

are very apt to be set upon the world ; but we must remember this is not the true treasure ; there are other manner of riches that we should look after—to be rich towards God, lest I be a carnal fool, Luke xii. 21. Complacency in a worldly portion is a sure sign of a worldly heart, more than greedy desire.

2. When we want wealth we should make this profession to induce us to contentment. The good disciples had the Spirit ; to Judas, as the bad one, he gave the purse. If you have spiritual wisdom and knowledge, you have that which is most excellent : James ii. 5, ‘ God hath chosen the poor of the world to be rich in faith.’

3. When we lose wealth for righteousness’ sake, we have that which is better. The knowledge of a hated truth is better than to shine with the oppressor : Prov. iii. 31, 32, ‘ Envy not the oppressor, nor choose any of his ways : for the froward is an abomination to the Lord ; but his secret is with the righteous.’ You have your losses exchanged for a greater good.

Use 3. Of trial. Let us examine ourselves and see what esteem and account we have of the word of God. If any say that we are all ready to profess that we esteem the word of God more than all riches, then let us bring it off from words to deeds. Do you prefer obedience before gain ? do you seek after spiritual wisdom more than gain ? Prov. iv. 7, ‘ Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom ; and with all thy getting, get understanding.’ Is this your main business, to be wise to salvation ? How many afflict and torment themselves to get silver and gold, but how few to understand and embrace God’s law ! How little doth this esteem of the word control contrary desires and affections !

SERMON LXXXI.

Thine hands have made me and fashioned me : give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.—VER. 73.

IN these words we have two things :—

1. The man of God’s argument, *thy hands have made me and fashioned me.*

2. His request, *give me understanding to keep thy commandments.*

1. For his argument. He pleadeth as God’s creature. Man is God’s immediate workmanship, both as to his body and his soul. Some apply the words, ‘ Thy hands have made me,’ to the creation of the soul ; and the other words, ‘ and fashioned me,’ to the creation of the body ; but we need not be so accurate. Both imply that he was wholly the work of God’s hand, a mere creature of his framing, and a creature exactly made ; so made that he was also fashioned, ‘ fearfully and wonderfully made,’ Ps. cxxxix. 14. The structure of man’s body darts a reverence and awe of God into the consciences of beholders ; and he saith in the 15th verse, ‘ I was curiously wrought ;’ the Vulgar reads it *acupictus*—painted as with a needle. Man’s body is a curious piece of embroidery, that is to be seen in the bones, veins, and arteries, that

spread and run throughout the body ; which consideration increaseth the argument, not only as he was God's work, but framed with a great deal of artifice.

2. Here is his request, ' Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.' In which he beggeth grace, that the faculty might be well disposed, ' Give me understanding ;' and rightly exercised, ' That I may learn thy commandments ;' that he might both know and keep his commandments. Surely he meaneth a saving knowledge : and therefore, when the work of grace is expressed by knowledge, a theoretical and notional knowledge is not understood, but that which is practical and operative ; such a knowledge as doth work such a change both in the inward and outward man, as that mind, heart, and practice do express a conformity to God's law. As Jer. xxiv. 7, ' I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord ; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God ; for they shall return to me with their whole heart ;' that is, all the blessings of the covenant he expresseth by giving them a heart to know him : they shall so know me as to acknowledge me for their God, and carry themselves accordingly in dutiful obedience to me. I will regard them as their God, and they shall regard me as my people. So when it is said, Col. iii. 10, that ' the new man' is ' renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him,' it is meant of a saving knowledge or acknowledgment of God, such as doth produce a perfect conformity to his law in both the tables ; it is such a knowledge as is set out in righteousness ; these are parallel expressions, Eph. iv. 24. Well, then, this new nature David prayeth for, ' Give me understanding ;' not as though he were altogether a stranger to it, but as seeking further degrees of it ; such a spiritual understanding of the will of God as might bring him into a more perfect and entire submission thereunto : ' I am thy creature ;' let me be thy new creature ; give me a faculty so clearly renewed that I may know and keep thy commandments.

Doct. That as we are creatures, we are some way encouraged to ask of God the grace of the new creature.

I shall draw forth the sense of the text and the doctrine in these propositions.

1. That man was made by God, or is God's immediate workmanship. We have the first notice of it, Gen. i. 26, ' Let us make man after our own image and likeness.' God put more respect upon him than upon the rest of the work of his hands. His creation is expressed in other terms than were used before : ' He said, Let there be light, and it was light ;' ' Let there be dry land,' &c. But here God speaketh as if he had called a consultation about it, ' Let us make man ;' not as if there were more difficulty, or as if creating power were at a nonplus, but to show what special notice he taketh of us, and to point out the excellency which he did stamp upon man in his creation beyond the rest of the creatures. There was no creature but had some impress of God upon it, for everything which hath passed his hand carrieth God's signature and mark ; it sheweth that it came from a being of infinite power and wisdom and goodness. But man hath his image and likeness stamped upon him : there you may discern God's

track and footprint, but here his very face. In his first moulding of him he would plainly and visibly discover himself. So again, when this making of man is explained, Gen. ii. 7, 'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.' Before we read that man was created, here we see in what sort: his body was framed with great art, though of base materials; a handful of dust did God enliven and form into a beautiful frame. But for the frame within, he had a more excellent and perfect soul than God gave to any other creature; by the union of both these, man became a living soul. Heaven and earth were married in his person; the dust of the earth and an immortal spirit, which is called the breath of God, were sweetly linked and joined together, with a disposition and inclination to one another, the soul to the body, and the body to the soul. When he had raised the walls of the flesh, and built the house of the body with all its rooms, then he puts in a noble and divine guest to dwell in it, and both make up one man.

2. The making of man now is the work of God, as well as the making of the first man was. God's hands did not only make and fashion Adam, but David. He saith, 'Thy hands have made me and fashioned me.' The body of man is of God's framing: Ps. cxxxix. 15, 16, 'My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth: thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.' Our bodies, you see there, though the matter were propagated by our parents, yet his hands made them and fashioned them. God is more our father than our natural parents are. Our parents know not whether the child will be male or female, beautiful or deformed; cannot tell the number of the bones, muscles, veins, arteries: this God appointeth and frameth with curious artifice; so that of all visible creatures, there is none in any sort equalleth man in the curious composition of the body, whether we look upon the beauty and majesty of his person, or take notice of the variety, nature, and use of his several parts, with their composition and framing them together, with a wonderful order and correspondence one to another, as if they had been described by a model and platform set down in a book: so secretly and curiously was the matter framed in passing through all the changes in the womb till it came to a perfect formation. Then for the soul, God infuseth that: Eccles. xii. 7, 'Then shall our dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God that gave it.' God gave the body too, but especially the spirit, because there he worketh singly and immediately; therefore he is called 'the Father of spirits.' They do not run in the channel of carnal generation or fleshly descent, Heb. xii. 9. So Zedekiah swore by 'the God that made his soul,' Jer. xxxviii. 16. So Zech. xii. 1, 'He formed the spirit of man within him.' The parent doth instrumentally produce man in respect of his body, yet the soul is from God, and immediately created and infused into the body by him, and being put into that dead lump of clay, doth animate and quicken it for the most excellent employment.

3. Man, that was created by God, was created to serve him: 'He formed us from the womb to be his servants,' as well as the first man, Isa. xlix. 5. Adam indeed was appointed for this use; all other creatures were made to serve God, but man especially by the design of his creation: other things ultimately and terminatively, but man immediately and nextly. God made all things for himself, Prov. xvi. 4; and Rom. xi. 36, 'For of him and through him are all things; to whom be glory for ever, amen.' Man is the mouth of the creation. Surely it is but reason that God should have the use of all that he gave us; that the author of life and being should have some glory by them; that he should dwell in the house he hath set up: he that made it hath most right to use it; that we should 'glorify him with our bodies and souls, which are his,' 1 Cor. vi. 20. Man is designed, engaged by greater mercies, furnished with great abilities, as at first endowed with God's image; he hath faculties and capacities to know and glorify his creator. There are natural instincts given to other things, or inclinations to those things which are convenient to their own nature; but none of them are in a capacity to know what they are, and have, and where they are: they cannot frame a notion of him who gave them a being. Man is the mouth of the creation to speak for them: Ps. cxlv. 10, 'All thy works praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints bless thee.' He was made to love, and serve, and glorify God. The divine image inclined him to obedience at first.

4. We are not now what God made us at first, but are strangely disabled to serve him and please him: Eccles. vii. 29, 'God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions:' there is man's original and his degeneration; what he was once made, and how far now unmade and departed from his primitive estate; his perfection by creation, and defection by sin: first made in a state of righteousness without sin, and now in a state of sin and misery without grace; was created with a holy disposition to enable and incline him to love, please, and obey God, but now hath found out many inventions, put to his shifts. Man was not contented to be at God's finding, but would take his own course, and hath miserably shifted ever since to patch up a sorry happiness. So Rom. iii. 23, 'All have sinned, and are come short of the glory of God.' By glory of God is not meant his glorious reward, but his glorious image. Image is called glory, 1 Cor. xi. 7, 'It is said of the man, that 'he is the image and glory of God, as the woman is the glory of the man.' So compare 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'We beholding the glory of the Lord in a glass,' &c. So here, we are 'come short of the glory of God,' that is, his glorious image. Hence it is that all our faculties are perverted, the mind is become blind and vain, the will stubborn and perverse, conscience stupid, the affections pre-occupied and entangled, and we find a manifest disproportion in all our faculties to things carnal and spiritual, sinful and holy. In the understanding there is a sharpness of apprehension in carnal things, but dull, slow, and blind in spiritual and heavenly things. Thoughts are spent freely and unweariedly about the one, but there is a tediousness and barrenness about the other; a will backward to what is good, but a strange bent and urging to what is evil. In that which is good we need a spur, in evil a bridle. These things persevere with

us; but how fickle and changeable in any holy resolution!—the memory slippery in what is good, but firm and strong in what is evil; the affections quick, easily stirred, like tinder, catch fire at every spark; but as to that which is good, they are like fire in green wood, hardly kept in with much blowing. Again, our delight is soon moved by things pleasing to sense; a carnal gust and savour is very natural to us, and rife with us, Rom. viii. 5, but averse from the chiefest good, and everything that leadeth to it. Surely, then, we have need to go to God and complain of corruption, sometimes under the notion of a blind and dark mind, begging the illumination of the Spirit; sometimes under the notion of a dead, hard heart, or an unpersuadable will, begging his inclining as well as enlightening grace. Surely they are strangely hardened that do not see a need of a spiritual understanding. Nay, God's children, after grace received, though sanctified betimes, yet halt of the old maim, dull in spirituals, alive and active in carnal matters. Carnal and worldly men act more uniformly and suitably to their principles than the children of God to theirs: Luke xvi. 8, 'The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light;' that is, more dexterous in the course of affairs. Grace for the present worketh but a partial cure: we have the advantage in matter of motive, we have better and higher things to mind; but they have the advantage in matter of principle; their principles are unbroken, but the principles of the best are mixed. We cannot do what we would in heavenly things; there is the back-bias of corruption that turns us away; and therefore they need to be instant with God to heal their souls; sometimes a blind mind, and sometimes a dis-tempered heart.

5. We must be new made and born again before we can be apt or able to know or do the will of God; as Christ inferreth the necessity of regeneration from the corruption of nature—he had been discoursing with Nicodemus—'You cannot enter into the kingdom of God; for that which is born of the flesh is flesh,' John iii. 5, 6. Our souls naturally accommodate themselves to the flesh, and seek the good of the flesh, and all our thoughts and care, and life, and love run that way. Now, what was lost in Adam can only be recovered in Christ. It is not enough that God's hands have once made us and fashioned us, but there is a necessity of being made and fashioned anew, of becoming 'his workmanship in Christ Jesus,' Eph. ii. 10; and so the words of the text may be interpreted in this sense: Thou hast made me once; Lord, new make me: thy hands made me; O Lord, give me a new heart, that I may obey thee. In the first birth God gave us a natural understanding; in the second, a spiritual understanding, that we may learn his commandments; first that we may be good, and then do good. The first birth gave us the natural faculty, the second, the grace, or those divine qualities which were lost by Adam's sin. Better never been born, unless born again; better be a beast than a man, if the Lord give us not the knowledge of himself in Christ. The beasts, when they die, their misery and happiness dieth with them, death puts an end to their pain and pleasure; but, we that have reason and conscience to foresee the end and know the way, enter into perfect happiness or misery at death. Unless the Lord sanctify this reason, and give us

a heart to know him in Christ, and choose that which is good, man is but a higher kind of beast, a wiser sort of beast, Ps. xlix. 12; for his soul is only employed to cater for the body, and his reason is prostituted to sense; the beast rides the man. We are not distinguished from the brutes by our senses, but our understanding and our reason. But in a carnal man, the soul is a kind of sense; it is wholly employed about the animal life. There is not a more brutish creature in the world than a worldly wicked man. Well, then, David had need to pray, Lord, thou hast given me reason; give me the knowledge of thy self and thy blessed will.

6. When we seek this grace, or any degree of it, it is a proper argument to urge that we are God's creatures. So doth David here. I am now come to my very business, and therefore I shall a little show how far creation is pleadable, and may any way encourage us to ask spiritual understanding and renewing grace.

[1.] In the general, I shall lay down this: It is a good way of reasoning with God to ask another gift because we have received one already. It is not a good way of reasoning with man, because he wastes by giving; but a good way with God, and that upon a double account. Partly because in some cases *Deus donando debet*—God by giving doth in effect bind himself to give more; as by giving life, to give food; by giving a body, to give raiment, Mat. vi. 25. God, by sending such a creature into the world, chargeth his providence to maintain him, as long as he will use him for his glory. God loveth to crown his own gifts: Zech. iii. 2, 'Is not this a brand plucked out of the burnings?' The thing pleaded there is, was not this a brand plucked out of the fire? One mercy is pleaded to obtain another mercy. So God bindeth himself to give perseverance, 2 Cor. i. 10; but this is not the case here; for by giving common benefits he doth not bind himself to give saving graces. And partly, too, because he doth not waste by giving: 'His mercy endureth for ever.' The same reason is given for all those mercies, Ps. cxxxvi.; why the Lord chose a church, maintaineth his church, giveth daily bread: 'His mercy endureth for ever.' God is where he was at first: 'He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not,' James i. 5. He doth not say, I have given already. Now, a former common mercy sheweth God's readiness and freeness to give; the inclination to do good still abideth with him; he is as ready and as free to give still; daily bread: 'His mercy endureth for ever;' spiritual wisdom: 'His mercy endureth for ever.' Indeed, the giving of daily bread doth not necessarily bind God to give spiritual wisdom; but that which is not a sure ground to expect may be a probable encouragement to ask. And learn this, that though nothing can satisfy unbelief, yet faith can pick arguments out of anything, and make use of the most common benefits of creation to strengthen itself.

[2.] God beareth much affection to man as he is his creature and the work of his hands; and the saints plead it when they would be spared and when they would be saved. As Job, chap. x. 3, 'Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands?' So ver. 8 of that chapter, 'Thy hands have made me and fashioned me, and yet thou dost destroy me.' The

sum and effect of these pleas is, it is strange that God should despise his own workmanship, especially a piece of such excellency as man is. Surely God is the readier to do good to man because he is the work of his hands. We see artificers, when they have made an excellent work, they are very chary and tender of it, and will not destroy it and break it in pieces. An instinct of nature teacheth us to love that which is our own by natural production; so it is an argument moving the Lord to much compassion to tell him that we are his workmanship: Isa. lxiv. 8, 9, 'But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, thou art our potter; we are all the work of thine hands: be not wroth with us very sore, O Lord.' This raiseth in us some hope of speeding and prevailing with God. The words of the text are emphatical, *made and fashioned*. God hath bestowed much care upon us to make and fashion us, and therefore he will pity us and spare us: Job xiv. 15, 'Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.' All these places show there is an argument in it that may raise our faith when other arguments fail.

[3.] Creation implieth some hope, because God forsaketh none but those who forsake him first. He might destroy us for our original sin, as we destroy serpents of a venomous nature before they have actually done any harm. Though man hath lost his goodness, God hath not. Every one of us in person doth actually break with God before he breaketh with us: 2 Chron. xv. 2, 'If ye forsake him, he will forsake you.' 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, David telleth Solomon, 'If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever;' he will not acknowledge thee. Take this rightly: that God giveth grace to any is his goodness; that to one more than another, is his distinguishing and elective love; that he denieth grace to any, is along of themselves, chargeable upon the creature, who abuse that common grace which, if improved, might have made them better; yea, though all deserve to be denied the grace of the Redeemer, yet it is not denied till after many wilful refusals, and by gross impenitency we turn the back upon God, when we will not implore our Creator's bounty, but obstinately refuse it.

