happy enough without us; he had a fulness and absolute sufficiency within himself; his great aim was to raise up objects out of nothing, to whom he would communicate his goodness. The heavens and earth were made that man might have a place for his exercise, and a dwelling for his rest, and in both might love, honour, serve, and glorify his Creator. God sits in his palace among his best creatures, and thither also will he translate man at length, if he be obedient, and observe the ends of his creation: thus his goodness appeareth.

(2.) His power. He brought all things out of the womb of nothing. The powerful *fiat* was enough: Isa. xl. 26, ‘Lift up your eyes on high, who hath created these things, and bringeth out their host by number, and calleth all things by their names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power?’ The force of the cause appeareth in the effect, and God’s power in the life and being of the creature. There is no artificer but he must have matter to work upon, or else his art will fail him and he can do nothing; all that man can do is to give some shape and form, or to fashion that in some new model which had a being before: but God made all things out of nothing; the inclination and beck of his will sufficeth for his great works. We have great toil and sweat in all things that we do, but behold what a great work is done without any pain and travail! It is troublesome to us to carry up a little piece of stone or timber to any building of ours, but God stretched out all these heavens in such an infinite compass by the word of his power, and hangeth the earth upon nothing.

(3.) His wisdom. The admirableness and comely variety of God’s works doth easily offer it to our thoughts. In the frame of the work you may easily find out a wise workman: Ps. cxxxvi. 5, ‘Sing praises to him that by wisdom hath made the heaven and the earth, for his mercy endureth for ever;’ so Prov. iii. 19, ‘The Lord by wisdom hath

founded the earth, by understanding hath established the heavens : the wisdom of God appeareth in the order of making, and order of placing all the creatures. In making them, in simple things God began with those that were most perfect ; as his first creature was light, which of all qualities is the most pure and defecate, and is not stained by passing through places most impure : then all the other elements. In mixed bodies God took another method, from imperfect to perfect ; first things that have a being, as the firmament, then life, as plants, then sense, as beasts, then reason, as men : first God would provide the places of heaven and earth, then the creatures to dwell in them ; first the food, then the creatures to be sustained by it. Provision was made for the inhabitants of the earth, as grass for beasts, and light for all living and moving creatures. Plants have a growing life, beasts a feeling life. Then man was made, last of all creatures, as most excellent. Thus God would teach us to go on from good to better. Man's palace was furnished with all things necessary, and they were placed and disposed in their apt cells for the beauty and service of the whole, and then like a prince he was sent into the world to rule and reign. There are not so many animals in the earth as in the sea, to avoid the great waste of food which would be consumed by the beasts of the land to the prejudice of man. But there is no end of these considerations. Only let me tell you, power is most eminently discovered in the creation : Rom. i. 20, 'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead.' The first apprehensions which we are possessed with, and which are most obvious, are the infinite greatness and power of the Creator.

[2.] These are manifested in the whole structure of his word ; his power in the histories and prophecies, which declare what God hath and shall do ; his wisdom in the precepts and counsels, and discovery of such mysteries ; his goodness in promises, institutions, and provisional helps. More particularly in the law part of his word, his goodness ; that sheweth man what is good : Micah vi. 8, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good ;' his power, in threatening such punishments and promising such rewards, and in the wonderful efficacy of his word in the conscience ; his wisdom, in stating such a rule, that hath such an admirable fitness for the governing and regulating of mankind. But though all three shine forth in the law, and all in each part, yet his wisdom is most eminent : Deut. iv. 6, 'Keep these statutes, for this is your wisdom and understanding.' In the gospel, still these three attributes appear—the wonderful wisdom, power, and goodness of God. His wisdom in the orderly dispose of the covenant of grace : 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, 'Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure ; for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.' And contriving the excellent design and plot of salvation by Christ : 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up to glory.' His power in the incarnation, resurrection, and miracles of

Christ; therefore Christ is called 'the wisdom and power of God.' But above all his love is magnified in the gospel: Rom. v. 8, 'God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us: 1 John iv. 9, 10, 'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him: herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;' Titus iii. 4, 'But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeareth.'

## SERMON LXII.

*I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law.*—VER. 55.

[3.] THESE are discovered in daily providence. To rub up and revive our thoughts, God is pleased anew to set before us the glorious effects of his wisdom, goodness and power; his wisdom in the contexture of providence, his power in the management of it, his goodness in the effects of it. His wisdom in the beauty and order of his works, in guiding the course of nature, and disposing all things about his people. He doeth all things well: Eccles. iii. 11, 'He hath made everything beautiful in its time,' or in the true and proper season; therefore, we that look upon providence by pieces, stumble at the seeming confusion and uncertainty of what falleth out, as if the affairs of the world were not under a wise government; but stay a little while till all the pieces of providence be put together in one frame, and then you will see a marvellous wisdom in them. In the work of creation, all things were 'very good,' Gen. i. 31; so for these six thousand years, as well as for the first six days. Those things which seem confused heaps when they lie asunder, when put together will appear a beautiful structure and building. So for his goodness. What part hath God been acting in the world for so long a time but that of mercy? He may be traced more by his acts of goodness than vengeance: Acts xiv. 17, 'Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, ἀγαθοποιῶν, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with joy and gladness.' The whole world is a theatre of mercy. If at any time we wrest punishment out of his hand, it is with an aim of mercy: as he threateneth that he may not punish, so he punisheth that he may not punish for ever. For his power, that is notably discovered to us every day. If we would draw aside the covering of the creature, you might soon see the secret almighty power of God which acteth in everything that falleth out; the same everlasting arm that made the creatures is under them to support them: Heb. i. 3, 'He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.' As they started out of nothing by his command, so they are kept from returning into nothing by the same powerful word, command, and decree of God: 'Thou hidest thy face, and they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, and they die; thou sendest out thy Spirit, and they are created;

and thou renewest the face of the earth,' Ps. civ. 29, 30, 'All things hold their life of him. If God withdraweth in any measure the wonted influence of his power from them, they presently find a change in themselves. It is even with the being and faculties of the creature as with the image of the glass, which, when the face removeth, it is seen no more. The Lord doth as it were breathe into them a being, and when he taketh in his breath they perish, and when he sendeth it out again they are renewed. Now, though God doth constantly discover his wisdom, power, and goodness, yet in some providence one of these doth more especially appear; his wisdom in some notable contrivance and chain of causes, which to a common eye seemed to have no tendency to such effects as are produced by them; as when out of the sins and perverse doings of men, or the disorders and confusions of the world, he raiseth his own glory, or by some unthought-of, unheard-of means bringeth about the deliverance of his people, taking the wise in their own craftiness. Sometimes his power, when by weak and contemptible means he bringeth great things to pass, and a straw becometh a spear in the hand of the Almighty. Sometimes in his goodness, in filling us with blessings, or doing notable acts of grace for his people's sake.