[4.] Seeing God is our creator, and the end of our creation is to serve God, we may the more confidently ask the grace which is necessary to enable us to serve him, that the same creating mercy which layeth on the obligation may help to discharge the debt. God is no Pharaoh, to require brick and give no straw, to appoint work and not to provide grace. Though he hath not absolutely promised to every individual person converting grace, yet he hath appointed certain means for the ungodly which they are bound to use in order to conversion; and if we consider the goodness of God, and the nature of those means, it is a great encouragement. Surely the assistances of grace are always ready: Mat. xxii. 5, 'Come to the feast, all things are ready.' None can tax him of backwardness. So our Saviour taxes the Jews: Mat. xxiii. 37, 'I would have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, but ye would not.' When did God ever fail the waiting soul, or put away the creature that sought after grace to serve him? He is often beforehand with us, never behindhand; and we grossly and heinously forfeit all our means and helps before we lose them.

[5.] There is encouragement to faith *a pari*, from the resemblance and likeness that is between his making us at first and his new-making of us in Jesus Christ. It is called a creation, Eph. ii. 10; Eph. iv. 24, 'The new man, which after God is created,' &c.; 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts.' The author is the same God to whom it belongeth to create. We have the human nature from him, and can have it from no other, much less can we have the divine nature from any other but him, Ps. li. 5, or else we should not have it at all. It is not implanted in our nature, or attainable by any industry of ours: 'It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth,' Rom. ix. 16, but the immediate work of God; it is the work of his omnipotency. So dead and indisposed are we by nature to holiness and grace, that no less than creating power is required to work it in us. Besides, we were created freely, without any merit of ours; so we expect from the same goodness such saving knowledge as may change our hearts. There is this double encouragement—there is God's omnipotent power, and his free giving us his image at first, Rom. iv. 17.

[6.] If we consider the manner of pleading, and the good frame of heart implied in the pleader, we may better understand the cogency of the argument; and though the argument itself doth not necessarily infer the help of grace, yet the manner of pleading sheweth some preparative work of grace, and such meet the Lord in the stated order of commerce between him and his creatures, and shall receive his blessing. And then the argument will be strong in this petition, 'Give understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.' Here are many things implied, such as are wrought by God in those to whom God will vouchsafe the grace.

(1.) An acknowledgment of the debt, that man, being God's creature, is obliged to serve him; as he was not made by himself, so not for himself; and should no more cease from intending God as an end, than he can cease from depending on God as a principle. Now, it is long ere we are brought to this. You know how the rebels are described and set out, Ps. xii. 4, 'Our tongues are our own; who is lord over us?' Now God hath gained one great end with us when we are sensible of our obligation to him, and are brought to acknowledge the debt, and that love, duty, and service we owe to him. Wherefore doth God press duty upon carnal men, who are no way competent or able to perform it? Divines tell us, to demand his right, as a creditor doth of a prodigal debtor, and to make us sensible that we stand bound to God in the debt of obedience.

(2.) Here is a will to pay, or a heart set upon service and obedience; for this is a speech becoming one heartily devoted to God, 'Thy hands have made me,' &c. He would willingly return to his creator's service, and glorify him with what was made by him: I acknowledge that I am obliged, as I am the work of thine hands, to live in a faithful obedience to thee; Lord, I give up myself to this work. Mark, this is a good spirit; he doth not beg his own comfort, but ability for service, that he might so know his master's will as to do it. Now this is repentance towards God, when we are heartily willing to return to our duty more than to our comfort, Acts ii. 21; there is more hope of that

soul that rather seeketh obedience than comfort, and where there is a resolved will and purpose to devote ourselves to the Lord, to please him, and serve him. This was God's end in his new covenant grace, and Christ's end in redemption, to restore us to obedience as well as to favour, and put us into a capacity of service again: Heb. ix. 14, 'Purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God;' 1 Peter ii. 24, 'Who his own self bare our sins in his body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness.' He died to weaken the love of sin in our hearts, and to advance the life and power of grace and righteousness.

(3.) There is implied in it a confession of impotency, that God cannot be glorified and served by him unless he be renewed and strengthened by grace; not by him as a creature till he be made a new creature, or have renewed influences of grace from him. God permitted the lapse and fall of mankind, that they may come to him as needy creatures, and take all out of his hands. Man's great error, which occasioned his fall, was that he would live alone apart from God, be sufficient to his own happiness. We greedily caught at that word, 'Ye shall be as gods,' Gen. iii. 5. The meaning was, not in a blessed conformity, but a cursed self-sufficiency. Man would be his own god, desired to have his stock in his own hands, and would be no more at God's finding: Gen. iii. 22, 'The man is become as one of us,' to live as an independent being. Well, then, to cure this, God would reduce him to an utter necessity, that he might bring him to an entire dependence, and might come as a beggarly indigent creature, expecting all from God, putting no confidence in his own righteousness for his justification, nor natural power and strength for sanctification: Gal. ii. 19, 'I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.' The rigorous exaction of perfect obedience under the hazard of the curse of the law maketh them dead to the law; the curse of the law puts them so hard to it, that they are forced to fly to Christ to be freed from condemnation; and the spiritual nature of the law, as it is a rule of obedience, driveth them to see there is nothing in themselves tending to righteousness, and holiness, to the glory of God, without the power of his Spirit: they that 'serve in the newness of the spirit,' Rom. vii. 6. God bringeth us at last to this: Mat. xix. 26, 'With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.' Well, then, when we are brought to see our impotency, we are at a good pass, and lie obvious to his grace.

(4.) It implies an earnest desire after grace; and that is a good frame of heart, when not satisfied with common benefits. David was not satisfied with his natural being, but seeketh after a spiritual being. What is that he prayeth so earnestly for, but an enlightened mind and a renewed heart, and all that he might be obedient to God? Thus we are more fitted to receive grace. A conscience of our duty is a great matter in fallen man, who is turned rebel against God and a traitor to his maker, who is impatient and self-willed, and all for casting off the yoke, Ps. ii. 3. Well, to have a heart set upon duty and obedience, that is the next step; the third was a sense of impotency; now this fourth a desire of grace: such the Lord hath promised to satisfy, Mat. v. 6. These open unto God, and are ready to take in his grace. Come

as creatures earnestly desiring to do your creator's will, and in the best manner, and will God refuse you? Because I am thy creature, teach me to serve thee, who art my creator.

(5.) There is one thing more in this plea, a persuasion of God's goodness to his creatures. This is the very ground and reason why this plea is used: Ps. cxlv. 9, 'The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.' There is a great deal of fatherly care and mercy to his creatures, till by their impenitency, persisted in against the means of grace, they render themselves incapable of it. The first battery which Satan laid to man's heart tended to undermine the sense of God's goodness to the creature, as if God were envious: Gen. iii. 5, 'Doth not God know that in the day ye eat thereof;' as if God envied their happiness: this the devil would instil. To have good thoughts of God is a great means to reduce us and bring us back again to him. We frighten ourselves away from him by entertaining needless jealousies of him, as if he sought our destruction, or delighted in it. Surely he will not destroy a poor soul that lieth submissively at his feet, and is grieved he can no better please him and serve him. The man that had hard thoughts of God neglected his duty: Mat. xxv. 24, 25, 'I knew thou wast an austere master, therefore I hid my talent in a napkin;' that is the legalism and carnal bondage that is in us, which makes us full of jealousies of God, and doth mightily hinder and obstruct our duty.

Use. The use is to press you to come to God as creatures, to beg relief and help for your souls: this will be of use to us in many cases.

1. To the scrupulous, who are upon regenerating, that are not sure that the work of grace is wrought in them. You cannot call God *Father* by the spirit of adoption; yet own him as a creator. Come to him as one that formed you: your desire is to return to him.

2. It is of use to believers when under desertions, and God appeareth against them in a way of wrath, and all God's dispensations seem to speak nothing but wrath: yet come to him as the creator. Lord, 'we are the work of thy hands.' If you cannot plead the covenant of Abraham, which was made with believers, plead the covenant of Noah, which was made with man and all creatures: Isa. liv. 9, 'For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee;' there may be a great storm, but no deluge. When all is wrath to a poor soul, let it come to him in the covenant of Noah.

3. It will be of use in pleading for grace for your children, who are as yet, it may be, graceless and disobedient: 'Thy hands have made and fashioned them.' Desire him to renew his image upon them by the spirit of grace.

In short, the sum of all is, here is encouragement: God is good to all his creatures, especially to man, most especially to man seeking after him, and seeking after him for grace, that we and ours may obey him, and do him better service than ever yet we have done.

SERMON LXXXII.

They that fear thee will be glad when they see me ; because I have hoped in thy word.—VER. 74.

THIS verse containeth two things :—

1. The respect of the faithful to David, *they that fear thee will be glad when they see me.*

2. The reason of this respect, *because I have hoped in thy word.*

First, The respect of God's faithful servants to David, and there take notice of the character by which God's servants are described, 'They that fear thee;' then their respect to David, they 'will be glad when they see me;' which may bear a double sense.

1. How comfortable it is for the heirs of promise to see one another, or meet together ! *Aspectus boni viri delectat*—the very look of a good man is delightful ; it is a pleasure to converse with those that are careful to please God, and awe-ful to offend him.

2. How much affected they are with one another's mercies : 'They will be glad to see me,' who have obtained an event answerable to my hope ; they shall come and look upon me as a monument and spectacle of the mercy and truth of God. This sense I prefer, though not excluding the other. But what mercy had he received ? The context seemeth to carry it for grace to obey God's commandments ; that was the prayer immediately preceding, to be 'instructed and taught in God's law,' ver. 73. Now they will rejoice to see my holy behaviour, how I have profited and glorified God in that behalf. The Hebrew writers render the reason, Because then I shall be able to instruct them in those statutes, when they shall see me, their king, study the law of God. It may be expounded of any other blessing or benefit God hath given according to his hope ; and I rather understand it thus : they will be glad to see him sustained, supported, and borne out in his troubles and sufferings ; they will be glad when they shall see in me a notable example of the fruit of hoping in thy grace, and this hope leaveth not ashamed.

Secondly, The reason is, 'Because I hoped in thy word ;' and there compare this with the first clause. God's children are described to be those that fear God, and David is described to be one that hopes in his word. Both together make up a good character and description of the Lord's people ; they are such as fear God and hope in his word. They are elsewhere coupled : Ps. xxxiii. 18, 'Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, that hope in his mercy ;' and Ps. cxlvii. 11, 'The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, that hope in his mercy.' A sincere Christian is known by both these ; a fear of God, or a constant obedience to his commands, and an affiance, trust, and dependence upon his mercies. Oh, how sweetly are both these coupled ; a uniform sincere obedience to him, and an unshaken constant reliance on his mercy and goodness ! The whole perfection of the Christian life is comprised in these two—believing God and fearing him, trusting in his mercy and fearing his name ; the one maketh us careful in avoiding sin, the other diligent to follow after righteous-

ness; the one is a bridle from sin and temptations, the other a spur to our duties. Fear is our curb, and hope our motive and encouragement; the one respects our duty, the other our comfort; the one allayeth the other. God is so to be feared, as also to be trusted; so to be trusted, as also to be feared. And as we must not suffer our fear to degenerate into legal bondage, but hope in his mercy; so our trust must not degenerate into carnal sloth and wantonness, but so hope in his word as to fear his name. Well, then, such as both believe in God and fear to offend him are the only men who are acceptable to God and his people. God will take pleasure in them, and they take pleasure in one another: 'They that fear thee will be glad when they see me.' The first part of the character, 'They that fear thee;' the fear of God is an excellent grace, a strong bridle to hold the soul from sin; not that servile, but filial and child-like fear, that is afraid to sin against God or break his laws: Prov. xxviii. 14, 'Blessed is the man that feareth always;' this grace should always bear rule in our hearts: 1 Peter i. 17, 'Pass the time of your sojourning in fear;' our whole course must be carried on under the conduct of this grace. Look, as the fear of man is a bridle upon the beasts to keep them from hurting man, Gen. ix. 2, 'The fear and dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth;' so when the fear of God is rooted in our hearts, we are kept from disobeying and dishonouring God. Joseph is an instance of the power of this holy fear: Gen. xxxix. 9, 'How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Secondly, the other character, 'I hope in thy word:' a Christian liveth by faith, whereas the brutish worldling liveth by sense; the one liveth by bread only, the other by the word of God: the one is a higher sort of beast, the other is a kind of earthly angel, for he liveth with God, and dwelleth with God, and expecteth all out of God's hands: Ps. cxxx. 5, 'I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope:' there is his charter and inheritance, and his solace and support; he fetcheth all from the word. Both these graces, as they are very acceptable unto God, so are they most lovely and beautiful to behold by men; to be among the company of them that fear God, and hope in his word, is the most pleasant thing to a gracious heart that can be; for while others are taken up about toys and trifles, they are taken up about the only serious matters. If Balaam was constrained to say of God's people, 'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!' oh, how pleasant is it much more to the people of God, to see one another, to come among them that fear God, and are loath to offend him, and also that hope in his word! They can speak of the life of faith, and blessedness to come, and take off the veil of the creature, and are mainly taken up with another world; their business is not to offend God here, and hope fully to enjoy him hereafter: Rom. i. 12, 'Comforted by the mutual faith both of you and me.'

Doct. That God's mercies bestowed upon some of his children should be and are an occasion of joy and comfort to all the rest. When David was a pattern of God's gracious help and deliverance, he saith, 'They that fear thee will be glad when they see me.' I shall give you some scriptures: Ps. cxlii. 7. 'The righteous shall compass me about, for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.' When any one of

God's children are delivered, all the rest flock about him, to assist and join in thanksgiving, and to help one another to praise the Lord. So Ps. xxxiv. 2, 'My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad;' that God had preserved and reserved David still. So Ps. lxiv. 10, 'The righteous shall be glad in the Lord and trust in him, and the upright in heart shall glory;' that is, when David was delivered, when God had showed mercy to him, then all the upright would come, and make their own profit and advantage by such an experience and deliverance.

The reasons of the point.

1. They are all members of one body, they are all called into one body, and the good and evil of one member is common to the whole. This reason is rendered by the apostle: 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26, 'But that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the rest rejoice with it;' ver. 27, 'Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.' The meaning of that place is, that the church altogether is the body of Christ, and every several person a member, and every member should be as solicitous for one another as for itself; they have the same common interests and concerns, whether of suffering or rejoicing. You know in the natural body, when the toe is trode on, the tongue crieth out, You have hurt me. We are concerned in the good or ill of our fellow-members; their joy is joy to us, and their sorrow sorrow to us: to this sense some expound that place, Heb. xiii. 3, 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them that suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.' Some understand it of Christ's mystical body; when they suffer, our souls are bound with them. But I think it bears another sense there: to be 'in the body' is to be in the flesh, during which state we are liable to many vexations and miseries; and therefore, if God doth so order it that the whole body, or all the members of the church, should not be afflicted at one time, but whilst some are afflicted others are free, and when we are not involved by passion there may be compassion. While we are in the body we are obnoxious to the same adversities, and should pity and comfort them as ourselves, and use all means to do them good; but if it be not the truth of the place, yet it is a truth, the more any partake of the spiritual life the stronger is spiritual sympathy: they 'rejoice with them that rejoice, and mourn with them that mourn,' Rom xii. 15; are bound with them that are in bonds, and enlarged with them that are enlarged. One part of us is in bonds when they are in bonds, one part of us is enlarged when they are enlarged; still we should have common interests and affections with our brethren; and for those that fear God to be selfish and senseless of the condition of others, it is a kind of self-excommunication, or an implicit renouncing the body: because we are in the body, we should be affected as they are. Look, as there was the same spirit in Ezekiel's vision in the living creatures and the wheels, I say the same spirit was in both; when one moved the other moved: so there is the same spirit in Christ's mystical body. We should be affected as they are; it is a kind of depriving ourselves of the privileges of the mystical body if we are not.

2. It is for the honour and glory of God; God hath most glory when praised by many. Therefore they flock together, 2 Cor. i. 11, 'That for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many in our behalf.' God loveth to have us act with joint consent both in prayer and praise, because he would interest us in one another's mercies and comforts, and so knit our hearts together in more holy love. Prayers made by many are mighty with God—when we come to God with many supplicants, make up a great party to besiege heaven: so praises rendered by many are the more honourable to God, and acceptable with him: 2 Cor. iv. 15, 'That the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God.' When many are engaged, and many are affected with it, God's glory is the more diffused, the revenue of the crown of heaven increased. One string maketh no music: when there are many, and all in tune, there is harmony. There are three things in it—many righteous persons, and joining together with one spirit in the same work, then the Lord hath more honour than he could have in a single person. In heaven God is praised in concert; we are brought all together, that we may make one body and congregation to laud, and praise, and serve God for evermore: so here, they that fear God and hope in his mercy, they often flock together to congratulate and join in thanksgiving for the mercies which any one of them hath received. When Christ was born there was a whole concert of angels: Luke ii. 13, 'A multitude of the heavenly host praising God, saying, Glory to God on high, on earth peace, good-will towards men.' It is a kind of heaven upon earth when all the people of God are led by one spirit to praise and glorify God: a closet prayer or thanksgiving is not so honourable as that of the congregation.

3. It is for the profit and comfort of all; partly because by this means they come to understand one another's experiences for their mutual support and edification. What God is to one that feareth him, he is to all that fear him sincerely, affected to them all; therefore the goodness of God to one believer bringeth joy and comfort to all the rest. They are spectacles and monuments of mercy for the saints to look upon, that they may learn thereby to depend upon God. Look, as in converting Paul, a persecutor, the apostle saith, 1 Tim. i. 16, 'Christ did show forth all long-suffering in me, for a pattern to them that should after believe on him,' in pardoning so great a sinner, in saving such a distressed soul, to invite others to Christ; so in all other cases, when God delivereth one, he inviteth others to the same hope; they are precedents of mercy to the rest, as David implieth here they would be encouraged by his example cheerfully to expect the same deliverance from God. In the example of one sufferer there is a pawn given to all the rest; it is for the edification and encouragement of others to be acquainted with our experiences of God's mercy to us: Ps. lxvi. 16, 'Come near, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul;' all are concerned, for they have the same necessities, have interest in the same God, the same promises, the same mediator, and the same covenant; so that to be acquainted with the passages of divine providence towards others is a great help to teach us more of God, that we may learn to magnify

his power. And partly by this means their hearts are more knit to one another in spiritual love ; when they pray for one another as for their own souls, and rejoice as in their own deliverance, it maintaineth unity among us. . God loveth to pleasure many of his children at once, and to interest them in the same mercy ; and so we receive the mercy others intercede for, and give thanks for it. Love in the spirit is seen in praying and praising God for one another. And partly, too, because it doth oblige us to more frequent acts of worship ; we can never want an errand to the throne of grace, or an opportunity of worship for ourselves or others, to pray with them, or to offer praise with them and for them.

4. Joy is communicative ; mourning apart is good : Peter ‘went out and wept bitterly,’ Mat. xxvi. 75. And Jeremiah saith, when he would weep for the people, Jer. xiii. 17, ‘My soul shall weep in secret places for your pride ;’ and Zech. xii. 12, 13, ‘They shall mourn every family apart, the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart,’ &c. Sorrow affecteth solitude and retiredness, where no eye seeth but God’s ; but joy doth best in company and in consort, as the woman called her neighbours to rejoice with her, Luke xv., because she had found the lost groat. So we must stir up one another to rejoice in God. Besides, mercies may be told to many, but not our griefs ; therefore the godly will be flocking together to help them in praises as well as prayers. It is not only commendable to beg their help in prayer, but we should call upon them to praise God with us : Ps. xxxiv. 3, ‘O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.’ We are bound to be witnesses of one another’s thankfulness, and to assist one another in the praises of God.

Use. Information of five things :—

1. It sheweth us the lawfulness, yea, the conveniency, yea, in some sort, the necessity, of public thanksgiving for private mercies. It is lawful ; we read of paying vows in the great congregation, Ps. xxii. 22, xl. 9. It is highly convenient and useful, partly that the people of God may flock together, and make a crown of praise for God : Ps. xxii. 3, ‘He inhabiteth the praises of Israel ;’ he delighteth to be in the midst of his people when they praise him. And partly that by the thankfulness of others we may be quickened to remember our own mercies, as one bird sets all the flock a-chirping. And partly that we may quicken others by our help ; and partly to show a Christ-like love to them, by being affected with their miseries, and rejoicing in their mercies. Well, these things should quicken us to join with others in their thanksgiving for their private mercies, so to raise a spiritual affection in us in the performance of those duties. And as it is lawful, so it is necessary ; other men’s mercies may be our mercies as well as theirs ; you are concerned in the mercy if you have prayed for it. We are to love God for hearing our prayers for others as well as ourselves. Eli gave thanks and solemnly worshipped God for Hannah’s sake, because he had before prayed for her, and therefore praised God for her, who had heard his prayers in her behalf : compare 1 Sam. i. 28. When Hannah told him what the Lord had done, Eli falls a worshipping the Lord ; he had prayed for her before in ver. 7, ‘The Lord grant thee thy petition which thou askest of him.’

Every answer of prayer is a new proof or fresh experience of God's love and special respect to us ; it is a sign that God regardeth us and is mindful of us, nay, it is a sign of God's favour, when he will not only hear us for ourselves, but for others also. If a man come to a king, he will say, If you had asked for yourself I would have granted you ; it is a special honour to intercede for others, which God putteth upon his choice servants : Gen. xx. 7, ' Abraham shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live ; ' Job xlii. 8, ' My servant Job shall pray for you, and him will I accept. ' God will hear his servants for others when he will not hear them for themselves. If our prayers had returned into our own bosoms, as David's for his enemies, Ps. xxxv. 13 ; if God as an answer had given you only the comfort of the discharge of your duty : Luke x. 6, ' If they be not worthy, your peace shall return to you again ; ' this were matter of praise, much more now the mercy is obtained. All this is spoken to show that there should be more life and spiritual affection in those duties which we perform in the behalf of others.

2. It informeth us of the excellency of communion of saints ; there is such a fellowship and communion between all the members of Christ's mystical body, that they mourn together, and rejoice together ; the grace vouchsafed to one is cause of rejoicing to all the rest ; they drive on a joint trade for heaven, and rejoice in one another's comforts as if they were their own, in one another's gifts and graces as if they were their own, in one another's supports and deliverances as if they were their own. We read of joy in heaven at the conversion of sinners ; they rejoice at our welfare, praising and lauding God ; so there is also joy on earth when any spiritual benefit is imparted ; if any be gotten to a godlike nature, they give thanks to God : ' They that fear thee will be glad when they see me ; ' Acts iv. 32, ' The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul ; ' there was a great multitude, many thousand souls. Here was the primitive simplicity, the Christians were so united as if they had but one heart and soul among them ; and it was a usual saying, *Aspice ut se mutuo diligunt Christiani*—see how the Christians love one another. It was otherwise afterwards ; no wild beasts are so fierce to one another as one Christian has been to another. Surely it concerneth all that fear God and hope in his word to be of one heart and of one mind as much as may be. Lesser differences should not make void this Christ-like love. The bonds of Christ's communion are the essentials of religion, if they fear God and hope in his word. Though Christians may be distinguished by several denominations, yet an angry brother cannot cast us out of our Father's family. We set up walls of partition between Christian and Christian, but God will not measure his fold by our enclosure: *Lingua Petiliani non est ventilabrum Christi*—it is well Petilian's tongue is not Christ's fan. Surely when we meet with our everlasting companions they should be dear to us, and for some private differences we should not omit the necessary duties of Christianity. This mutual and cordial respect we should have for one another.

3. It informs us of the mischief and evil of a private spirit, which doth not take notice of the favours of God done to others, nor is affected with others' mercies. Most men ' seek their own things,'

Phil. ii. 21. Nature is sensible of nothing but natural bonds, the lines of its communication are too narrow, either their own flesh, the smart and ease of their own bodies, or their own kindred. Now, the saints have a more diffusive love, they can strive with God earnestly in prayer for those whose face they never saw in the flesh, Col. ii., and can be thankful for their mercies as far as they come to their notice. All Christians are not only of the same kind, but of the same body; though they have not a private benefit by the mercy, yet they can heartily praise God for it; the angels praise God for us, Luke ii., for his good-will to men, they are only spectators, not the parties interested. When the Lord set afoot that blessed design, it was good-will to men, yet the multitude of the heavenly host rejoiced and praised God. We had both honour and benefit by Christ's incarnation. So to praise God for the good of others argueth a good spirit like the angels, but to envy the good of another and be grieved thereat is devilish, like the spirit of the devil. In heaven we shall not only rejoice in our own, but in one another's salvation, because there shall be no envy, no privateness of affection. Why are we so selfish and senseless now? 'Who is afflicted and I mourn not?' said Paul. Now to those that mourned for others' calamity, their deliverance is a kind of relief. Will you lose your evidence of being in the body for want of rejoicing in their mercies, gifts, and deliverances?

4. It informeth us—(1.) How much it concerneth us to preserve an interest in the hearts of God's people, and to behave ourselves so that they that fear God may be glad of our mercies, and bless God for them. The communion of saints is a sweet thing; we must not forfeit this privilege by our inordinate walking, pride, contention, sourness and bitterness of spirit, unusefulness to the church, as having an interest divided from the church. Those whose mercies are apprehended as a public benefit are the strictly conscientious, those that fear God and hope in his word, who labour to keep themselves from the snares of the present world, and look for the happiness of the world to come; the one is the fruit of fearing God, the other of hoping in his word—the tender conscience and the heavenly-minded Christian. Partly because they are our everlasting companions; we shall live for ever with them: they were chosen from all eternity to be heirs of the same grace together with us; therefore it is sweet to praise God for any good that befalleth them: Ps. lxxvi. 16, 'Come near, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul;' Ps. xxii. 22, 'I will declare thy name unto my brethren.' But when a man walketh questionably, he obscureth the life of God in himself, or, like a string that is out of tune, spoileth the harmony. The saints may mourn for the wicked, but they cannot so easily bring their hearts to rejoice with them; they may give thanks for their mercies, it is true, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, but not with that cheerfulness, with that sense. The conscience of our duty engageth us to bless God that he hath spared them, reprieved them a little longer, given them more time to repent, and correct their errors; but it is very sweet to join with them who are our brethren and companions, not only now, but to all eternity. And partly because our mercies proceed from the covenant, upon which is built all our hope and all our desire, and so

we are edified by the support and help which God affordeth to them that fear him and hope in his word ; thereby we see that they that wait long wait not in vain on the word of God's promise, and so learn to wait with patience ourselves, because those who depended on his promised assistance are then answered and supported ; yea, it is a ground of hope to all that so many will be gratified by the deliverance of one, when we so work for the deliverance of one that at length both he and others will have cause to be glad. (2.) Another thing is, it doth encourage others' prayers and praises for us, when we are useful and profitable, and bring in that supply to the body which may be justly expected from us according to the measure of that part which we sustain in the body. Look, as in the natural body the blood and the life passeth to and fro, there is a giving and receiving between all the members that live in the communion of it, so mutual obligations pass between the children of God. Many are interested in their mercies that are of use in the church: Rom. v. 7, 'For a good man some would even dare to die,' such as David or Paul ; yet this is no discouragement to the meanest or weakest, for they have their honour and use: 'When ye fail they shall receive you,' Luke xvi. 9 ; they have their ministry and service: 'Now the head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee,' 1 Cor. xii. 21. (3.) The humble and the meek, for the proud procure their own just dislike and disappointment. Solomon telleth us, 'Only by pride cometh contention,' Prov. xiii. 10. Pride is the great impediment and let to all Christian offices. We cannot so heartily pray for one another, nor praise God for one another, when pride and contention prevail. We should overcome this stomach and spleen: 'Bless them that curse you,' as David fasted for his enemies when they sought his life, Ps. xxxv. 12. You should not lay this stumbling-block in the way of their duty ; it is a great discouragement.

5. It informeth us how comfortable and how pleasant the converse and conference of godly persons is, and how much it excelleth the merriest meetings of the carnal. The special love which the godly have to one another doth exceedingly sweeten their converse, for the very presence of those we most dearly love is a pleasure to us to see, but much more their holy conference. When Christians meet together and find their own persuasions of the love, power, mercy and wisdom of God backed with the experience and testimony of others, it is a mutual strength and support to us ; and therefore the apostle saith, Rom i. 12, 'That I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith of you and me.' When we converse with them that can speak, not by hearsay only, but by experience, of the power of the blood of Christ in purifying their consciences, and his Spirit to sanctify their hearts, it is a mighty prop: 2 Cor. i. 4, 'And that we may comfort others with the comforts wherewith we are comforted of God.' Report of a report is a cold thing, not valued, but a report of what we witness and experience ourselves comes warmly upon our hearts. Nay, many times it may fall out that people of less knowledge, but more feeling and experience, may abundantly confirm the more knowing, and excite them to a greater mindfulness of God and heavenly things. But alas ! the meetings of carnal persons, what are they to this ? It may be they will fill your ears with stories

of hawking and hunting, the best wine and delicious meats, of honours and purchases in the world, all which tend but to increase the gust of the flesh, and the carnal savour which is baneful to us; or else with idle stories, the clatter of vanity, which are impertinent to our great end; or else about the world, thriving in the world: nothing about those high and excellent and necessary things of the grace of God in Christ, and the truth of the promises, and the glory of the world to come: Ps. xxxvii. 30, 31, 'The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment: the law of God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide;' and 'The mouth of the righteous is as choice silver;' they have a sense of better things. But alas! from others you hear nothing but unsavoury vanity, which is as different from the discourse of the children of God as the melody of a bird from the grunting of a hog or swine.

SERMON LXXXIII.

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.—VER. 75.

WE have need all to prepare for afflictions, for we are to take up our cross daily. Now, to help you to a right carriage under them, these words, well considered, will be of some use to you; they are the confession of a humble soul abundantly satisfied with God's dispensations. In them observe:—

1. A general truth or point of doctrine concerning the equity of God's judgments, *thy judgments, O Lord, are right.*

2. A particular application or accommodation of this truth to David's case and person, *in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.*

3. His sure and firm persuasion of both, *I know.* Let us explain these branches and parts of the text as they are laid forth.

1. The general truth, the Lord's judgments are right. In which proposition there is the subject and the predicate. The subject or things spoken are the Lord's judgments. The word is often put in this psalm and elsewhere for God's statutes, or precepts, or righteous laws; and in this sense some take it here, and make out the sense thus: 'Lord, I know that thy judgments,' viz., thy precepts, are holy, just, and good; and this persuasion is not lessened in me, though thou hast sharply afflicted me: I have as great a value and esteem for thy word as ever. But rather, by the Lord's judgments are meant the passages of his providence, as the latter clause sheweth; those judicial dispensations whereby he doth punish the wicked, or correct his children. And let it not seem strange that the troubles and afflictions of the godly should be called judgments; for though there be no vindictive wrath in them, yet they are called so upon a double reason: partly because they are acts of God's holy justice, correcting and humbling his people for sin, according to the sentence of his word. Thus it is said, 1 Peter iv. 17, that 'judgment shall begin at the house of God;' where the trials and troubles of the godly are plainly called

judgments. And partly because the Lord judiciously measureth and directeth them as the state of his children requireth and their strength will bear. So it is said, Jer. x. 24, 'Correct me, but in judgment.' The first notion implieth God's justice, the second his wisdom. And mark, it is said distinctly in the text, 'Thy judgments, O Lord.' His enemies might unjustly persecute him, but 'thy judgments;' so far as the Lord hath a hand in it, all was just and right: this is the subject or thing spoken of. Secondly, Here is the predicate, or what is said of it, 'are right;' the Hebrew, *tsedec*; the Septuagint, *ὅτι δικαιοσύνη τὰ κρίματα σου*, are righteousness itself; thy dispensations are wholly made up of perfect justice; how smart soever they be, they are right as to the cause, right as to the measure, right as to the end. The first of these respects concerneth God's justice, the two other his wisdom. First, Right as to the cause; they never exceed the value of their impulsive: Job xxxiv. 23, 'He will not lay upon man more than is right, that he should enter into judgment with him.' God never afflicteth his people above their desert, nor gives any just occasion to commence a suit against his providence. Secondly, Right as to the measure, not above the strength of the patient. In his own people's afflictions it is so: Isa. xxvii. 8, 'In measure when it shooteth forth thou wilt debate it; he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.' God dealeth with his own with much moderation, meting out their sufferings in due proportion. So Jer. xxx. 11, 'I will correct thee in measure.' Thirdly, Right as to their end and use. God knoweth how to strike in the right vein, and to suit his providence to the purpose for which it is appointed: the kind of the affliction is to be considered as well as the measure. The Lord chooseth that rod which is most likely to do his work. Paul had a thorn in the flesh, that he might not be exalted above measure, 2 Cor. xii. 7. He was a man inured to dangers and troubles from without, these were familiar to him, therefore he could the better bear them; but God would humble him by some pain in the flesh, which should sit near and close.