[4.] These three attributes suit with God's threefold relation to us. By his almighty power he becometh our creator; as most wise, our supreme governor; as most good, our gracious benefactor. We depend upon him for our present supplies, and from him we expect our future hopes. His creation gives him a right to govern us, his wisdom a fitness, and his bounty doth encourage us voluntarily to give up ourselves to his service.

[5.] These three attributes do most bind our duty on us, as they beget in us love, fear, and faith, or esteem, reverence, and trust, which are the three radical graces that result from the very being and owning of God, and are the *cultus naturalis* enjoined in the first commandment. His wisdom as a lawgiver begets reverence and fear; his goodness is the object of love, and his power of trust. If he be most wise, there is all the reason in the world that he should rule and govern us; for who is fitter to govern and make laws than he that is most wise? If he be most good, infinitely good, there is all the reason in the world that you should love him, and no show of reason why you should love the world and sin before him. If powerful and all-sufficient, there is all the reason you should believe in him, as one that is able to make good his word, either by promise or threatening. Faith goeth upon that: Rom. iv. 21, he was 'strong in faith, being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform.' He is God all-sufficient, therefore his promises are not to be distrusted, his threatenings not to be slighted. There is no resisting or standing out against him, in the twinkling of an eye he can tear you in pieces, pluck away the guilty soul from the embraces of the unwilling body. A spark of his wrath makes thee a burthen to thyself. So for promises; one word of his mouth can accomplish all the good that is contained in them. And it is observable that the respects of the creature, that are peculiarly due to one of these attributes, are sometimes in scripture directed to another. It is said, Hosea iii. 5, 'They shall fear the Lord and his

goodness in the latter days ;' and love him for his power and greatness, and believe in him for his wisdom. Again, they trust him for his goodness, love him for his wisdom, fear him for his power ; all these changes are in scripture.

Secondly, Why God is best remembered when his name is studied ? The reason is, because the study of his name doth increase those three fundamental radical graces before mentioned.

1. The studying of his name increaseth our love : ' Thy name is as an ointment poured forth, therefore the virgins love thee,' Cant. i. 3. Ointment kept close in the box doth not diffuse its savour, but ointment poured forth is full of fragraney and reviving, it perfumeth the whole house : John xii. 3, ' The house was filled with the odour of the ointment.' So when the name of God is not considered, we are not comforted and strengthened and quickened ; but pour it forth, take it abroad in your serious thoughts and believing meditations, and that doth attract and draw hearts to him. When we consider the mercy, grace, power, wisdom, truth, and justice of God, these affect all those that have any spiritual discerning. This is the way to draw esteem from carnal hearts ; he hath authority to make laws, for he is the wise God ; power to back this authority, for he is the almighty Creator, who can frown thee into nothing ; but yet he is good and gracious, ready to receive you, and pardon, and do you good, though you have rebelled against him. To pour out this name is our duty, and then poor creatures will be prevailed with : it is our duty to do it in the discoveries of the gospel, your duty to ponder upon it in your private meditations. The wisdom of God in the word sheweth your duty, his power what need you have to bind it on your hearts ; and your case is not without hope, for you have to do with a good God : there is no mercy to such as fear not his powerful justice, and no justice for such as flee from it to his mercy. See how God poureth out his name : Exod. xxxiv. 5-7, ' And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord ; and the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation.'

2. The studying of God's name increaseth our faith and trust : Ps. ix. 10, ' They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.' God is first known, and then trusted, and then served. If God were known more he would be more trusted, and if he were more trusted we would not be so double-minded and unstable in the profession and practice of godliness. We little study God, and because we study his name so little, our faith is weak, and therefore we are so uncertain in our conversations. It is well when all our comfort and duty is immediately fetched out of the name of God, or his nature considered by us.

3. The studying of God's name increaseth our reverence and fear : Ps. exi. 9, ' Holy and reverend is thy name ;' Ps. lxxxvi. 11, ' Unite my heart to the fear of thy name.' The more you study the nature of God, the more awe-ful, serious, humble, watchful will you grow. Thus

you see serious and becoming thoughts of God do much increase our faith, fear, and love.

*Use.* The use is to exhort you more—

1. To study the name of God, and to dwell upon the meditations of the Almighty, and to possess your mind with him till no place be left for sin or vanity.

[1.] The name of his being. God is not only the best of beings, but properly that which is ; because he is a self-being, that gave being to all things else, and from everlasting to everlasting. We are but as it were of yesterday, and our being is from him, and our life in his hands ; we cannot live an hour without him, nor fetch a breath without him, nor think a thought, nor speak a word, nor stir a hand or foot without him. There is a continual providential influence and supportation : as the beams of the sun vanish as soon as the sun is clouded, so do we fail when God suspends his influence. A watch goeth of itself, a mill of itself when the workman taketh off his hand from them : it is not so with us and God ; for, Acts xvii. 28, ‘In him we live, move, and have our being.’ What Paul said of spiritual life, Gal. ii. 20, is true also of life natural, ‘I am, yet not I, but God is all in all.’ He is in us, and liveth in us, or we could not subsist for a moment. We need not seek God without in the workmanship of heaven and earth, for we have God within ourselves, and may feel him and find him in our own life and motion ; as the child in the womb liveth by the life of the mother, before it is quickened and liveth apart by a life and soul of its own ; or as a pipe sounds by the blowing of the musician ; if he stop his breath it is altogether silent ; so we live and breathe in God, and all the tuneable variety of our motions cometh from his breathing in us. Now, if God be so near us, shall we not take notice of his presence, and carry ourselves accordingly ? Shall we offend him and affront him to his face, and displease him without whom we cannot live ? But alas ! how seldom do we reflect upon this ! How is it that we move and think not with wonder of the first mover in whom we move ? How is it that we live and persevere in being, and do not consider of this fountain and self-being who gave our life to us, and still continues it ? Oh, the negligence of many souls professing the knowledge of God and godliness ! We speak, walk, eat, and drink, and go about all our business, as if we had a self-being and independent, never thinking of that all-present and quickening Spirit that acts us, moveth in us, speaketh in us, maketh us to walk, eat, drink, and do all the functions of nature ; like the barbarous people who see, hear, speak, and reason, and never once reflect upon the principle of all these—a soul within.

[2.] Let us think often of the name of God, his attributes.

(1.) Of his wisdom, that we may compose ourselves to worship, adore him, serve him according to his will and pleasure, and may admire him in the justice and equity of his laws, and the excellent contrivance of his providence, that so we may submit to the directions of the one and the determinations of the other. To the directions of his word : Can we count God to be a wise God, and refuse his counsel ? Doth not our practice give our profession the lie when we rather walk after our hearts’ counsels, and the examples and fashions of the world, than observe the course God hath prescribed to us in the word ? Who, then,

is thought wise—God or men? So for submission to the determination of his providence. The flesh would fain be pleased, and therefore quarrelleth many times at God's dispensations as harsh and severe; but in good earnest who is wiser—God or men? Do we think we are fitter to sit at the helm, and govern and steer all affairs, than the wise Creator of heaven and earth? Shall we sit as judges upon his actions, and think that might have been prevented, this might have been better ordered, either for God's interest or our own comfort? Men will be teaching God how to govern the world; for we prescribe to him as if he did not understand what were fit for us: he pleaseth us not in his wisest dispensations, and we bear it out as if we could mend his works: Job xxi. 22, 'Shall any teach God knowledge?' Those that disallow of God's proceedings take upon them to be God's teachers. It was a blasphemous speech of Alphonsus, *Si Deo a consiliis adfuisset in creatione mundi, multa se consultius ordinaturum*—if he had been of God's counsel when he made the world, he would have ordered many things better. Many abhor such a gross speech, yet think almost to the same effect. If they had the governing of the world, such men should not prosper; such and such things should not be done.

(2.) The name of his power. Oh! think often of that almighty power that maketh and conserveth all things, that giveth a being to you and every creature, and will do so to his promises, though never so unlikely; for what cannot he do that bringeth all things out of nothing by his word? Therefore our confidence in him should be more strong and steadfast; for why should we have any jealousies and distrusts of him who is omnipotent? In your greatest wants he is all-sufficient, and can supply you: Gen. xvii. 1, 'I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' In your greatest dangers he can deliver you: Dan. iii. 17, 'Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.' In your lowest estate he is able to raise you up: Rom. xi. 23, 'And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again.' Whatever difficulties oppose themselves against the thing promised, he can remove them, for nothing is too hard for the Almighty: Phil. iii. 21, 'He is able to subdue all things to himself.' How weak and despicable soever the visible means be, God can work by them: 2 Chron. xiv. 11, 'It is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or them that have no power.' All is alike to omnipotency. Instruments or means may be too great for God's honour to be used, never too small or weak for him to work by.

(3.) The name of his goodness. God is infinitely good, effectually good, independently good, and all-sufficiently good. If good be amiable in our eyes, so should God be. He hath all that is lovely in the creatures in a more eminent degree, and therefore our affections, that are scattered to them, should be united in God. He is the supreme good, and the fountain of all goodness. Oh! how should we love this God, and that above all things in the world, or else we do not love him aright. This is that which draweth in your hearts to him, and upon this should your thoughts dwell. He showed his goodness to you in creation, when he made you a little lower than the angels; but much more in redemption, when he preferred you above the angels;



for 'he did not take hold of angels, but took hold of the seed of Abraham.' What should you be doing but admiring of this, and showing forth the virtue and force of this love? 'God is love, and dwelleth in love,' 1 John iv. 16. Oh! shall the paltry things of this world draw off your love from God, who is goodness itself? Let this prevail with you to lay down all your doating upon the creature, that you may no more follow the shadow, but cleave to the substance. We owe all that we are, all that we have, all that we hope for, to his goodness; and therefore let us consecrate and dedicate ourselves to his service and glory.

2. To study it so as some good may come of it. We should keep our thoughts on this holy subject—

[1.] Till we admire God. The degree of the saints' knowledge here below is only to proceed to admiration: Ps. viii. 1, 'O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!' When we have studied God, silence will be the best eloquence, and admiration advance him more than speech. Admire the name of his being. Creatures in their highest glory may be described, an account may be given of them; but his nature is Wonderful, can be admired, but not told. Admire his wisdom: Ps. civ. 24, 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.' Admire his love: Oh, how excellent is thy loving-kindness! Ps. xxxvi. 7; 'Oh, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!' Ps. xxxi. 19. The name of his power: Ps. cxlv. 3, 'Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.' The object is too big for the faculty: it is a contempt of God when we think of him and do not admire him. Oh, the riches of his wisdom, height of his power, breadth of his love!

[2.] Till we make some practical improvement of him; otherwise to know God is but a vain speculation, a work of curiosity rather than of profit. By the sight of God the heart must be—

(1.) Drawn off from the creature, self, and sin.

(2.) Drawn unto God.

(1.) Drawn off—

(1st.) From the creature. That is a true sight of God which abaseth all things beside God, not only in opinion but affection; that attracteth and uniteth the soul to God, and draweth it off from all created excellences. The sight of God's purity darkens the purity of the angels, and staineth the pride of all created glory: Job iv. 18, 'Behold, he put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly.' So that is a true sight of God's excellency that draweth off the heart from the vain, changeable, and empty shadow of the creature; and God is not truly amiable to us till this effect be in some measure wrought in us: 1 John ii. 15, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' So that our love to God will be known by the decay of our love to earthly things.

(2d.) From self. A sight of God will best discover thyself unto thyself, that in the light of God's glorious majesty thou mayest distinctly behold thine own vileness and misery. Esaias, when he saw God in vision: Isa. vi. 5, 'Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone,

because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, and mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts.' That is the use he made of this glorious sight: he knew, doubtless, something of this before, but now is affected as if he had never seen it. The glory of God shining on him doth not lift him up in arrogancy and conceit of the knowledge of such profound mysteries, but he is more abased in himself; this light made him see his own uncleanness. So Job xlii. 5, 6, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; therefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes.' As long as it was hearsay, Job thought himself something, and might reflect upon himself and actions with a kind of complacency and delight; but now he could not look upon himself with any patience. Self-love maketh us loathe other men's sins more than our own, and hindereth us from representing ourselves to ourselves in a true shape. It is the mere speculative knowledge of God, and science falsely so called that puffeth up; but a true knowledge of God breedeth self-loathing.