2. The particular accommodation of it to David, 'In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.' Pray mark, in the general case he observeth justice; in his own, faithfulness. The book called *Midrash Tillim* referreth these words to David's flight from Absalom, when he went to Mount Olivet weeping; it was an ill time then with David, he had no security for his life; being driven from his house and home, 'He went up Mount Olivet, going and weeping,' 2 Sam. xv. 30. Then, when so great and sore trouble was upon him, then he saith, 'I know that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.' Mark the emphasis; he doth not barely acknowledge that God was faithful, though, or notwithstanding he had afflicted him, but faithful in sending them. Affliction and trouble are not only consistent with God's love plighted in the covenant of grace, but they are parts and branches of the new covenant administration. God is not only faithful notwithstanding afflictions, but faithful in sending them. There is a difference between these two; the one is like an exception to the rule, *quæ firmat regulam in non exceptis*; the other makes it a part of the rule. God cannot be faithful without doing all things that tend to our good and eternal welfare: the conduct of his providence is one part of the covenant

engagement: as to pardon our sins, and sanctify us, and give us glory at the last, so to suit his providence as our need and profit requireth in the way to heaven. It is an act of his sovereign mercy, which he hath promised to his people, to use such discipline as conduceth to their safety. In short, the cross is not only an exception to the grace of the covenant, but a part of the grace of the covenant. The meaning is, God is obliged in point of fidelity to send sharp afflictions: Ps. lxxxix. 32, 'I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.' Sharp rods and sore stripes not only may stand and be reconciled with God's loving-kindness and truth, but they are effects and expressions of it; it is a part of that transaction, viz., his covenant love.

3. The third thing to be explained is his sense of these truths, 'I know.' Knowing implies clearness of apprehension and firmness of persuasion; so that, *I know*, is I fully understand, or else, I am confident or well assured of this truth. But from whence had David his knowledge? how knew he all God's judgments to be right? Not from the flesh, or from natural sense. No; the flesh is importunate to be pleased, will persuade us to the contrary. If we consult only with natural sense, we shall never believe that, when God is hacking and hewing at us, he intendeth our good and benefit, and that when sore judgments are upon us, his end is not to destroy, but to save, to mortify the sin, and save the person. Sense will teach us no such thing, but will surely misinterpret and misexpound the Lord's dealings; for the peace of God is a riddle to a natural heart, Phil. iv. 7. Whence then had David his knowledge? Partly from the word of God, and partly from his own observation and particular experience.

[1.] From the word of God; for it is a maxim of faith that God can do no wrong, that 'he is righteous in all his ways, and just in all his works,' Ps. cxlv. 17; and again, Deut. xxxii. 4, 'He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment and truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he.' These are undeniable truths revealed in the word of God, and must satisfy us, whatsoever sense saith to the contrary. The causes and end of God's particular judgments are sometimes secret, but they are always just: Ps. xevii. 2, 'Clouds and darkness are round about him, but righteousness and truth are the habitation of his throne.' Therefore when we see not the reason of God's particular dispensations, we must believe the righteousness and goodness of them.

[2.] David knew by his own observation and particular experience: he had much studied his own heart, and considered his own ill-deservings and soul-distempers, and therefore saw the Lord's discipline was necessary for him. We should better understand God's work, and sooner justify him both in point of justice and faithfulness, if we did use more observation, and did consider what need and profit there is of affliction: 'Tribulation worketh experience,' Rom. v. 4, 5. We see what need there was of affliction, and how seasonable the Lord's work was. This is a more sensible way of knowledge than the former. Faith is a surer ground, but spiritual observation hath its benefit. Natural conscience doth represent our guilt, but experience sheweth

God's faithfulness, how seasonably God took us in our month, and suited his providence to our present condition.

Doct. That it would much quiet the minds of the people of God about all the sad dispensations of his providence, if they would seriously consider the justice and faithfulness of them.

So did David silence all his murmurings when the hand of God was sore upon him; so should we silence all our murmuring, all our suspicions of God's dealing, when we are under the cross. I know the Lord doth nothing unjust, but is faithful; he will not retract his covenant love, and I know his covenant love binds him to lay on us seasonable affliction and correction. I shall do two things:—

First, Illustrate the point by some considerations.

Secondly, Show that there is much of justice and faithfulness in all the troubles and afflictions of God's people.

Consid. 1. We are not only to grant in the general that God's judgments are right, but that he hath in faithfulness afflicted us. So doth David, when the stroke of God was heavy upon himself. Many will assert the righteousness of God when they speak to others in their afflictions, but do not indeed justify him in the afflictions that come upon themselves. We are hasty to censure, but backward to humble our own souls before God: they will give him the praise of his justice when he chasteneth others, but think God dealeth harshly and rigorously with them when his scourge is upon their own backs. Such a difference is there between knowledge speculative and experimental, between that conscience which we have in others' concernments, and that knowledge which self-love giveth us in our own. David here doth not only own the general truth, but sees God's faithfulness when the stroke lighted upon himself. So Job iv. 3-5, you shall see this was objected to Job, that he could comfort others, but not the hand of God was upon him, his soul fainted. They that stand upon the shore may easily say to those that are in the midst of the waves and conflicting for life or death, Sail thus. When we are well, we give counsel to the sick; but if we were so, how would we take it ourselves? So can we say patiently, All is just, and keep silence to God?

Consid. 2. We must not only grant this truth, that God is faithful, when at ease, but when under the sharpest and smartest discipline. We use to praise God in prosperity, but we should bless him also when he seemeth to deal hardly with us; speak good of God when under the rod. When we view a cross at a distance, or in the doctrinal contemplation of this truth, we say that God may exercise us with the greatest evil, and that we need these methods to bring us to heaven; but when afflictions come thick, and near, and close, and we are deprived of our nearest and dearest comforts, credit, liberty, health, life, children, then we have other thoughts. It is more easy to speak of trouble than to bear it. We read of Jesus Christ that he learned by experience, Heb. v. 8. He had an actual experience by the things he suffered; and he saith, 'Now is my soul troubled,' John xii. 27. There is a vast difference between the most exact apprehension in the judgment, and the experimental feeling of it in the senses: the one may be without so much vexation as the other will produce. Though

Christ understood perfectly what his sufferings should be, and had resolved upon them, yet when he came to feel it, his very righteous soul was under perplexity, as a glass of pure water may be tossed and shaken. Affliction is another thing to present sense and feeling than it is to guess and imagination. Much more doth it hold good in us, for we have not such a perfect foresight of sufferings as Christ had. We suppose they may be avoided, or shifted off one way or other. I speak this that we may not depend upon our present resolutions when out of trouble, but labour to be more prepared than usually we are, that when trouble cometh upon us, we may glorify God.

Consid. 3. This acknowledgment must be the real language of our hearts, and not by word of mouth only: thus we must give unto God the praise of his truth and righteousness. We tip our tongues with good words, and learn such modesty in our language, as to say God is just, and do not rave against his providence in wild and bold speeches; but justice and faithfulness must be acknowledged not with the tongue so much as with the heart. It is the language of the heart which God looketh after, when the soul keepeth silence to God, and a due and suitable impression is left upon it of his justice, by a meek and humble submission: Micah vii. 9, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, for I have sinned against him.' When God is angry, and chastiseth for sin, we must stoop humbly under his afflicting hand, bear it patiently and submissively, for the rod is dipped in our own guilt; that stoppeth our mouths and checketh repinings. So, seeing his faithfulness, it maketh us 'accept the punishment of our iniquities,' Lev. xxvi. 41, that is, yield to it, as a man would to a bitter potion, or a medicinal preparative for his health; so to afflict is a means to get rid of sin, which would be the bane of the soul.

Consid. 4. It is not enough to acknowledge justice, but we must also acknowledge faithfulness; not only his just severity in the punishments of the wicked, but his fidelity and love in the correction of his children: it is not enough that we justify God, and forbear to murmur against his afflicting us, but we must see his love and faithfulness in it, and that he performeth his covenant love. His wisdom and justice, that suppresseth murmurings; his love and faithfulness, that giveth hope, and comfort, and courage: the one concerneth the honour of God, he righteth himself by his just judgments; the other concerneth our benefit and eternal welfare. Faithfulness is to us, and for our good. Pharaoh could own justice: Exod. ix. 27, 'The Lord is righteous, but I and my people are wicked.' But it is a higher thing to own faithfulness; that supposeth faith, as the other doth conviction. Guilt will sooner fly in our faces, and extort from us an acknowledgment of God's justice, than we can own the grace of the new covenant, especially when carnal sense and smart seemeth to speak the contrary. The sight of his justice checketh murmurings, the sight of his faithfulness fainting and discouragement. God's dispensations are just with respect to the sentence of the law, faithful with respect to the promises of the gospel. In short, the cause of all affliction is sin, therefore justice must be acknowledged; their end is repentance, and therefore faithfulness: the end is not destruction and ruin, so they might be acts of justice, as upon the wicked; but that we may be fit

to receive the promises, such to whom God will perform the promise of eternal life, and so acts of faithfulness.

Consid. 5. Faith must fix this as a ground not once to be questioned, much less to be doubted or denied, that God is just, upright, and faithful in all his dealings, though weak man be not able to conceive the reasons of them. His justice may be dark, as when he permitteth us to the will of wicked men, who afflict us without a cause, and lay on without any mercy and pity, and God seemeth to befriend their cause, at least doth not restrain them, nor give check to their fury. We are apt to be tempted to thoughts of rigour and injustice in God's dispensations, but we must consider not men's dealing, but God's. It is unjust as to men, but we have no cause to be angry with God, and complain of God, as if he did not do right. No; though we do not see the reason of it, yet it is just. 'God's judgments are a great deep.' We should believe the righteousness and goodness of God in the general, Ps. xxxvi. 7, before we can find it out. The people of God have maintained their principle, when they have been puzzled and embangled in interpreting God's providence: Jer. xii. 1, 'Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee;' and Ps. lxxiii. 1, 'Yet God is good to Israel.' In all such cases it is best to acknowledge our own ignorance, and rather accuse ourselves of blindness than God of injustice. This is a fixed truth, that God is righteous, though we cannot so clearly make it out. And sometimes we are tempted to doubt of his fidelity and truth, when we feel nothing but the smart of the rod: the benefit is future, not an object of sense, but faith; and it must be evident to faith before it is evident to feeling: Heb. xii. 11, 'No affliction for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; but afterwards it bringeth the quiet fruit of righteousness.' When all is sharp and hard to sense, faith can see all is for our profit, for our good. Here is nothing repugnant to God's truth, nothing but what is necessary to make good his truth. Faith must determine it to be, when sense will not find it so. God's works are misexpounded when we go altogether by present sense, whether internal or external: many times we know not what God is about to do, as Christ told Peter: John xiii. 7, 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' That which the Lord is doing tendeth not to ruin and wrath, though through our ignorance and mistake we so interpret it. Alas! no wonder we are in the dark, when we so judge of his work, who is 'wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working;' who will not always satisfy our sense and curiosity, but chooseth such a way as will most suit his intent. But ever in all such cases faith must determine that God is just and faithful, and will cast all things for the best, though we see it not; we must assent by faith, when we cannot find it by sense internal or external: 'I know in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.'

Secondly, I am to show you, and to prove to you, that there is much of justice and faithfulness to be observed in all the afflictions which come upon us.

First, There is much of justice in all God's judgments. I prove it:—

1. From God's nature: Ps. cxix. 137, 'Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments;' his work is as his being is, holy and

righteous ; all his providences carry a condecency and becomingness with his nature. We presume it of a righteous man that he will do righteous things ; and shall not we believe so of the holy God ? We cannot be infallibly persuaded of a righteous man, for a righteous man may leave his righteousness, because the creature is mutable ; and the most righteous and innocent man hath mixed principles, and his rule is without him, and sometimes he may hit it, and sometimes swerve from it : but God is unchangeable, his will and nature is the supreme reason and measure of all things ; his acts are accordingly, he cannot err. A carpenter who hath a line in his hand may chop right or miss ; but if we could suppose a carpenter whose hand was his rule, he would always hit right. We may be confident the judge of all the earth will do right ; his righteousness and the righteousness of men differ infinitely more than a candle differeth from the sun : Zeph. iii. 5, ' The righteous God in the midst of thee will do no iniquity.' God will not, yea, he cannot ; it is contrary to his nature. Abraham might seek to wriggle out of danger by a shift, Noah might fall into drunkenness, Lot pollute himself with incest, Moses trip in his faith, David destroy his innocent servant Uriah, Jonah fall into fear and rash anger, the angels may depart from their rule, if the divine goodness should cease to support them for a moment ; but it is impossible that God, who is holiness and righteousness itself, can err and fail in any of his actions.

2. God never afflicteth or bringeth on judgment without a cause : ' For this cause many are sick,' 1 Cor. xi. 30 ; there is something done on the creature's part before punishment is inflicted. If we consider God as the Lord dispensing grace, he acts sovereignly, and according to his own will and pleasure : ' Even so, Father, because it pleaseth thee,' Mat. xi. 27, for he may do with his own as he pleaseth ; it is no wrong to show his grace to some, and pass by others. But if we consider God as a judge, he never punisheth without a foregoing cause on the creature's part. God, who is arbitrary in his gifts, is not arbitrary in his judgments : there is a rule of commerce between him and his creatures, stated and set forth, and allowed and appointed by him, and consented unto by us : the directive and counselling part is the rule of our obedience, and the sanction or comminatory part is the rule of his judicial process. In acts of grace, and in dispensing with the violations of his law, he sometimes maketh use of his prerogative, but not in punishing, there he keepeth to his law ; and therefore it is that the saints do give him the honour of his justice : Dan. ix. 7, ' O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face ; for we have sinned, and done wickedly, and have rebelled in departing from thy precepts ;' Neh. ix. 33, ' Thou art just in all that is brought upon us ; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly : ' all our trouble is the penalty of his broken law justly inflicted on us. In short, the breach is first on our part, there is some violation of his law or contempt of his grace ; but God loveth us first, there he hath the precedency ; he beginneth in all acts of grace, but the reason of his judicial dispensations is first with us. We are first in the offence, and provide fuel for his wrath before it break out upon us.

3. When there is cause given, God doth not presently take it, but

giveth sinners time in his process against them, and doth not presently execute the sentence of his word till they are found incorrigible. He giveth them warning before he striketh; he wooeth and soliciteth by many kind messages to return to their duty, and speaketh to them sometimes in the rough, sometimes in the still voice: 'He bringeth his judgment to light every morning,' as the prophet speaketh, Zeph. iii. 5; he doth so delight in mercy, and is so tender of the workmanship of his hands, especially his own people, that he never proceedeth to severity as long as there is some way unessayed to reclaim them, not yet made use of. As one that would open a door, and knows not the key; he tries key after key, one dispensation after another; he doth not take the sinner at first word, but followeth him with frequent warnings of his danger, with offers of advantage if he return; yea, at last he is loath to give them up to severe judgments, even then when he can scarce without imputation to his holiness forbear any longer; Hosea xi. 8, 'How shall I give thee up? I am God, and not man.' Such expostulations and speeches are very frequent in the prophets; and all these speeches do abundantly justify God when he judgeth: he would fain hold off the extremity of judgments deserved by them; the Lord maketh a stand, and would fain be prevented before he proceedeth to his strange work.

4. The judgments inflicted are always short of the cause, surely they never exceed the value of it: Ezra ix. 13, 'Thou hast punished us less than we have deserved.' God doth not exact the whole debt of sinners which they owe to his justice. It was a heavy stroke that then lighted upon Jerusalem. Was their wound but a scratch, or affliction little? Doleful and sad ruin was brought upon that place, the city and the temple burnt to ashes, the people carried captive to a strange land; yet 'Thou hast punished us less than we have deserved.' They were in Babylon, they might have been in hell; our reward is always more than our desert, but our punishment is always less than our desert. We count it a favour if forfeiture of life be punished with banishment, or if a sentence of banishment be commuted into a fine, or the fine be mitigated and brought lower; and shall we think God dealeth rigorously with us? When he layeth on some heavy cross, he might have cast us into hell, and laid his hand upon us for ever. See Job xi. 6, 'O know, therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.' We have low thoughts of sin, and therefore have grievous apprehensions of God's judgments. We do but sip of the cup, when God might make us drink of the dregs of it.