(3d.) From sin: it draweth off the heart. This remembrance will represent filthiness as filthiness without a covering. Sin is a deformity to God, as contrariety to his laws, the purity and goodness of his essence, and wisdom of his laws; yea, an act of rebellion and disloyalty against his sovereignty. Sin still is heightened by the consideration of God and a reflection upon his nature; as against his authority, purity, goodness, so there is unkindness, disobedience, and a blot in it. Well may the apostle say, 3 John 11, 'He that doth evil hath not seen God.'

(2.) The heart must be drawn unto God by love, fear, and trust; for unless we meditate upon God to this end, 'Though we know God, we do not glorify him as God,' Rom. i. 21, till your hearts be moved and inclined to love, fear him, and obey him. His being calls for it, that we should seek after communion with God, who is such a self-sufficient, all-sufficient, and eternal being. Whom would we own, or whose favour would we seek? The favour of poor creatures, who are now one thing, now another? or the favour of God, who can still say, I am that I am! what I was I am, and I will be what I am? Friends are changeable, their affections dry up, and they themselves die, and their favour and all their thoughts of doing us good perish. There is no end of his duration or affection. His attributes call for love; his power rendereth him the most desirable friend and dreadful adversary. What more dreadful than power that cannot be resisted, wisdom that none can be hid from? and what more lovely than his love? Surely if we did study his name, his promises, and threatenings, it would have more power with us: how would we seek to him, and submit to his blessed will, and depend on him, as those that have nothing in ourselves, nor anything else in the world had being without him! We would then believe all opposite powers to be nothing, and wink at either the dreadfulness or loveliness of the creature, while the eye of our souls is wholly taken up with the sight of God; our desires would be to him, and our delights in him, and being deadened to the creature, would wholly cleave to him.

*Doct. 3.* Those that have spiritual affections will take all occasions to remember God's name. In adversity, for their comfort: Isa. xxvi.

8, 9, 'Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee : the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee : with my soul have I desired thee in the night ; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early ;' Isa. l. 10, 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light ? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.' In prosperity, for a regulation and restraint to their affections, that they might not too freely run out on the creature to the wrong of God. It is said of the wicked, Ps. lv. 19, 'Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God ;' but God's children remember him in their comforts : Deut. viii. 10, 11, 'When thou hast eaten and art full, thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee ; beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God ;' so ver. 18, 'Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for he it is that giveth thee power to get wealth.' In company they will be speaking of God : Eph. v. 4, *ἀλλὰ εὐχαριστία*, but rather giving of thanks.' Alone they will be thinking of God ; so that when they are alone, they are not alone ; God is with them in their solitude : John xvi. 32, 'Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every one to his own, and shall leave me alone ; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.' By day they redeem time, God's statutes are their songs ; by night when they cannot sleep : 'When I awake I am still with thee,' Ps. cxxxix. 18. Oh, what an advantage it is to have the heart thus thronged with thoughts of God in the night ! When others sleep, good men are awake with God.

1. Observe this, that which David speaketh of himself was a secret duty. Those duties which we perform in secret, and wherein we avoid the applause of men, are most sincere, and by them many times we obtain most blessing : Mat. vi. 6, 'Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.' David was the same in secret that he was in the light. Other witnesses of our respect to God we need not than God himself : it is enough that he seeth us and approveth us. Our desire and scope should be to please him, not to appear devout to men, or to be esteemed as such by them. Therefore, besides public ordinances, we should give ourselves to spiritual exercises in secret.

2. This was a spiritual duty transacted in the heart by his thoughts. The darkness of the night doth not hinder the delight of the soul ; it is day within though night without. When a child of God shall see God, and be seen of him, though the sun shineth not upon the world, it is enough, their hearts are enlightened with God's Spirit.

3. It was a duty done *ἄκαιρος*, unseasonably to a vulgar eye. When others were buried in sleep, David would awaken sometimes to remember God. It is their solace ; and spiritual affections and heroic grace must not be limited to the ordinary dull way of expressing duty to God. They have special affections and special dispensations : Ps. lxxiii. 6, 'My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when I remember thee on my bed, and meditate of thee in the night-watches.'

4. It is not unseasonable. In the night, without distraction, we can more freely command our thoughts, for the senses being exercised,

scatter the mind to several objects: Job xxxv. 10, 'None saith, Where is God, my maker, who giveth songs in the night?' That is matter of rejoicing and comfort to poor oppressed creatures. So Ps. xlii. 8, 'I will sing of his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me.' Day and night he was filled with a sense of God's love. The reasons are—

[1.] They are fitted for it, having knowledge and a deep impression of the majesty of God upon their hearts: 'My reins instruct me in the night-season,' Ps. xvi. 7. These things that make a deep impression in the day, the thoughts will return upon in the night; now God and his words are impressed upon them.

[2.] They delight in it: Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.' They delight themselves in beholding the face of God, though not by immediate vision, yet by meditation. They are so affected with thoughts of his excellency, goodness, kindness, that it is their solace to draw their hearts off from all things and persons in the world to that divine object.

[3.] They profit by it. (1.) As to comfort, it easeth us of many sorrowful, troublesome, and weary thoughts. We must fetch our comforts from God; the divine nature is the first fountain of them, therefore called 'the God of all comfort,' 2 Cor. i. 3. (2.) As to duty and obedience. The reasons of our duty and subjection are most enforced from the nature of God: therefore the more we remember the nature of God, the more we are quickened to obedience: there we see his infinite power, supreme authority, exact holiness, tender love: 'Let the potsherd of the earth contend with one another,' Isa. xlv. 9. Our business is to keep God our friend. He hath two properties that make him most comfortable or most terrible, according as he is at peace or war with us—eternity and omnipotency.

*Use.* Let us take more occasions to think of God, and that with admiration. Many take no more notice of him than if he were not at all; but let us take all occasions: Ps. iv. 4, 'Commune with your own hearts upon your bed.' All the time we can spare from our necessary, civil, and natural actions should be employed in calling to mind what we have seen, or heard, or felt of God. A loathness and backwardness to this duty is an ill sign.