Secondly, I am to prove that the godly may discern much of faithfulness in their afflictions; this will appear to you by these considerations:—

1. In the covenant of grace God hath promised to bestow upon his people real and principal mercies; these are promised absolutely, other things conditionally. God doth not break his covenant if he doth not give us temporal happiness, because that is not absolutely promised, but only so far forth as it may be good for us; but eternal life is promised without any such exception unto the heirs of promise. Eternal promises and threatenings, being of things absolutely good or evil, are therefore absolute and peremptory; the righteous shall not fail of the reward, nor the wicked escape the punishment; but tem-

poral promises and threatenings being of things not simply good or evil, are reserved to be dispensed according to God's wisdom and good pleasure, in reference and subordination to eternal happiness. It is true it is said, 1 Tim. iv. 8, that 'godliness hath the promise of this life, and that which is to come;' but with this reference, that the less gives place to the greater; if the promises of this life may hinder us in looking after the promises of the life to come, God may take the liberty of the cross, and withhold these things, and disappoint us of our worldly hope. A man lying under the guilt of sin may many times enjoy worldly comforts to the envy of God's children, and one of God's children may be greatly afflicted and distressed in the world, for in all these dispensations God looketh to his end, which is to make us eternally happy.

2. This being God's end, he is obliged in point of fidelity to use all the means that conduce thereunto, that he may attain his eternal purpose in bringing his holy ones to glory: Rom. viii. 28, 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' Good! what good? It may be temporal, so it falls out sometimes a man's temporal good is promoted by his temporal loss: Gen. i. 20, 'Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good;' they sold their brother a slave, but God meant him to be a great potentate in Egypt. It may be spiritual good: Ps. cxix. 71, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.' But, to be sure, eternal good, to bring about his eternal purpose of making them everlastingly happy. And in this sense the apostle saith, 'All things are yours,' 1 Cor. iii. 22. Ordinances, providences, life, death, all dispensed with a respect to their final happiness or eternal benefit; not only ordinances to work internal grace, but providences as an external help and means; for God having set his end, he will prosecute it congruously, and as it may agree with man's nature, by external providences as well as internal grace. See Ps. cxxv. 3, 'The rod of the wicked shall not always rest upon the back of the righteous.' God hath power enough to give them grace to bear it, though the rod had continued; and can keep his people from iniquity, though the rod be upon them; but he considereth the imbecility of man's nature, which is apt to tire under long afflictions, and therefore not only giveth more grace, but takes off the temptation. He could humble Paul without a thorn in the flesh, 2 Cor. xii. 7, but he will use a congruous means.

3. Among these means, afflictions, yea, sharp afflictions, are some of those things which our need and profit requireth; they are needful to weaken and mortify sin: Isa. xxvii. 9, 'By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged;' to increase and quicken grace: Heb. xii. 10, 'But he chasteneth us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' Without this discipline we should forget God and ourselves; therefore, that we may return to God, he afflicts us: Hosea v. 15, 'In their afflictions they will seek me early;' and come to ourselves: Luke xv. 17, the prodigal 'came to himself.' Afflictions are necessary for us upon the former suppositions, namely, that God hath engaged himself to perfect grace where it is begun, and to use all means which may conduce to our eternal welfare, that we may not miscarry and come short of our great hopes: 1 Cor. xi. 32, 'When we are judged,

we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.' The carnal reprobate world are left to a looser and larger discipline. Brambles are not pruned when vines are. New creatures require a more close inspection than others do. Self-confidence and spiritual security are apt to grow upon them ; therefore, to mortify our self-confidence, to awaken us out of spiritual sleep, we need to be afflicted, and also to quicken and rouse up a spirit of prayer. We grow cold and flat, and ask mercies for form's sake : Isa. xxvi. 16, 'Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.' And that we may be quickened to a greater mindfulness of heavenly things. The best of us, when we get a carnal pillow under our heads, are apt to sleep secure. God will not let us alone to our ruin, but afflicts us that we may be refined from the dregs of the flesh, and that our gust and relish of heavenly things may be recovered, and that we may be quickened to a greater diligence in the heavenly life. Look, as earthly parents are not faithful to their children's souls when they live at large, and omit that correction which is necessary for them : Prov. xxix. 15, 'The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.' The mother is mentioned, because they are usually more fond and indulgent, and spare many times, and mar the child ; but our heavenly Father will not be unfaithful, who is so wise that he will not be blinded by any passion, hath such a perfect love, and does so fixedly design our eternal welfare, that he rebuketh that he may reform, and reformeth that he may save.

4. God's faithfulness about the affliction is twofold—in bringing on the affliction, and guiding the affliction.

[1.] In bringing on the affliction, both as to the time and kind, when our need requireth, and such as may do the work : 1 Peter i. 6, 'Ye are in heaviness for a season, if need be.' When some distemper was apt to grow upon us, and we were straggling from our duty : Ps. cxix. 67, 'Before I was afflicted I went astray.' Some disappointment and check we meet with in a way of sin, which is a notable help in the spiritual life, where God giveth a heart to improve it.

[2.] As to guiding the affliction both to measure and continuance, that it may do us good and not harm : 1 Cor. x. 13, 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' Violent temptations are not permitted where the Lord seeth us weak and infirm ; as Jacob drove as the little ones were able to bear. So when the temptation continued is like to do us hurt, either God will remove it—2 Thes. iii. 3, 'Faithful is the Lord, who will establish and keep you, ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ, from the evil ;' the persecutions of unreasonable men are there intended—or else support them under it : 2 Cor. xii. 9, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'

Use 1. To check and reprove divers evils which are apt to grow upon our spirits in our troubles.

1. Murmuring and repining thoughts against God's providence. Why should we murmur and complain, since we justly suffer what we suffer, and it is the Lord's condescension that he will make some good use of these sufferings to our eternal happiness, that we may be

capable of everlasting consolation? His justice should stop murmurings: Lam. iii. 39, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?' If he complain, he can complain of none but himself; that evil choice he hath made for his own soul, which it may be he would never have thought of but upon this occasion. His punishment here carrieth no proportion with his offence; it is *punishment* in the singular number, *sins* in the plural; one punishment for many acts of sin: and a *living man*, on this side hell, what is this to everlasting torments? Life cannot be without many blessings to accompany it; while living we may see an end of this misery, or have time to escape those eternal torments which are far worse. The form of the words sheweth why we should thus expostulate with ourselves, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain?' Why do we complain? God hath not cut us off from the land of the living, nor cast us into hell; it is the punishment of sin, and is far less than we have deserved. Again, the faithfulness of God checketh murmurings. God knoweth what way to take with us to bring us to glory; therefore trust yourselves in God's hands, and let him take his own methods: 'Commit your souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator,' 1 Peter iv. 19. He is πιστὸς κτίστης; as he is a creator, he doth not love to destroy the work of his hands; as he is faithful in his covenant, he will take the best and safest course to bring you to heaven.

2. Let it check immoderate sorrow and uncomely dejection of spirit; he is just in the afflictions of his people, but yet so that he is also faithful; he is a father when he beateth and indulgeth, when he smiles and when he frowns. Afflictions do not make void our adoption, they rather increase our confidence of it, Heb. xii. 5. Whatever we do upon other reasons, we should not suspect his love because of our afflictions. God's strokes do not make void his promises, nor doth he retract his gift of pardon when he chastiseth. Mere crosses and troubles are not an argument of God's displeasure, but acts of his faithfulness; so that we have reason to give thanks for his discipline, rather than question his love. In the book of Job it is made a mark of his love, as in those words which are so frequent, Job vii. 17, 18, 'What is man that thou art mindful of him? that thou chastisest him every morning, and triest him every moment?' We are not only beneath his anger, but unworthy of his care, as if a prince should take upon him to form the manners of a beggar's child; it is a condescension that the great God should deal with us, and suit his providences for our good.

3. This should check our fears and cares; his judgments are right and full of faithfulness; he will bear us through all our trials, and make an advantage of them, and perfect that grace which he hath begun, and finally bring us to eternal glory. The Lord's faithfulness in keeping promises is often propounded as a strong pillar of the saints' confidence: 1 Cor. i. 9, 'Faithful is God, by whom ye are called;' 1 Thes. v. 24, 'Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.' He dispenseth all things with respect to our eternal welfare. But I am afraid of myself; I have provoked the Lord to leave me to myself; but the Lord will pardon weaknesses when they are confessed: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is just and faithful to forgive them,' speaking to reconciled believers; and when we fall, the Lord hath

ways and means to raise us up again, that we perish not; by checks of conscience: 2 Sam. xxiv. 10, 'And David's heart smote him when he had numbered the people;' Ps. cxix. 59, 'I thought on my ways,' &c.; by the word, as Nathan roused up David, 'Thou art the man.' God, that foresaw all things, hath ordered them so that nothing shall cross his eternal purpose and promise made to us in Christ.

Use 2. Let us acknowledge God's justice and faithfulness in all things that befall us. For motives, consider—

1. It is much for the honour of God, Ps. li. 4, that, under the cross, we should have good thoughts of God, and clear him in all that he saith and doth, see love in his rebukes.

2. It is for our profit; it is the best way to obtain grace to bear afflictions, or to get deliverance out of them. When God hath humbled his people, exercised their grace, he will restore to them their wonted privileges; he waiteth for the creatures' humbling, Lev. xxvi. 41, 42.

For means:—

[1.] You must be one in covenant with God, for to them the dispensations of God come marked not only with justice, as to all, but faithfulness: Ps. xxv. 10 'All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth to them that keep his covenant.'

[2.] You must examine yourselves; the Lord complains of the neglect of this, that when they were in affliction they would not consider: Jer. viii. 6, 'No man said, What have I done?' If you would consider, you would see cause enough to justify God: Lam. iii. 39, 40, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain? Let us search and try our ways, and turn to the Lord.'

[3.] You must observe providence, and your hearts must be awake and attend to it: Ps. cvii. 43, 'Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord;' Eccles. vii. 14, 'In the day of adversity consider.'

[4.] You must be such as value not your happiness by the increase or decrease of worldly comforts, but by the increase or decrease of grace in your souls: 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'For this cause we faint not, because, though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day.' If you value yourselves by your outward condition, you will still be imbrangled; you should more highly esteem of and be more solicitous about the welfare of your souls in a time of affliction than of all things else in the world: and you will more easily submit and more wisely consider of his doing, and the better understand your interest. When the main care is about your souls, you will value other losses the less, as long as your jewel is in safe hands.

[5.] You must resign your souls to God entirely without exception, refer yourselves to his methods, and let him take his own way to bring you to everlasting glory. When you do with quietness of heart put yourselves into God's hands, as being persuaded of his love and faithfulness, you will be the sooner satisfied in God's providence, seeing he doth all things well. The apostle bids them, 1 Peter iv. 19, put your souls in Christ's hands, and hold on your duty with courage and confidence, cheerfully and constantly. You have no reason to doubt but Christ will take the custody and charge of the soul that is com-

mitted to him : 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed, that he is able to keep that I have committed to him.' Venture your souls in this bottom ; he hath power to keep it, he hath pawned his faithfulness in the promise.

SERMON LXXXIV.

Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.—VER. 76.

IN the foregoing verse he had acknowledged that God had afflicted him, and now he prayeth that God would comfort him. The same hand that woundeth must heal, and from whom we have our affliction we must have our comfort : Hosea vi. 1, 'Come, let us return unto the Lord ; for he hath torn, and he will heal us ; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.' Affliction is God's judicial act, a kind of putting the creature in prison ; which being done by the supreme judge, who hath an absolute power to save and to destroy, to ruin or pardon, there is no breaking prison or getting out without his leave.

He doth there not only speak of affliction, but of the justice and faithfulness which God showed in it.

1. Justice. Those that humbly confess the justice of his strokes may with the more confidence implore his mercy. Judgment hath done its work when the creature is humble and penitent, There lieth an appeal then from the tribunal of his justice to the throne of his grace. Though our sins deserve affliction, yet there is comfort in the merciful nature of God and the promises of the gospel. David first acknowledgeth that he was justly afflicted, and then he flieth to mercy and beggeth comfort.

2. He observeth also a faithfulness in all God's dispensations ; he doth not afflict his children to destroy them, but to prepare them for the greater comfort. As one of his children and servants, David sueth out his privilege. God, that is just and true, will also be kind and merciful. To have judgment without mercy, and desolation without consolation, is the portion of the wicked : but, Lord, saith he, 'I am thy servant,' therefore 'I pray thee let thy merciful kindness be for my comfort.'

So that you see this request is fitly grafted upon the former acknowledgment. In it observe—

1. The original cause of all the good which we expect, *thy merciful loving-kindness.*

2. The effect now sued for, *be for my comfort*, or to comfort me.

3. The instrument or means of obtaining it, which is double :—

[1.] On God's part, the word, *according to thy word.*

[2.] On our part, prayer, *let, I pray thee.*

(1.) In the word there is the relief discovered and offered, and thereby we are encouraged and assured.

(2.) On our part there is prayer, in which we act faith and spiritual desire.

(3.) We have hope given in the word, and we sue it out by prayer.

(4.) The subject capacitated to receive this effect, from that cause, in this order, *thy servant*.

Doct. That the people of God have liberty, and much encouragement from God's merciful nature and promises, to ask comfort in their afflictions.

This point will be best discussed by going over the parts and branches of the text as they have been laid forth to you.

First, The primary and principal cause of all comfort is the merciful kindness of God. We read in 2 Cor. i. 3, that he is 'the father of mercies;' and then it presently followeth, that he is 'the God of all comfort.' The remedy of all our evils lieth in the mercy of God, and his kindness and goodness is the fountain of all our blessedness. I shall inquire—

1. What his merciful kindness is.

2. What special encouragement this is to the people of God.

1. What his merciful kindness is. You see here is a compound word, which importeth both his pity and his bounty. Here is mercifulness and kindness mentioned. First, His mercifulness. Mercy hath its name from misery. *Misericordia* is nothing else but the laying of the misery of others to heart, with intention of affording them relief and succour. In God it noteth his readiness to do good to the miserable, notwithstanding sin. The motion cometh from within, from his own breast and bowels: for 'our God is pitiful and of tender mercy,' James v. 11; and the act of it is extended and reached out unto the creature in seasonable relief, for the throne of grace was erected for this purpose, Heb. iv. 11. Two things there are in mercy—(1.) A propension and inclination to commiserate the afflicted; (2.) A ready relief and succour of them according to our power, *affectus et effectus*. (1.) There is a compassion or being affected with the misery of others. This properly cannot be in God, in whom as there is no passion, so strictly speaking there is no compassion. Yet something analogous there is, a taking notice of our misery, something like a pity arising in his heart upon the sight of it, which the scripture frequently ascribeth to God, and we can best understand as we consider the divine perfections shining forth in the human nature of Christ: Exod. ii. 24, he 'heard their groaning;' and Isa. lxiii. 9, 'In all their afflictions he was afflicted;' Judges x. 16, 'His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel;' forms of speech taken from the manner of men, who use to be thus affected when they see a miserable object. God in his simple and perfect nature cannot be said either to joy or grieve, but he carrieth himself as one thus affected. Or these expressions were laid in aforehand to suit with the divine perfections as manifested in Christ, who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities. (2.) Mercy noteth the actual exhibition of help and relief to the miserable. When his people cry to him, he runneth to the cry: Ps. lxxviii. 38, 'He being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not; yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.' Mark, there God's forgiving the iniquity was not inflicting the temporal punishment or destroying the sinner presently; the cause of all was not any good in the sinner, but

pity in God, that moved him to spare them for the time. So he doth sometimes for those that cry to him but in a natural manner, as a beast maketh its moan when it is in pain. But much more will his compassion show itself to his people, when they bemoan themselves in a spiritual manner: Jer. xxxi. 18, 20, 'I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.' What then? 'My bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.' When Ephraim was bewailing his sins, God taketh notice of it, and returneth an answer full of fatherly affection, that he would surely show him mercy. God's compassion proceedeth from love as the cause, and produceth relief as the effect. Secondly, the next word is kindness; that noteth the bounty of God, or his free inclination to do good without our merit, and against our merit. The cause is not in us, but himself. We draw an ill picture of God in our minds, as always angry and ready to destroy. No; the Lord is kind, and that many times to 'the unthankful and to the evil,' Luke vi. 35. We should all enlarge our thoughts more about God's merciful nature, that we may love him more, that we may not keep off from him. As long as we think he delighteth in the creature's misery, or seeketh occasions of man's ruin and destruction, God is made hateful. No; you must conceive of him as one that is kind, that 'doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men,' Lam. iii. 33, but is ready to do good upon all occasions. We need not fear any hurt from God, but what we willingly bring upon ourselves. He destroyeth not humble souls that lie at his feet, and would have mercy upon his own terms.