### SERMON LXIII.

*This I had, because I kept thy precepts.—VER. 56.*

IN this psalm the dependence of the verses is neither to be neglected, nor too curiously sought after. Many of the sentences have no other connection than pearls upon the same string, though some are as links in the same chain, fastened one to the other by an apt method and order. The design of the penman was to cast all his experiences into the order of the Hebrew alphabet; and as there are in the Hebrew twenty-two letters, so twenty-two parts or octonaries. Each octonary beginneth with the same letter. This sentence which I have read

seemeth to be independent of the preceding verse, and is the sudden effusion or eruption of a gracious heart engaged in the meditation of the fruit of obedience: 'This I had, because I kept thy precepts.' In the words you have—

1. David's assertion of his integrity, *I have kept thy precepts.*

2. The gain of this course indefinitely proposed, *this I had.*

3. The link between both in the causal particle, *because.* David doth not here tell you what he had, but this and that: this hope, this comfort, this quickening, this deliverance; all this I had; that is, whatever is good and comfortable. The feminine pronoun *Zeth* is put neuturally, the Hebrew wanting the neuter gender.

The points are two :—

First, He that continueth faithful in a course of obedience will find at length that it will turn to a good account.

Secondly, That it is of great use to observe what good cometh to us by keeping close to God's ways.

For the first point, he that continueth faithful in a course of obedience will find at length that it will turn to a good account. Here three things are to be explained :—

1. What it is to keep God's precepts.

2. What is the good that accrueeth to us thereby.

3. The connection between both these, or the reasons and grounds upon which we may expect this good.

1. Let us inquire what it is to keep God's precepts. The phrase is often used in scripture, implying a diligent observance of it, and obedience thereunto. The term *keep* relateth to a charge or trust committed to us. Look, as on our part we charge Christ with our souls—2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know that he is able to keep that I have committed to him'—so Christ chargeth us with his word, that we may be chary and tender of it. We charge him with our souls, that he may sanctify and save them in his own day; so he chargeth us with his precepts, that we may lay them up in our hearts, and observe them in our practice. As we would have Christ to be faithful to his trust, so should we be in ours, and that even to a tittle: James ii. 10, 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in point, he is guilty of all.' Now, there is a twofold keeping of God's precepts—legal and evangelical.

[1.] The legal keeping, that is when we keep and perform the commandments so exactly as is answerable to the rigour of the law. What is that? The law requires perfect and absolute obedience, without the least failing in any one point: Gal. iii. 10, 'Cursed is he that continueth not in all things that is written in the book of the law to do them.' The least offence, according to that covenant, layeth us open to the curse; as for one sin once committed the angels were turned out of heaven, and Adam out of paradise. In this sense there is no hope for us.

[2.] There is an evangelical keeping God's precepts, and that is filial and sincere obedience; and so they are said to keep God's precepts,—not they who have no sin in them, but they who study to be free from sin, and desire to please God in all things. David had many failings, and some of them of a high nature; yet he saith, *I have kept thy precepts.* His purpose and endeavour was to please God in all

things. The apostles had many failings; they were weak in faith, passionate, full of revenge, calling for fire from heaven; a great many failings we may find upon record against them; yet Christ returneth this general acknowledgment: John xvii. 6, 'They have kept thy word.' God accepteth of our endeavours; when our defects are repented of, he pardoneth them: James v. 11, 'You have heard of the patience of Job;' and we have heard of his impatience too, his cursing the day of his birth, and his bold expostulation with God; but God putteth his finger upon the scar, and mentions that which is commendable. This sincere obedience is known by our endeavours after perfection, and our repentance for defects. For let me tell you here, that perfect obedience is required under the gospel: the rule is as strict as ever it was, but the covenant is not so strict. The rule is as strict as ever it was; we are still bound to perpetual, personal, and perfect obedience, otherwise our defects were no sins: 'For where there is no law, there is no transgression,' Rom. iv. 15. But the covenant is not so strict. This perfect obedience is not so indispensably required under the sanction and penalty of the old covenant; for the gospel, though it alloweth or approveth of no sin, yet it granteth a pardon of course to some sins as they are retracted by a general repentance. As sins of infirmity, such as are sins of ignorance, which had we known we would not have committed; and sins of incogitancy and sudden surreption, which may escape without observation of them; and sins of violent temptation, which by reason of some sudden assault sway our passions against the right rule; such sins as do not arise out of an evil purpose of the mind, but out of human frailty; they are consistent with an interest in this covenant, which alloweth a means of recovery by repentance, which the law doth not. The law for one offence once committed doth condemn a man without leaving him any way or means of recovery; but the gospel saith, 'I came to call sinners to repentance,' Mat. ix. 13. It accepteth repentance, and doth not cast men off for sins of infirmity. Where there is a general purpose to please God, and a hearty sorrow when we offend him, this is the sincerity which the gospel accepteth of. In the law, complete innocence is required; in the gospel, repentance is allowed: and so he is said to keep God's statutes that doth not voluntarily and impenitently go on in a course of known sin.

2. Let me now show the good that cometh to us thereby. David saith indefinitely, 'This I had;' not telling us what good or privilege it was, only in the general it was some benefit that accrued to him in this life. He doth not say, 'This I hope for, but, This I had.' And therefore I shall not speak of the full reward in the life to come. In heaven we come to receive the full reward of obedience. But a close walker, that waiteth upon God in a humble and constant obedience, shall have sufficient encouragement even in this life. Not only he shall be blessed, but he is blessed; he hath something in hand as well as in hope. As David saith in this 119th Psalm, not only he *shall be* blessed, but he *is* blessed. As they that travelled towards Zion, they met with a well by the way: Ps. lxxxiv. 6, 'Who passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well: the rain also filleth the pools.' In a dry and barren wilderness through which they were to pass, they were

not left wholly comfortless, but met with a well or cistern; that is, they had some comfort vouchsafed to them before they came to enjoy God's presence in Zion, some refreshments they had by the way. As servants, that beside their wages have their vails, so, besides the recompense of reward hereafter, we have our present comforts and supports during our course of service, which are enough to counter-balance all worldly joys, and the greatest pleasures that men can expect in a way of sin. Let me instance in the benefits that believers find by walking with God in a course of obedience, that every one can say, 'This I had, because I kept thy precepts.'

[1.] Peace of conscience, a blessing not to be valued; and this we have because we keep his precepts: Isa. xxxii. 17, 'The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.' They shall be free from those unquiet thoughts wherewith others are haunted. A wicked man's soul is in a mutiny, one affection warreth against another, and all against the conscience, and conscience against all; but in a heart framed to the obedience of God's will there is peace. *Pax est tranquillitas ordinis*—when everything keeps its place there is peace; when the elements keep their place, and the confederacies of nature are preserved, then there is peace: so when a man walketh in a holy course there is peace; when the thoughts and affections are under rule and government, there is a serenity and quiet in the soul. Now, this is never brought to pass in the soul but by obedience and holy walking according to the rule of the new creature: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy shall be upon them, as upon the whole Israel of God.' Such an accurate and orderly life is the only way of obtaining this peace and harmonious accord in the soul. So Ps. cxix. 165, 'Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them;' not only peace, but great peace—a peace that passeth all understanding, a peace better felt than expressed; and this resulteth from obedience, or the government of our hearts and ways according to the will of God. Look, as cheerfulness and liveliness accompanieth perfect health, or the tunable motion of the spirits in the body, so this serenity and quiet in the soul, the regular and orderly motion of our faculties; there is a sweet contentment of mind resulting from it. 'The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.' In a troublesome world we need to have our hearts and minds kept and guarded from assaults of temptations, and diffident vexing cares and fears; and therefore it is mightily necessary in those times to get the peace of God, without which the soul is upon the rack. Oh, this sweet peace and calm that is in our hearts in the midst of all tempests and tossings from without! A man is provided and fortified against the apprehension of injuries, troubles, dangers, and those heart-cutting cares which otherwise are apt to seize upon us. This a believer can say, This peace of conscience I had in the midst of all the troubles from without. Now this peace others cannot have: Isa. lvii. 21, 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;' they have not this inward tranquillity and serenity of mind; their affections are so unruly, and their consciences so unquiet, they are never able to rest.

But how can this be? None seem to be less troubled than wicked

men. I answer—There is a difference between a dead sea and a calm sea; a stupid conscience they may have, but not a quiet conscience: their consciences are stupefied by drenching their souls in worldly delights and pleasures; but the virtue of this opium is soon spent, their consciences are easily awakened by the convictions of the word, the sting of afflictions, the agonies of death. Well, then, this may the composed heart say, I had this peace, this serenity of mind, because I kept thy precepts.

[2.] Next to peace of conscience there is joy in the Holy Ghost; this is the fruit of peace, as peace is the fruit of righteousness: Rom. xiv. 17, 'The kingdom of God consisteth not in meat and drink, but in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' First righteousness, and then peace, and then joy in the Holy Ghost. As joy of heart and gladness is the fruit of temporal or civil peace, when every man may sit under his own vine and his own fig-tree, and reap the fruit of his labour without the danger of annoyance; so now, when a man can enjoy himself as being reconciled to God, or being at peace with him, and hath tasted of the clusters of Canaan, he can 'rejoice in hope of the glory of God,' Rom. v. 11. This is that joy in the Holy Ghost which God doth graciously dispense to those that obey his word and hearken to the motions of his Spirit. Oh! how may a believer triumph and say, 'This I had because I kept thy precepts!' Joy is the fruit of holiness, and the oil of grace maketh way for the oil of gladness: Ps. cxix, 14, 'I rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies more than in all riches.' David experienced the joys of obedience, and the joys of a crown: now saith David, 'I rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies more than in all riches;' not in the contemplation, but in the way. This was a joy that did result from practical obedience, which is more than the possessions and treasures of the world. Many picture religion in their fancies with a sour and austere face, and think it inviteth men to nothing but harsh and unpleasant courses. Oh, no! It inviteth you to the highest contentment the creature is capable of, the joy in the Holy Ghost, which is 'unspeakable and glorious.' A sensualist, that runs after the dreggy delights of the flesh, is the veriest fool in the world; for he can never have any true joy, it is but frisks of mirth (while conscience is asleep), but when it is gone, it leaveth a sting behind it.

[3.] Increase of grace. This is another benefit we get by keeping God's precepts: 'They go from strength to strength,' Ps. lxxxiv. 7; as they that went to the feast at Jerusalem; they went from troop to troop; so they are brought forward in their way to heaven. God, that punisheth sin with sin, rewardeth also grace with grace. The one is the most dreadful dispensation that God can use. When men have gone on in a course of sin, God often punisheth one sin with another, so that they are plunged deeper and deeper every day in the gulf of profaneness. But it is most comfortable when godliness increaseth upon our hands, and God is still perfecting his own work in us: Rom. vi. 19, 'As you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity, so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.' It standeth us upon to observe the growth of grace, as we were formerly conscious of the growth of sin. Shall



we be more earnest to damn ourselves than to save ourselves? There is no man but in his carnal estate might observe how he departed from God by degrees, and his heart was hardened by degrees. At first he had some light and conscience, till he sinned it away and turned his back upon the ordinances, which might revive it and keep it awake; and then his sin betrayed him further and further into a customary course of profaneness. I say, a carnal man may trace the growth of sin in his own heart step by step, and say, 'This I had because I slighted such a check of conscience, despised such an ordinance, fell into such an enormous practice;' for God forsaketh none till they first forsake him. So may a child of God trace his gradual increase in holiness: this I had by hearkening to the counsel of God at such a time against the reluctance of my flesh. There is no duty recovered out of the hands of difficulty but bringeth in a considerable profit to the soul: Prov. iv. 18, 'The way of the just is a shining light, which shineth more and more to the perfect day.' Look, as the day decreaseth the night increaseth, till it cometh to thick darkness; so by every sin men grow worse and worse, till at last they stumble into utter darkness. But the way of the just is a growing light; it increaseth always into more durable resolutions and exact practice of godliness, till it come to the high noon of perfection. David taketh notice of the fruit of obedience: Ps. xviii. 24, 'The Lord accept of me according to the cleanness of my hands.'

[4.] Another benefit that we have is many gracious experiences and manifestations of God vouchsafed to us in the way of obedience. In the present world God and believers are not strange to one another; a man that walketh close with him will meet him at every turn: Ps. xvii. 15, 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness.' The Psalmist there preferreth his present condition before the greatest happiness of carnal men. Why? Because he had opportunity of beholding the face of God, or enjoying the comforts of his presence. But how? In righteousness, in a strict course of obedience. If God be a stranger to others, they may thank themselves: John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me is loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him.' Holiness is the only way to clear up our right to these great comforts of the gospel; and if you would get experience of them, make conscience of obedience, and be exact and punctual with God, and you will not want your refreshments and visits of love, and expressions of his grace and favour to you: those sensible proofs and manifestations God will not give to us but in a way of obedience; so the promise runneth, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, to him will I manifest myself;' so ver. 23, 'If a man love me, and keep my commandments, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and take up our abode with him.' These are taken into sweet fellowship and communion with God, and the blessed Trinity will take up their abode in his heart. But pray, mark, Christ, that is so tender and willing to communicate the influences of his grace, yet standeth upon his sovereignty, and therefore still insisteth upon keeping his precepts, if they would partake of his comforts.