2. What encouragement this is to the people of God.

[1.] It is an encouragement, because the object of mercy is misery. Mercy is favour shown to a miserable person. Now, the more sense of our misery, especially of our true misery, which is sin, the greater hopes. So that the broken-hearted are more capable of his mercy than others are. God will 'revive the spirit of the contrite ones,' Isa. lvii. 15-17. He taketh care to comfort them and to look after them, whatever be neglected, Isa. lx. 2. None are so apt to presume of mercy as the careless, nor none less capable of mercy, or more deserve judgment. While we make nothing of sin it is easy to believe mercy. In a time of peace sin is nothing, vanity and carnality nothing, a negligent course of profession nothing, vain talk, idle mis-spence of time, pleasing the flesh with all it craveth is nothing, and there needeth no such niceness and strictness—God is merciful; but when the conscience is awakened, and we see our actions with their due aggravations, especially at the hour of death, and when earthly comforts fail, then it is hard to believe God's mercy. Sin is a blacker thing than they did imagine, and they find it another manner of thing than ever they thought of; and the same unbelief that now weakens their faith about their duty, and what belongeth to their duty, doth now weaken their faith about their comfort, and what belongeth to their comfort. Those that now question precepts will then question promises. Well, then, the careless and negligent are not capable objects of the tenders of mercy; but the sensible, and the contrite, and the serious, these are the fittest objects, though they think themselves farthest off from mercy. Those that have a deep

sense of their own unworthiness most see a need of mercy, and most admire mercy, Gen. xxxii. 10. They see that mercy doth all, that there is somewhat of the pity and kindness of God in all things vouchsafed. They apprehend they are always in some necessity, or in some dependence, and they are unworthy, and that it is at God's mercy to continue or take away any comfort they have. Health, liberty, strength, all is dipped in mercy, continued in mercy, restored at mercy.

[2.] It is an encouragement to us, because the scripture saith so much of this mercy in God. *Id agit tota scriptura, ut credamus in Deum*, saith Luther. It is natural to him: 1 Cor. i. 3, 'The father of mercies,' not *pater ultionum*, but *miser ricordiarum*; he is as just as he is merciful, but he delighteth in the exercise of one attribute more than the other—Micah vii. 18, the other his 'strange work.' There is a fulness and plenty, abundant mercy, 1 Peter i. 3; and Ps. li. 1, 'According to the multitude of thy tender mercies.' Our wants are many, and so are our sins; only plentiful mercy can supply and overcome them. They are tender mercies, compared with those of a father and a mother. Of a father: Ps. ciii. 13, 'As a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity those that fear him.' We need not much entreat a father to pity his child in misery. An earthly father may be ignorant of our misery, as Jacob in Joseph's case: an earthly father pitieth foolishly, but God wisely, when it is most for our benefit; an earthly father's pity may go no further than affection, and cannot always help his children and relieve their misery. But God, as he is metaphorically said to have the affection, so he hath an all-sufficient power to remove any evil present, or avert that which is imminent. With that of a mother: Isa. xlix. 15, 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee,' saith the Lord. In the general, passions in females are more vehement, especially in human creatures; the mother expresseth the greatest tenderness and largeness of love. God hath the wisdom of a father and bowels of a mother. Mark, it is not to an adopted child, but to her own son, her sucking child that hangeth on her breast, cannot subsist without the mother's care. Mothers are wont to be most chary and tenderly affected towards them, poor helpless infants and children, that cannot shift for themselves; nature hath impressed this disposition on them. Suppose some of them should be so unnatural as to forget their sucking babes, which is a case rare to be found, yet 'I will not forget you,' saith the Lord. They are durable compassions: 'His compassions fail not,' Lam. iii. 22. They are continual mercies, supplying daily wants, pardoning daily failings, bestowing daily mercies. Oh, that the miserable and the wretched, those that find themselves so, could believe this and plead this, and cast themselves in the arms of this merciful Father! Surely the penitent are not more ready to ask than he to give: 'Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace,' Heb. iv. 16. Let not our sins keep us from him; our misery rather than our worthiness is an object of his mercy.

[3.] His mercy is more to his people than to others. There is a general mercy and a special mercy. (1.) There is a general mercy

by which God sustaineth and helpeth any creature that is in misery, especially man: so Christ calleth him merciful as he showeth himself 'kind to the unthankful and evil,' Luke vi. 36. Had it not been for this mercy the world had been long since reduced into its ancient chaos, and the frame of nature dissolved. (2.) There is a special mercy which he showeth to his people, pardoning their sins, sanctifying their hearts, accepting their persons. So 'of his mercy hath he saved us,' Titus iii. 4, 5; 'Quickened us;' Eph. ii. 4, 5, 'God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.' This showeth God hath more mercy for his people than for others. Now this is a great encouragement, he that took pity upon us in our lost estate, and did then pardon our sins freely, will he not take pity upon us now we are in a state of grace, and have our sins pardoned? Surely he will show mercy unto us still in forbearing the punishment due unto us, or in mitigating his corrections, or sweetening them with his love. What matter is it who hateth us, when the Almighty pitieth us, and is so tender over us?

Secondly, The satisfying effect, which is comfort. Here I shall show—

1. What is comfort.

2. That consolation is the gift and proper work of God, to be asked of him.

1. What is comfort. It is sometimes put for the object or thing comfortable. Sometimes for the disposition of the subject, or that sense and apprehension that we have of it.

[1.] The object or thing comfortable, and so comfort may note:—
 (1.) Deliverance and temporal blessings. These things are comfortable to the senses, and in a moderate proportion and with submission they may be asked of God. That comfort is put for deliverance many scriptures witness. Take these for a taste: Ps. lxxi. 21, 'After deep and sore troubles thou shalt increase my greatness and comfort me on every side;' so Ps. lxxxvi. 17, 'Show me a token for good, that they which hate me may see it and be ashamed; because thou Lord hast holpen me and comforted me;' so Isa. xii. 1, 'In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger was turned away, and thou comfortedst me.' In all these places comfort is put for temporal deliverance, which is an effect of God's mercy, and may be an object of the saints' prayers. It is lawful to deprecate afflictions. There are but few of the best of God's children that can hold out under long troubles without murmuring or fainting.
 (2.) Another object of comfort is the pardon of sins, or a sense of God's special love in Christ, wrought on our hearts. This is matter of comfort indeed. This is the principal effect of God's merciful kindness in this life, and the great consolation of the saints, as offering a remedy against our greatest evil, which is trouble that ariseth from guilt and sin. This obtained filleth them with joy and peace, Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'Puts gladness into our hearts.' To feel God's love in the soul, Rom. v. 5, is the heaven upon earth which a believer enjoyeth, which allayeth the bitterness of all his troubles. Heaven above is nothing but comfort, and the comforts of the Spirit are heaven below. God keepeth not all

for the life to come. (3.) Another object of comfort is our happy estate in heaven, which puts an end to all our miseries: Rev. vii. 19, 'God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes;' Rev. xxi. 4, 'There shall be no more death nor sorrow, nor crying nor any pain;' Luke xvi. 19, 'In thy lifetime thou receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented.' We have not our full comfort till we come to heaven. In the world there still is day and night, summer and winter; here is a mixture of mourning and joy, but there all comfort, Mat. v. 4. (4.) The highest and chiefest object of our comfort is the Lord himself: 1 Sam. xxx. 6, 'David comforted himself in the Lord his God.' Though all things else fail, this should satisfy us. Though we have little health, no friends, no outward supports to rejoice in, yet thou hast God, whose favour is life, and who is the fountain of happiness, and the centre of the soul's rest. The prophet, when reduced not only to some straits but great exigencies: Hab. iii. 18, 'Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' The joy of sense is in the creature, the joy of faith is in God. Thus we may consider comfort objectively. All that I shall say further is this, that we should take heed what we make to be the object of our solid comfort, Luke x. 24. They are carnal men that wholly place their comfort in earthly things, in the pleasures, and honours, and profits of the world: Luke vi. 24, 'Woe to you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation.' They have all here, and can look for no more, and if disappointed here, they are utterly miserable. There are consolations arising from good things exhibited, but more in good things promised. 'Everlasting consolations,' 2 Thes. ii. 16.

[2.] Let us consider it subjectively. Comfort is the strengthening of the mind when it is apt to be weakened by doubts, fears, and sorrows. As by patience we are kept from murmuring, so by comfort we are kept from fainting. It is the strength, stay, and support of the heart against any grievance whereby it is likely to be overcome. There are three words by which that delightful sense of God's favour as a stay and strengthening to the heart is expressed—comfort, peace, and joy. (1.) Comfort is that sense of his love by which the sorrows that arise from the sense of sin and the fears of God's justice are not altogether removed and taken away, yet so mitigated and allayed that the soul is not overwhelmed by them, but hope doth more prevail. This is the nature of comfort, that it doth not altogether remove the evil, but so alleviate and assuage it, that we are able to bear it with some alacrity and cheerfulness: and this is the common state of believers, answerable to the ordinary measure of faith which God giveth his children. Though they are assaulted with sorrows, doubts, and fears, yet they have that true and solid ground of comfort in the promises which begets some hope and expectation towards God; and when the conflict groweth grievous, God of his mercy allayeth the storm by the working of his comforting Spirit. (2.) There is peace, which is another notion which implieth comfort, but withal a more full degree of it; for peace doth so settle and calm the conscience, that they are assaulted either with none or very light fears. It may be explained by external peace. External peace is that state of things which is not troubled with wars

from abroad, or intestine tumults and confusions at home, for some long space of time. A truce is a shorter respite, but a peace is a long calm and quiet. So when we are not assaulted with doubts and troubles, but have much peace and quietness of spirit in believing: Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.' (3.) As peace exceedeth consolation, so doth joy exceed peace, and beget a more notable sense of itself in the soul. In peace all things are quiet, so as we feel no anxious tossings of mind, no gripes and fears of an accusing conscience; but in joy, true joy, more, some lively motions of heart accompanied with a more lively pleasure and delight. In peace the soul is in such a condition as the body is when nothing paineth us: but in joy,—as when the corporeal senses are mightily moved with such things as delight and please them, as at a feast,—the soul is filled with perpetual suavities, so great many times as cannot be told: 1 Peter i. 8, 'Joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

Well, then, this is comfort, if you consider it with respect to the sense of God's love, or the hopes of glory; such a lightening and easing of the heart as sheweth itself in alacrity in God's service, and courage in tribulations.

1. These comforts, though not absolutely necessary to salvation, yet conduce much to the well-being of a Christian, and therefore are not to be despised. It is as oil to the wheels, Job xv. 11. If neglected and not sought after with earnest diligence, they are despised, which cannot be without great sin.

2. It follows after holiness, as heat doth fire. The oil of grace will breed the oil of gladness. There are certain spiritual pleasures which do attend a course of obedience. Holiness is our work, comfort our reward; holiness is God's due, comfort our profit and interest: Acts ix. 31, 'Walked in the fear of God and comfort of the Holy Ghost.' Grace carrieth us out to honour God, love to him breedeth comfort. It is strange if it be not so; there is some unusual impediment.

3. Though our main comfort be in heaven, yet whilst we are here in the world we have some foregoing consolation, as an earnest and pledge of more to ensue, and as the solace of our pilgrimage, Ps. cxvii. 54. Here is not only the offer, but the sealing of pardon and peace to the soul.

4. Comfort is more needful at some time than at others, and God dispenseth it suitably to our trials, necessities, and wants. In great afflictions and temptations there is a larger allowance, because they need greater comforts, 2 Cor. i. 5; a drop of honey is not enough to sweeten a hogshead of vinegar. The Lord reserveth the comforts of his Spirit for such a time. The more humble and frequent in prayer, grace is more exercised, drawn forth into the view of conscience.

2. Comfort is to be asked of God, for it is his proper gift. It is his name: 'The God of all comfort,' 2 Cor i. 3; and 2 Cor. vii. 6, 'The God that comforteth those that are cast down.' It is well that our comforts are in the hand of God; we should have little of it if it were in the disposal of the creature.

Consider:—

1. That natural comforts are the gifts of God: 1 Tim. i. 17, 'He giveth us richly all things to enjoy,' and sets forth the bounds of our

habitation, where and how much we shall have, and giveth and taketh these things at his pleasure, raising up some from the dunghill, pulling down others from the throne of glory, 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8. That prosperity may never be without a curb, nor adversity without a comfort, God will acquaint the world with such spectacles now and then: all things are at his dispose.

2. That moderate delight and contentment that we have in our earthly blessings is his allowance. The creature without God is like a deaf-nut; when we crack it, we find nothing, Eccles. ii. 24, 25, and Eccles. iii. 13. It is the gift of God, and it is one of the chiefest earthly mercies, that in this valley of tears, where we meet with so many causes of grief and sorrow, we take comfort in anything. Without this, a crown of gold will sit no easier than a crown of thorns upon the head of him that weareth it; yea, a palace becomes a prison, and every place a hell to us. It is not abundance of honour that makes a man happy, but comfort, Luke xii. 15. If God send leanness into the soul, or a spark of his wrath into the conscience, all is as the white of an egg, unsavoury. A secret curse eateth out all the contentment of it. He that liveth in a cottage is happier than he that liveth in a palace, if he have comfort there.

3. For spiritual comfort, which ariseth either from the sense of his love, or the hope of glory, we cannot have one drop of it but from God. His Spirit is called 'the comforter.' All the world cannot give it if he doth not give it us: he hath an immediate and sovereign power over the hearts of men; if he frown, nothing can support us. When the sun is gone, all the candles in the world cannot make it day. We can procure our own sorrows quickly, but he only can comfort us. None but divine comforts are authentic.

Thirdly, The means of conveying and procuring this comfort.

1. The means of conveying it on God's part is his word. David pleadeth that where the remedy of his misery was discovered and offered. We read often in this psalm how David revived his comfort by the word; and Rom. xv. 4, 'Comfort of the scriptures.' There is the matter of true spiritual comfort: 1 Cor. xiv. 31, 'That all may learn and all be comforted.' This follows from the former; God is the God of comfort, and we should not have the heart to come to him unless he had opened the way to him by his promise. The world cannot give it to us; philosophy cannot. The word of God can. And this comfort is both strong and full, for measure and matter. Matter; there the death of Christ is laid down as the foundation of comfort. If we consider God as holiness itself, and we nothing but a mass of sin and corruption, you will see there can be no reconciliation without satisfaction given. Mercy must see justice contented; one attribute must not destroy another. Justice hath no loss, it is fully satisfied in Christ, and that is the ground of our comfort, 2 Cor. i. 3. There are the promises of deliverance, protection, support, the liberties and privileges of Christians laid forth. These are the breasts of comfort, Isa. lxvi.; suck of these and be satisfied. In short, our great comforts are, God's presence with us while we are in these houses of clay, our presence with God in his palace of glory: 1 Thes. iv. 17, 18, 'We shall ever be with the Lord;' and 'Comfort one another with these words.'

2. The means on our part, receiving the sweet effects of God's mercy and word, and that is prayer. We cannot have it without dealing with God in a humble manner. Whatever God giveth he will have it sought out this way; Ezek. xxxvi. 37, 'I will yet be inquired after to do it for them;' so Isa. xxix. 10, 11. Now the reasons are these:—

[1.] Because in prayer we act faith and spiritual desire, both which are as the opening of the soul, Ps. lxxxii. 10, to raise our confidence, or draw forth the principles of trust.

[2.] We ask God's leave to apply in particular what is offered in the word in general: as in the next verse, 'Let thy tender mercies come unto me,' ver. 77. In everything we must ask God's leave though we have right; though in possession we ask leave, because we may be mistaken in our claim.

[3.] It is a fit way of easing the heart and disburthening ourselves, Phil. iv. 6, 7. When we pray most, and most ardently, we are most happy and find greatest ease.

[4.] God will be owned as the author of comfort, whoever be the instrument, Isa. lvii. 19; in prayer we apply ourselves to him. The word is a sovereign plaster, but God's hand maketh it stick; many read the scriptures, but are as dead-hearted when done as when they began. The Spirit is the comforter; we are very apt to look to the next hand, to the comfort, but not to the comforter, or the root of all, which is loving-kindness in God.

Fourthly, The subject capable, 'thy servant.' Here we may ask the eunuch's question, 'Of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other man?' Of himself questionless, under the denomination of God's servant. But then the question returneth, Is it a word of promise made to himself in particular, or God's servants in the general? Some say the former, 2 Sam. xii. 13, the promises brought to him by Nathan. I incline to the latter, and it teacheth us these three truths:—(1.) That God's servants are only capable of the sweet effects of his mercy and the comfort of his promises. Who are God's servants? (1st.) Such as own his right, and are sensible of his interest in them: Acts xxiii. 23, 'The God whose I am and whom I serve.' (2d.) Such as give up themselves to him, renouncing all other masters. Renounce we must, for we were once under another master, Rom. vi. 17; Mat. vi. 24; Rom. vi. 13; 1 and Chron. xxx. 8. (3d.) Accordingly frame themselves to do his work sincerely: Rom. i. 9, 'Serve with my spirit;' and Rom. vii. 6, 'In newness of spirit,' so as will become those who are renewed by the Spirit: diligently, Acts xxvi. 7, and universally, Luke i. 74, and wait upon him for grace to do so, Heb. xi. 28. These are capable of comfort. The book of God speaketh no comfort to persons that live in sin, but to God's servants, such as do not live as if they were at their own dispose, but at God's beck: if he say, Go, they go. They give up themselves to be and do what God will have them to be and do. (2.) If we would have the benefit of the promise, we must thrust in ourselves, under one title or other, among those to whom the promise is made, if not as God's children, yet as God's servants. Then it is as sure as if our name were in the promise. (3.) All God's servants

have common grounds of comfort: every one of God's servants may plead with God as David doth. The comforts of the word are the common portion of God's people; they that bring a larger measure of faith, carry away a larger measure of comfort.