[5.] Protection in their work. They are under the special care and conduct of his providence while they keep his precepts: 'He keepeth them as in a pavilion; thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of men,' Ps. xxxi. 20. And who are they that are kept? 'Those that fear him and trust in him,' ver. 19. Pray, mark, when they had no visible defence, when they seemed to be left open as a prey to the oppressions and injuries of their potent adversaries, yet there is a secret guard about them, and they are kept, the world knoweth not how: God's favour and providence is their sure guard and defence. Whatever contentious and proud men design and threaten against them, yet they never have their full will upon them. Many a child of God hath ridden out the storm, and may come and say, 'This I had, because I kept thy precepts.' This it is to keep close to God and hold fast our integrity. Elsewhere the Lord expresseth himself to be 'a wall of fire round about his people,' Zech. ii. 5, which should affright at a distance, and consume near at hand. In those countries, when they lay in the fields, they made fires about them to keep off the wild beasts; so God, when he seeth it fit to excuse his people from trouble, he can in the most unsafe times, and when they are weakest, protect them by his secret hand, bridling their enemies, and making their attempts ineffectual. Satan is sensible of this privy guard: Job i. 10, 'Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?' The world seeth not this invisible guard, but the devil seeth it. There is no gap open for mischief to enter and break in upon them. This can God do when he pleaseth; and a man that holdeth fast his integrity, and goeth on in his duty, referring himself to God's keeping, shall have experience of it, and when the danger is over, say, 'This I had, because I kept thy precepts.'

[6.] In public and common judgments God maketh a difference; and some of his choice ones are marked out for preservation, and are as brands plucked out of the burning, whilst others are consumed therein. This is done oftentimes, I cannot say always. The Jews have a proverb that two dry sticks may set a green one on fire: a good man may perish in the common judgment, that is the meaning of the proverb. And sometimes their condition may be worst; as Jeremiah: the whole city was besieged, and he in the dungeon. Chaff and corn is threshed in the same floor, but the corn is ground and baked. But this is the best way we can take to be hid in the common calamity, though there be not an absolute certainty; for the comfort is but propounded with a possibility: Zeph. ii. 3, 'Seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.' Though God hath a peculiar eye to the godly, yet their temporal safety is not put out of all doubt; it may be, or it may not be; but their eternal comforts are sure and safe. Yet strict and humble walking is the only way; and in some cases God sheweth that there shall be a distinction between his people and others, and when others are overwhelmed, they shall be preserved; as Eccles. viii. 12, 'Surely I know it shall be well with them that fear the Lord, which fear before him; but it shall be ill with the wicked;' and Isa. iii. 10, 'Say unto the righteous it shall be well with him, for they shall eat of the fruit of their doings; but

say unto the wicked it shall be ill with them, for the work of his hands shall be given to him ;' and Jer. xv. 11, ' Verily it shall be well with this remnant : I will cause the enemy to treat them well in the day of evil and affliction.' All these places speak of delivering them from trouble, or moderating the trouble to them. If there be an uncertainty in the thing, yet a probability ; but whenever it is done, it is a singular favour, and we must own it as the fruit of obedience : ' This I had, because I kept thy precepts.' We must expect the temporal reward of godliness with much submission, and venture upon his providence.

[7.] So much of sanctified prosperity as shall be good for them : Mat. vi. 33, ' First seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and these things shall be added.' God will cast them into the bargain ; and though he may keep them low and bare, yet ' no good thing will he withhold,' Ps. lxxxiv. 11. So that a child of God surveying all his comforts may say, ' This and that and the other mercy I had from the Lord's grace ; these comforts and these deliverances came in 'because I kept thy precepts.'

3. The next thing is to show you what connection there is between these two, obedience and this good, or the reason of the Lord's dealing thus.

[1.] God doth it partly out of his general justice, as he is governor of the world : his holy nature doth delight in holiness, and therefore it is requisite, *ut bonis bene sit, et malis male*—that it should be well with them that do well, and evil with them that do evil, and such dealing a man should have from God as he dealeth out to God : Ps. xviii. 25, 26, ' With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the upright thou wilt show thyself upright, and with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.' In the general, that it should be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked ; there is an argument in the governing justice of God : but then, to come to particulars, that it should be so ill with the wicked, here is *exacta ratio justi* ; but that it should be so well with men imperfectly righteous, this is moderate justice mixed with undeserved mercy.

[2.] There is his gracious promise and covenant ; heaven and earth are laid at the feet of godliness : 1 Tim. iv. 8, ' Godliness hath the promise of this life and that which is to come.' Something during our service in this world.

The second point is, that it is of no small benefit to see and observe what good we have by obedience to God.

1. It will increase our esteem of his grace. That the little and slender obedience that we yield to his law should have such respect and acceptance with him as to be recompensed with so much peace, and comfort, and protection, and so many blessings : ' Lord, what am I, and what is my father's house ?' Oh, what a good master have we ! When the saints are crowned, they cast their crowns at the Lamb's feet, Rev. iv. 10. We hold all by his mercy : Luke xvii. 10, ' When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants ;' not in compliment, but in truth of heart, we are unprofitable servants. That God should respect us, it is not for the dignity of the work, but merely for his own grace.

2. It is of use that we may justify God against the reproaches and prejudices of carnal men, who think God is indifferent to good and evil, and that all things come alike to all, that it is in vain to be strict and precise, that there is no reward to the good: Mal. iii. 14, 'It is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?' Yea, the temptation may befall God's own children, and be forcibly borne in upon their hearts: Ps. lxxiii. 13, 'Verily I have cleansed my hands in vain.' We think all is lost labour. Now, to produce the sweet consolations of God, and his temporal supplies, and the manifold blessings bestowed upon us, it is a good stay to our hearts, and enables us to justify God against the scorns and reproaches of the world.

3. It is of use to check our murmurings. If we endure anything for God, we are apt to repine, and pitch upon that evil we receive from his hand, passing over the good. A little evil, like one humour out of order, or one member out of joint, disturbeth the whole body; so we, by poring upon the evil we endure, pass over all his other bounty: Mal. i. 2, 'Wherein hast thou loved us?' God cannot endure to have his love suspected or undervalued; and yet people are apt to do so when dispensations are anything cross to their desires and expectations. But now it is a great check, to consider that if we have our troubles, we have also our consolations; and we should rather look upon the good that cometh to us in pleasing God, than the temporal and light afflictions we meet withal in his service: Job ii. 10, 'Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and not evil?'