Oh, then, let us lift up our eyes and hearts to God this day, and, in as broken-hearted a manner, seek this comfort as possibly we can!

SERMON LXXXV.

Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.—VER. 77.

THE man of God had begged mercy before, now he beggeth mercy again. The doubling the request sheweth that he had no light feeling of sin in the troubles that were upon him; and besides, the people of God think they can never have enough of mercy, nor beg enough of mercy; they again and again reinforce their suits, and still cry for mercy. After he had said, 'Let thy merciful loving-kindness be for my comfort,' he presently addeth, 'Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live.'

In the words we have two things:—

1. His request, *let thy tender mercies come unto me.*

2. A reason to back it, *that I may live.*

First, The request consists of three branches:—

1. The cause and fountain, *let thy tender mercies.*

2. The influence and outgoing of that cause, or the personal application of it to David, let them *come unto me.*

3. The end, *that I may live.*

1. The cause and fountain is the Lord's tender mercies: it is remarkable that in this and the former verse he doth not mention mercy without some additament; there it was merciful kindness, here tender mercy. Mercy in men implieth a commotion of the bowels at the sight of another's misery; so in God there is such a readiness to pity, as if he had the same working of bowels: Jer. xxxi. 20, 'My bowels are troubled for him,' or sound for him. Now some are more apt to feel this than others, according to the goodness of their nature, or their special interest in the party miserable. We expect from parents that their bowels should yearn more towards their own children than to strangers; so God hath the bowels of a father: Ps. ciii. 13, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' There needeth not much ado to bring a father to pity his children in misery, if he hath anything fatherly in him.

2. The outgoing of this mercy is begged, 'Let it come unto me;' where, by a fiction of persons, mercy is said to come or find out its way to him.

3. The effect, 'That I may live.' Life is sometimes taken literally, and, in its first sense, for life natural, spiritual, or eternal, by a metonymy for joy, peace, comfort: now which of these senses shall we apply to this place? Some take it for life natural, that he might

escape the death his enemies intended to him. Certainly in the former verse he speaketh as a man under deep troubles and afflictions, and in the following words he telleth us that the proud dealt perversely with him, and therefore he might have some apprehensions of dying in his troubles, which he beggeth God to prevent. Some think he beggeth God's mercy to preserve him in life spiritual, and Bellarmine understandeth it of life eternal. But I rather take it in the latter sense, for joy and comfort, which is the result of life, where it is vital and in its perfection. *Non est vivere sed valere vita.* 1 Thes. iii. 8, 'We live, if ye stand fast in the truth.' A man that enjoyeth himself is said to live. But if we take it in this notion, a double sense may be started; for it may imply either a release from temporal sorrows, and so the sense will be, Have pity upon me, that I may once more see good and comfortable days in the world, for a life spent in sorrow is as no life. Or, he putteth life for some comfortable sense of God's mercy, or assurance of his love to him. Most interpreters, both ancient and modern, go this way. *Νέκρον ἑαυτὸν ἡγείται τῆς θείας ἐστερημένον εὐμενείας*, saith Theodoret. He counted himself but as a dead man without the sense of God's favour and good-will to him, but it would be as a new life or resurrection from the dead if God would show him mercy, and cast a favourable aspect upon him. This sense suiteth well with the context, for David was for the present deprived of the tokens and effects of God's tender mercy; why else should he so earnestly beg for that to come to him which he had already; and it suiteth well with a gracious spirit such as David had.

The points are:—

1. That God's tender mercy is the fountain of his people's comfort and happiness.

2. That it is not enough to hear somewhat of the mercy of God, but we should by all means seek that it may come unto us.

3. That it is life to a believer to have a sense of God's mercy and love in Christ, and death to be without it.

4. Such as would taste or have a sense of God's mercy must delight in his law. This was David's plea.

The two last propositions I shall insist upon, the other being handled elsewhere, and so much consideration of them as is necessary for the opening and improving of this verse will occur in one or both of these points.

That it is life to a believer to have a sense of God's mercy and love in Christ, and death to be without it.

David was a dead man because he felt not God's mercy as formerly: he did eat, and drink, and sleep, and transact his business as others did; but he counted this as no life, because he felt not the wonted sense of God's love. Gracious spirits cannot live without divine comforts, they take no joy in the world unless God favourably look upon them.

Let me illustrate this note with these observations:—

1. Observe, he seeketh all his comfort from mercy, and tender mercy; so in the former, so in the present verse. I shall show you the necessity and utility of so doing.

[1.] The necessity of it. The best of God's children have no other

claim. For a publican to come and say, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner,' Luke xviii. 13, is no such wonder; but for a David to use the same plea, that should be noted. From first to last the children of God have no other claim; it is mere mercy that took us into a state of grace at first, and mere mercy that keepeth us in it, and furnisheth us with all the supplies that are necessary to keep it up in vigour and comfort, and mercy that giveth us the final consummation and accomplishment of it at last. Our first entrance into the state of grace is always ascribed to mere mercy. Nothing moved the Lord to bestow life upon dead and graceless sinners but his mere pity and tender compassion: 1 Peter i. 3, 'Of his abundant mercy he hath begotten us to a lively hope;' Eph. ii. 4, 'God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, while we were yet dead in trespasses and sins, yet quickened us;' Titus iii. 5, 'Of his mercy he hath saved us, by washing us in the laver of regeneration.' Mercy was, then, exercised not only without our desert, but against our desert: God was not moved to bestow his grace by any goodness which he did foresee or find in us, but merely by his own pity; misery offered the occasion, but mercy was the cause of all the good done unto us. After conversion, all our supports and supplies are given us of his tender mercy: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them.' New creatures and the most accurate walkers are not so free from sin but they still stand in need of mercy. All their receipts come to them not in the way of merit, but undeserved mercy. Our peace and comfort, when we walk most according to rule, is the fruit of mercy. The elect are called 'Vessels of mercy,' Rom. ix. 23, because, from first to last, they are filled up with mercy, and supplied by the free favour and love of God in Jesus Christ. Our final consummation is from mercy: the same mercy that lays the first stone in this building doth also finish the work: Jude 21, 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.' We take glory out of the hands of mercy, and it is mercy that sets the crown upon our heads, after we have done and suffered the will of God here upon earth. We can merit no more after grace than before.

[2.] The utility of it; this giveth boldness and more hopeful expectation; that will appear if we consider what mercy is. It is God's propension and inclination to do good to the sinful and miserable, so far as his wisdom seeth convenient. As mercy is a perfection in the divine nature, so God is necessarily merciful as well as just; but the exercise of it is, I confess, free and arbitrary: it is not necessarily exercised but according to his will and good pleasure, to some more, to some less, as his wisdom thinketh fit. Yet this advantage we have by it, that mercy rather seeketh a fit occasion to discover itself than a well qualified object, as justice doth; for it doth not consider what is due or deserved, but what is needed. Therefore, first, the needy and miserable have some hope, for misery as misery is the object of mercy; and therefore when our afflictions are pressing and sore, our miseries and straits are some kind of argument which we may plead to God: Ps. lxxix. 8, 'Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us, for we are brought very low;' they plead their miserable condition. Mercy relents towards a sinful people when they are a wasted people: he

heareth the moans of the beasts, and therefore certainly he will not shut up his bowels against the cries of his people; their very misery pleadeth for them. Secondly, the broken-hearted that have a sense of their misery have a greater advantage than others, and are more capable of God's mercy, because they are not only miserable, but miserable in their own feeling, especially if this feeling be deep and spiritual; they are sensible of the true misery, and they are more troubled about sin than temporal inconvenience: Mat. ix. 13, 'Go learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.'

3. When we flee to his mercy, and seek it in the appointed way of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ: the Lord will not utterly destroy a sinner fleeing to his mercy; he hath engaged his word and oath, Heb. vi. 18; and this comfort we may make use of partly when the sense of guilt sits heavy upon the soul; go humble yourselves before the merciful God, and sue out his favour and reconciliation with you, as David doth, Ps. li. 1, 'Have mercy upon me, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions;' you know not what a merciful God may do for his undeserving and ill-deserving people. And partly when God is upon his judicial process, and calleth a people to an account for their sins, he still retaineth his merciful nature: Hab. iii. 2, 'In the midst of wrath he remembereth mercy;' his wrath and indignation doth not so far transport him as that he should forget his merciful nature, and deal with his afflicted people without all moderation. When God is justly angry for sin it is a special time wherein to plead for mercy.

Secondly, He beggeth that it may come to him. Let us see the meaning of the request, and then what may be observed upon it. Coming to him noteth a personal and effectual application.

1. A personal application, as in the 41st verse of this psalm, 'Let thy mercies come to me also, even thy salvation, according to thy word.' David would not be forgotten, or left out or lost in the throng of mankind, when mercy was distributing the blessing to them.

2. Effectual application, that noteth—(1.) The removing of obstacles and hindrances; (2.) The obtaining the fruits and effects of this mercy. First, The removing of obstacles. Till there be way made, the mercy of God cannot come at us, for the way is barricaded and shut up by our sins. As the Lord maketh a way for his anger, Ps. lxxviii. 50, by removing the hindrances, eating out the staff and the stay, taking away that which letteth, so the Lord maketh way for his mercy, or mercy maketh way for itself, when it removeth the obstruction; sin is the great hindrance of mercy. We ourselves raise the mists and the clouds which intercept the light of God's countenance; we build up the partition wall which separates between God and us, yet mercy finds the way. Secondly, The obtaining the fruits of mercy. The effects of God's tender mercies are common or saving. We read, Ps. cxlv. 9, 'The Lord is good to all, his tender mercies are over all his works;' not a creature which God hath made but the Lord pitieth it and supplieth its wants. But there are spiritual effects of the Lord's tender mercy, his pardoning our sins, restoring us to his grace and favour, and repairing his image in us: Eph. i. 3, 'Who

hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ ;' such spiritual blessings as are a sure effect of God's favour, never given in anger. Riches may be given in anger, so may also temporal deliverance, but pardon of sin is never given in anger, nor the Spirit of the Lord Jesus to dwell in us. Of spiritual blessings, some are comfortable to us, others honourable to God ; some fall in with our interest, others suit with God's end ; as pardon is of the first sort, and the subjection of the creature to God of the latter. We are willing to be pardoned and freed from the curse of the law and the flames of hell, but to be renewed to the image of God and quickened to the life of grace, and put into a capacity to serve our Creator and Redeemer, that we are not so earnest for ; and yet these are the undoubted pledges of the special mercy of God to us, and absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of other relative benefits. We must suppose David to intend both in his prayer, 'Let thy mercy come unto me.' Once more, these spiritual benefits may be considered as to the effects themselves, and the sense that we have of our enjoyment of them. Our safety dependeth upon the saving effects and fruits of God's special mercy, and our peace, joy, and comfort upon the sense of them. Both are comprised in that petition, 'Let thy tender mercies come unto me.' This being stated as the full meaning of the words, let us observe :—

[1.] That it is not enough to hear of somewhat of God's saving mercies, but we should beg that it may come unto us, be effectually and sensibly communicated unto us, that we may have experience of them in our own souls ; the hearsay will do us little good without experience ; the hearsay is the first encouragement : 'We have heard the kings of Israel are merciful kings ;' that moved them to make the address in a humble and submissive manner for their life and safety : 1 Kings xx. 31, 'Let us, I pray thee, put on sackcloth upon our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go to the king of Israel.' We may reason at a better rate concerning the God of Israel. We have heard that the God of Israel is a merciful God, that he delights in mercy ; but then, Let us try what he will do for us. Upon the participation of the saving effects and benefits of his mercy, our comfort and interest beginneth. (1.) We shall never have such admiring thoughts of mercy as when we have felt it ourselves ; then we know the grace of God in truth, Col. i. 6. A man that hath read of honey, or heard of honey, may know the sweetness of it by guess and imagination, but a man that hath tasted of honey knoweth the sweetness of it in truth ; so by hearing or reading of the grace and mercy of God in Christ, we may guess that it is a sweet thing, but he that hath had an experimental proof of the sweet effects and fruit of it in his own heart, and all that is spoken of God's pardoning and comforting of sinners is verified in himself, this giveth him a more sensible demonstration of the worth and value of this privilege, then more admiring thoughts of mercy, when he can say, as Paul, 1 Tim. i. 13, *ἡλεήθην*, I was saved by mercy. (2.) We shall more love God : Phil. i. 9, 'I pray that your love may abound in all sense ;' the spiritual gust maketh love abound. (3.) We cannot speak of it with that fulness, life, sense, and affection to others, nor so movingly invite others to share with us, as

when the effects of his goodness are communicated to us : Ps. xxxiv. 8, 'Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.' A report of a report is a dead cold thing, but a report from experience is lively and powerful. Well, then, let it come to me.

[2.] The sense or participation of God's saving mercies is to believers the life of their lives, the heaven they have upon earth, the joy and comfort of their souls, and the want of this is a kind of death to them; for so David expresseth himself, 'Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live.'

The reasons are taken partly from the object, and partly from the subject—from the thing itself, and from the disposition of a renewed heart.

1. From the thing itself, from the object; and there, first, the value of this privilege, compared with all that may be called life. Life is either natural, spiritual, or eternal.

[1.] Compare it with life natural, and there the Psalmist will tell you: Ps. lxiii. 3, 'Thy loving-kindness is better than life;' life is not life without it; without the feeling of this love, or the hope of feeling it, it is little worth. To have the light of the sun, which is the comfort of the senses, without the light of God's countenance, which is the comfort of the soul, is a sad and dark estate, especially to the children of God, that know they are made for another world, and for this only in their passage thither. Natural life only giveth us a capacity to enjoy the comforts of sense, which are base, dreggy, and corruptive; but the special favour of God lets us into such consolations as perfect the soul, and affect it with a greater pleasure than our natural faculties are capable of. Life natural is a frail, brittle thing, but these saving effects of God's mercy lay a foundation of eternal happiness. Life natural may grow a burden, but the love of God is never burdensome; the days may come in which there is no pleasure, Eccles. xii. 1; Job xxxiii. 20, 'His life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty food;' in sickness and age, in troubles of conscience. Men do pretty well with their worldly happiness till God rebuke man for sin; then all the glory, profit, and pleasure of the creature doth us no good: Ps. xxxix. 11, 'When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.' Judas haltered himself when filled with the sense of God's wrath: Job chose strangling rather than life. At death, when all worldly things cease, and are of no more use to us, the sense of God's love will be of great use to us. All the world understand the worth and value of God's love when death cometh; then a child of God feeleth it. Oh, saith he, I would not for all the world but that I had made sure of the love of God before this hour! How terrible else would it have been to leave all and leap out into an unknown world! Jer. xvii. 9, 'The unjust man at his latter end shall be a fool;' and Job xxvii. 8, 'What is the hope of the hypocrite, if he hath gained, when God cometh to take away his soul?'

[2.] Life spiritual: the soul hath no life but in communion with God, who is the fountain of this new life. Now the more sensible and close this is, the more they live; the vitality of this life lieth in the sensible participation of the effects of his special grace and mercy; then we have it more abundantly, John x. 10; not only living, but lively.

[3.] For eternal life, a comfortable sense of God's mercy is the beginning and pledge of the true and heavenly life, Rom. v. 4-6. The shedding abroad the love of God in the heart of a believer maketh this his hope sure and certain, he needeth not be ashamed, for he hath earnest beforehand.