4. It is an encouragement to us in well-doing, the more proofs and tokens we have of his supportation. We are wrought upon by the senses; as Jer. ii. 19, 'Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings reprove thee: see what an evil and bitter thing it is to forsake the Lord;' and ver. 23, 'See thy way in the valley, and know what thou hast done.' As parents, when their children smart for eating raw diet, they upbraid them with it: It is for eating your green fruit; so doth the Lord come to his people: Now you see the evil of your doings. So, on the contrary, it doth engage us to strict walking to see how God owneth it; so doth God appeal to us by experience: 'Have I been a land of darkness to you, or a barren wilderness?' Jer. ii. 31; Micah ii. 7, 'Do not my words do good to them that walk uprightly?' Look about you, survey all your comforts; did sin procure these mercies, or godliness? Have you not found sensible benefit by being sincere in my service?

*Object.* But is this safe, to ascribe the comfort and blessings that we have to our own obedience? Is it not expressly forbidden, Deut. ix. 4, 'Say not in thy heart, For my righteousness hath the Lord brought me to possess the land?'

*Ans.* 1. David doth not boast of his merits, but observeth God's mercy and faithfulness in the fruits of obedience. There is his mercy in appointing a reward for such slender services: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them.' All the comfort we have is from mercy; yea, undeserved mercy. Those that walk according to this rule stand in need of mercy. Their peace and comfort floweth from mercy; they need mercy to cover the failings they are conscious to in their walkings. And then consider

his truth and faithfulness. The reward of well-doing cometh not by the worthiness of the work, but by virtue of God's promise: 'His word doth good to them that walk uprightly,' Micah ii. 7. God hath made himself a debtor by his promise, and oweth us no thanks for what we can do; it is only his gracious promise.

*Ans.* 2. David speaketh not this to vaunt it above other men, but to commend obedience, and to encourage himself and invite others by remembering the fruits of it. There is a great deal of difference between carnal boasting and gracious observation. Carnal boasting is when we vaunt of our personal worth; gracious observation is when, for God's glory and our profit, we observe the fruits of obedience, and the benefits it bringeth along with it. That God never gave us cause to leave, but to commend his service, and, by what we have found, to invite others to 'come and taste that the Lord is gracious.'

*Use* 1. To encourage us in the ways of the Lord and keeping of his precepts. It is no unprofitable thing: before we have done we shall be able to say, 'This I had, because I kept thy precepts.' Two things God usually bestoweth upon his people—a tolerable passage through the world, and a comfortable going out of the world; which is all a Christian needeth to care for: here is only the place of his service, not of his rest.

1. He shall have a tolerable passage through the world. A child of God may have a hard toilsome life of it, but he hath his mixtures of comfort in his deepest afflictions; he hath peace with God, that keeps his heart and mind, and maketh his passage through the world tolerable, because God is engaged with him: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'Faithful is he that hath called you, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear.' He is freed from wrath, and hath his discharge from the curse of the old covenant; he is taken into favour with God, and hath as much of temporal relief as is necessary for him; his condition is made comfortable to him.

2. A comfortable passing out of the world: Isa. xxxviii. 3, 'Remember, O Lord,' saith Hezekiah, 'I have walked before thee with an upright heart.' When you lie upon your death-beds, and in a dying hour, how comfortable will this be, the remembrance of a well-spent and well-employed life in God's service! They that wonder at the zeal and niceness of God's children, when they are entering into the other world, they cry out then, Oh, that they had been more exact and watchful! Oh, that they might die the death of the righteous! They should live so. Men then have other notions of holiness than ever they had before. But, Christians, here is your comfort; the word of God, that hath been your rule, is now your comfort and cordial, and stands by you to the very last.

*Use* 2. To persuade us to observe the difference between the ways of God and the ways of sin. When a man cometh to cast up his account on the one side and on the other, oh what a difference is there! Certainly there will a time come when you must cast up your account and use this recollection, either when your eyes are opened by grace in conversion, or when your eyes are opened by punishment. On sin's side consider, when you look back to what is past—(the Lord grant you may make this reflection!)—Rom. vi. 21, 'What fruit had you in

those things whereof you are now ashamed? You cannot look back without horror of conscience; as the unclean person, when he looketh back, and considereth that his flesh and body is consumed by sin, Prov. v. 11-13. He speaketh there of some noisome disease that hath gotten into his body. But then, on the other side, the side of godliness, 'This I had, because I kept thy precepts,' Oh! what peace, what serenity of mind, what hopes of eternal life, what comfortable entertainment shall you have in heaven! Determine beforehand what it will come to. Thus you see the difference between a sinful and godly course.

### SERMON LXIV.

*Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words.*—VER. 57.

DAVID doth in this place make out his right and title, 'Thou art my portion, O Lord,' &c. Here is—

1. David's protestation, *thou art my portion, O Lord.*

2. David's resolution, *I have said that I would keep thy words.*

In the first of these, in David's protestation, you may take notice of his claim, and of the sincerity of it.

1. Of his claim to God, 'Thou art my portion.' A part or portion, in the original use of the word, signifies a less quantity taken from a greater; a part is used in opposition to the whole. But with respect to the matter in hand, it is not used in such a sense, but for our lot and happiness; not *sensu mathematico*, not with reference to a whole, but *politico et forensi*, with respect to choice, interest, and possession; and the allusion is taken either from the distribution of the land of Canaan, where every one had his portion appointed to him by lot, and measured to him by rod and lines: therefore it is said, 'The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage;' or else it is an allusion to the partage of an ordinary estate, where every child hath his portion assigned him to live upon. Thus he lays claim to God himself.

2. The sincerity of this claim may be gathered, because he speaks by way of address to God. He doth not say barely, 'He is my portion,' but challengeth God to his face, 'Lord, thou art my portion.' Elsewhere it is said, Lam. iii. 24, 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul.' There he doth not speak it by way of address to God, but he adds, My soul saith. But here to God himself, who knows the secrets of the heart. To speak thus of God to God argues our sincerity, when to God's face we avow our trust and choice; as Peter, John xxi. 17, 'Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee;' he appeals to God's omniscieny; such an appeal is there to God for the truth of this assertion; as in that other place, when the believing soul lays claim to God, the integrity of that claim is also asserted, not only by the lips or mouth, but also the soul. There is *oratio mentalis, vocalis, vitalis*: there is the speech of the heart, in the real inclina-