(1.) God's favour furnisheth us with a remedy against all evils and miseries; *i.e.*, wants, troubles, sins. The want of other things may be supplied by the love of God, but the want of the love of God cannot be supplied with anything else; if poor in the world, yet we may be rich in faith, James ii. 5; if afflicted, destitute, yet this loss may be made up by the presence of God in the soul, 2 Cor. iv. 16. As our outward man decayeth, our inward man is renewed day by day. If they want the creature they have God; there is no want of a candle when they have the sun; if they want health, the soul may be in good plight, 3 John 2, as Gaius had a healthy soul in a sickly body. If they want liberty, they lie open to the visits of his grace; the Spirit of God is no stranger to them, nor can his company and comforts be shut out. Tertullian telleth the martyrs, You went out of the prison when you went into it, and were but sequestered from the world, that you might converse with God: the greatest prisoners are those that are at large, darkened with ignorance, chained with lusts, committed not by the proconsul, but God. If they want the favour of men, they have the favour of God: God smileth when the world frowneth; they may be banished, but every place is alike near to God and heaven. Some climates are nearer and some further off from the sun, but all alike near to the sun of righteousness. *Ubi pater ibi patria*, that is our country where God is. We are harassed, beaten, afflicted in sundry manners, but the sting is gone; the rod that is dipped in guilt smarteth most, but a pardoned man may rejoice in tribulations, Rom. v. 1, 2. But now, on the contrary, suppose a man high in honour, wallowing in wealth, spending his time and wealth in ease and pleasure, but after all this God will bring him to judgment. The world is his friend, but God is his enemy and he is all his lifetime subject to bondage, Heb. ii. 14; not always felt, but soon awakened; and during the time of his comfort and delight, he is dancing about the brink of hell, liable to an eternal curse; and there is but the slender thread of a frail life between him and execution, a few serious sober thoughts undo him.

(2.) Sin; that is the great evil, both as to the guilt of it and the wages of it, the guilt and obliquity of it. No creature can provide a plaster for this sore; to get our consciences settled and our natures healed, this is the special fruit of God's mercy in Christ; his business is to save us from sin, Mat. i. 21; Acts iii. 26, 'God having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from your iniquity;' Rom. xi. 26, 'There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob;' have God's image repaired, and restored to his grace and favour. Those that have felt sin a burden, nothing will satisfy till the Lord looks graciously upon them.

(3.) The favour of the Lord is the fountain of all blessings. Get an interest in his special mercy, and then all things are yours. You

have God for your God, who commandeth all things: 1 Cor. iii. 22, 'Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all things are yours;' Mat. vi. 33, 'First seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you;' Prov. x. 22, 'The blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.'

(4.) It sweetens every comfort; a piece of bread with the love of God is a plentiful feast. 'A little that a righteous man hath is better than the revenue of many wicked.' *Quid prodest regium alimentum si ad Gehennam pascat?*—what profiteth it to be fattened for slaughter?

2. Reasons from the subject, or disposition of the renewed heart.

[1.] They have once had an apprehension of their true misery by reason of sin and the curse. None prize the favour of God, but they have been burdened with the sense of sin and misery. We speak in vain to most men; it is only the sick will prize the physician, the condemned be earnest for a pardon.

[2.] They are renewed. Till a man be holy he cannot rejoice in spiritual things; the fool's heart is always in the house of mirth, Eccles. vii. 4. For masks, and plays, and merry meetings, feasts and banquets, and vain company, and idle games and pastimes, these are the life and joy of their souls. A fool will make a foolish choice, as children prefer their rattles and toys before a solid benefit: Rom. viii. 5, 'For 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;' the desire sheweth what is delightful and comfortable, but now the renewed heart, it is their all to be in favour with God. They have not the spirit of the world, 1 Cor. ii. 3; many have affections for anything but God.

Use 1. The use is—(1.) Reproof to those that care not for this sense of God's mercy. David could not think himself alive till he was reconciled to God. Profane men are not much troubled with this care; though God be angry they can seek their delight elsewhere; they can rejoice in the creature apart from God; so they may have outward things they are at ease, and can sing lullabies to their souls, as that wretch in the parable, Luke xii. 19, 'Eat, drink, and be merry.' If they be in trouble, they seek to put away their troubles by carnal means. Let these consider, first, God can make the stoutest-hearted sinner who standeth aloof from him to see he is undone without him. It is no hard thing to put a sinner in the stocks of conscience, so that one favourable look would be valued more than all the world. Secondly, It may be, when punishment hath opened their eyes, God may hide his face and withhold the blessing from them when they seek it with bitter tears: Prov. i. 28, 'They shall call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me.' (2.) To shame the people of God that have such cold and careless thoughts about that which true believers count as dear as their lives.

1. This slightrness cometh from carnal complacency, or inordinate delight in the creature, or letting out ourselves to worldly delights. Now this is vile ingratitude, when God's gifts, and those of the worse sort, draw us from himself. Will you be of a Gadarene spirit, or as one of the vain fellows, as Michal told David scoffingly?

2. Consider how dangerous this is to our temporal and eternal felicity. Temporal felicity : The creature is blasted when our life is bound up with it ; the world is eclipsed that the favour of God may be more prized, and the loss of the creature should more awaken us to seek after God. We most prize the evidences of God's favour and reconciliation with him when we are in trouble, and God taketh away our worldly comforts, that the consolations of his Spirit may not seem as small things. Many have smarted for carnal complacency. Eternal felicity : When any carnal thing is valued more than God, it puts our eternal comforts upon a hazard ; it is a selling the birthright for a mess of pottage, Heb. xii. 15. Well, then, let us be weaned from the world, for while we take too much delight in the creature God is the less esteemed.

Use 2. Instruction, to teach us how to carry ourselves with respect to this privilege, a sense of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts in the fruits and effects thereof.

1. Let us make it our chiefest care to get and preserve the fresh sense of God's love upon our hearts, grudging at no labour : 2 Peter i. 10, ' Give diligence to make your calling and election sure,' &c. No cost : Mat. xiii. 46, ' When he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it ;' Phil. iii. 8, 9, denying lusts and interests.

2. Not to hazard it on cheap terms. God forbid that I should sell my inheritance ! Will you sell away Christ and heaven for such cheap rates, hazard your souls for carnal satisfaction ?

3. Let us be sensible of the want of it as the greatest misery, Mat. ix. 15.

4. Rejoice in it above all things, Ps. iv. 6, 7. Be glad if this be promoted, though by sharp afflictions.

Doct. 2. All such as would have the comfortable effects and sense of God's mercy must delight in his law.

1. Delight in the law implieth obedience, for it is not a delight that ariseth from speculation, or the contemplation of the truth revealed therein. ' I delight to do thy will, O my God ; yea, thy law is within my heart,' Ps. xl. 8 ; and Ps. cxii. 1, ' Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments ;' not in the knowledge of their duty, but in the practice of it. It is in the law as the rule of duty, and all tendeth to practice. They that delight in the speculation grudge at the practice. One that is observant of God's will delighteth to believe and obey, as well as to know God's word.

2. A ready and cheerful obedience must be willingly and heartily undertaken ; love to the work for the work's sake. A man is never truly converted to God till God hath his love, and his law hath his love ; for the constitution of the heart is not seen in our opinions so much as in our affections, love, desire, and delight. Many men's judgment is for God ; that is, conscience is for God, but their hearts are for other things ; when obedience is practically and cheerfully undertaken, and the delight of our souls in them. Men have a little compulsory religiousness ; it is most when frightened into it. Men do something, but had rather leave it undone, and do not choose rather

to walk holily if they had their own choice. A man is slavish when fear of being damned doth only sway him ; the godly love holiness as holiness, they are constant with God.

But why do they that have a comfortable sense of his mercy delight in his law ?

1. These are only fit to ask mercy.

2. These are qualified to receive mercy.

1. These are only fit to ask mercy.

[1.] Because they are likely to ask it most feelingly. None prize the mercy of God, nor will ask it in such an earnest and broken-hearted manner, as those that delight in his law. These see their want of it, they are sensible of more defects than others are : Rom. vii. 24, 'O wretched man that I am !' They mind their work, which others, that exercise themselves not unto godliness, mind not ; they have greater light and greater discoveries, more love ; much work driveth them oftener to the throne of grace. None rest in duties so much as they that have least cause : Mal. i. 13, 'What a weariness is it !'

[2.] These ask more regularly ; therefore it is said, Ps. xxxvii. 4, 'Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart.' Why so unlimitedly ? Because delight in the Lord retrencheth carnal desires and moderateth earthly desire ; their hearts are not so set upon outward things as the hearts of other men are : John xv. 7, 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' Why doth God make so large an offer ? He trusteth such as keep communion with Christ. There is a conformity between their wills and God's in the matter of their desire so far as we are renewed and hold communion with him ; their unruly lusts will be subdued, and their unlawful desires for matter, manner, and end be laid aside, and they will acquiesce in the good pleasure of God, and the most excellent things. Therefore God maketh them this offer, Ask what ye will. Not that men are warranted to pray for what they will, or to expect an answer in whatsoever they desire, but as their delight in his law is prevalent, their wills are limited by his word and will, and the Spirit in them 'maketh intercession according to the will of God,' Rom. viii. 26, 27.

[3.] These may with most confidence ask mercy ; others are excluded : Prov. xxviii. 9, 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, his prayer is an abomination to the Lord.' These are included : 1 John iii. 22, 'And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.' If we refuse God speaking to us in infinite wisdom, as he does in the word, no wonder if God refuse us stammering foolishly in prayer, Jer. ix. 21. Men that purpose to continue in their sins shall not be heard in other things, otherwise the grossest sinners may come to God to have their sins pardoned and removed, and expect to be accepted and heard through Christ ; but the perpetual assistance and favour of God is not given to them. Such as would be heard and accepted, and come with assurance of welcome and audience, ought to be devoted to him, to worship him, to call on him.

2. These are qualified to receive mercy, according to the tenor of

that covenant in which mercy is dispensed and magnified in the covenant of grace or the covenant of God's mercy in Christ, Heb. v. 9, and x. 14. This being apt to be abused, let us explain how obedience is a condition of the covenant. A condition meriting and purchasing the blessings of the covenant it cannot be; for God giveth the ability to obey wholly and solely of his own grace: it is short of the rule, and infinitely inferior to the reward. A condition applicatory, whereby we apply ourselves to the covenant on our part, it is, and therefore necessary. It is a secondary condition, disposing us to communion with God in and by the covenant. At first we must be turned by repentance towards God, through faith in the Redeemer, before we receive remission of sins, Acts xx. 18. Faith and repentance are conditions of pardon, and sincere obedience a condition of salvation. The first condition containeth a resolution of obedience for the future, though we have not actually so obeyed. The secondary condition, that we should make good our resolution. We must keep covenant as well as make covenant. Faith is an entering into covenant, for it is a consent to take Christ as lord and saviour; and constant and delightful obedience is a constant keeping covenant, Ps. xxv. 10, and ciii. 17, 18. The making covenant was necessary for our entrance, the keeping covenant for our continuance. Consent to take any for king, husband, master, draweth another condition after it, that we carry ourselves in these relations dutifully: besides promising there must be performing; he that is my sovereign must be obeyed. There must be conjugal fidelity to the husband, and faithful service to the chosen master; so in the covenant between us and God, us and Christ.

Object. But you will say. How, then, shall we take comfort in the new covenant, who are so many ways faulty?

Ans. We must consider—(1.) What it exacts; (2.) What it accepteth.

1. What it exacts. To quicken us to more earnest endeavours and humble confession of failings, it exacteth perfect obedience, admits of no imperfection either of parts or degrees.

2. It accepteth a perfection of parts, there being truth of godliness, and a single-hearted inclination to observe the whole will of God; then our defects and weaknesses are covered by Christ's perfect righteousness. The unregenerate lie under the rule of exaction, but being out of Christ, are denied the benefit of acceptance.

Use 1. To inform us that petitions of mercy and the plea for new obedience are very consistent: 'Let thy tender mercies come unto me;' and his argument is, 'For I delight in thy word.' Mercy is nevertheless free, though the creature mind his duty; for when we have done all we are but unprofitable servants, Luke xvii. 10; and grace helpeth us to do what we do: Luke xix. 18, 'Thy pound,' not my industry; and 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain: but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' It was grace to appoint such reasonable terms, to accept of them, though done in that sorry fashion which our frailty permitteth us to tender to God.

Use 2. To quicken us to a delightful course of obedience, if we

would have the sense of mercy. The same spirit that urgeth us to obey, a sense of God's love, urgeth us also to delight in his law. The same spirit that urgeth us to sue out the promise urgeth also to obey the precept.

1. Consider how God hath twisted his honour with our interest, and ordered both for his own glory. God's interest and honour is to be considered as well as our salvation. We must never look for such mercy and grace from God as shall discharge us from our duty and subjection to God, or give you liberty to dishonour and disobey him. No; 'Christ redeemed us to God,' Rev. v., and Luke i. 74, 75. Salvation is our benefit, obedience is God's right and interest. Happiness man is not averse from, but he sticketh at the terms. Some part of this happiness suiteth well enough with our natural desires, as pardon and life; but we care not for his law and the obedience we owe by virtue of it. We are naturally more willing of what maketh for ourselves, for our comfort, than what maketh for the honour of God.

2. Consider, a great part of God's first mercy is expressed in healing our natures and preparing us for this delightful course of holiness, Heb. x. 16, 17; 1 Cor. i. 30; Titus iii. 4, 5.

3. Consider, this comfortable sense of God's mercy should induce us to this by way of argument: 1 John iv. 19, 'We love him because he first loved us;' 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again;' and Gal. v. 6, 'In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith, which worketh by love.' And then, by way of gratitude, we ought to bend all the powers of our souls to holiness and obedience, and lay out our care and labour upon it.

4. Consider, the more holiness and obedience any one hath, the more acceptable to God. A holy soul is an object capable of God's love; the holy God delighteth in holiness, as well as the merciful God pitieth misery. The more holy we are, the more God loves us. Let us not make wounds for God to cure. As we increase in holiness we increase in favour with God. This is true of Christ, who never had any defect of holiness, but only was to increase in the exercise of it.

5. Consider how just it is with God to refuse our cries for mercy when we despised his precepts for duty. Besiege your hearts with these considerations, and press them daily upon you. We are marvellous apt to please ourselves with some loose apprehensions of mercy, without bending ourselves to our duty.

6. Consider how reasonable it is that, when mercy hath taken us, with all our faults, at our first entrance into covenant with God, we should afterwards study to please and make it our delight so to do.

7. Consider how impossible it is to cherish a sense of his mercy and love to us while we neglect duty. The soul hath two sentiments of religion which can never be defaced—a desire of happiness, and subjection to God—*ut anima sit subjecta Deo et pacata in se*. As we love our own comfort, so we will be troubled about our duty; the soul will not

sit easy. Comfort follows holiness as light doth fire, and sin will cause trouble as the prick of a needle doth pain. The soul cannot be serious and mind things but it will be so. Indeed, at some times, by carelessness, our sense of the necessity of obedience is extinguished, and then a little serveth turn to keep the conscience quiet or stupid ; but it will return again. Never leave till holiness and obedience be your delight as well as your care.

Use 3. To press us to be earnestly dealing with this merciful God for comfort. We need it now in a time of judgment, when delivered over to judgments, Hosea xi. 8, as sometimes to sin, so to plagues ; when God opens the floodgates, lets out judgments upon a people without restraint : ‘ I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be,’ Deut. xxxii. 20. So also the 30th verse, ‘ Their rock sold them, and the Lord hath shut them up.’ Mercy can put a stop, but that will interpose no more. Again, when the people of God are much hated and maligned ; now, ‘ We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; perplexed, but not in despair,’ 2 Cor. iv. 8.

1. If it be God’s nature to be merciful and kind, why should we be discouraged ? Mercy is free, favour is shown to a miserable person. Mercy can recall the punishments due to us, and mitigate corrections, and sweeten our comforts.

2. But, then, you must be content that mercy should issue out in its own way and order ; first giving us principal mercies, then necessary ; first sanctifying, and then comforting : ‘ Saving us by washing us in the laver of regeneration.’

3. Reckon your comfort more by a sense of God’s care than by removing temporal trouble. Spiritual comfort is more excellent than bodily.

4. You must sue it out by prayer, wherein, first, it must be with brokenness of heart. Let true spiritual misery be discerned and complained of. Let us lay our sins and sores before his pity. Secondly, with faith, for here is the word mentioned. Why are we so disconsolate ? is there no balm in Gilead ? It is our usual fault, we pore too much upon our troubles. There is a God of comfort, who answereth his name every way, and will keep his word with his people. Let us come to him in all our wants. Thirdly, with resolution of more faithful obedience, for God’s servants are only capable ; renew your covenant of serving God.

5. The godly have common comforts. What will serve one’s turn will serve another’s also. They have all the same fundamental work of grace in their hearts ; they are all born of God, have his image stamped on them, have the same Redeemer ; the same Spirit worketh in all, and the promises are made alike unto all, not upon personal considerations.

SERMON LXXXVI.

Let the proud be ashamed ; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause : but I will meditate in thy precepts.—VER. 78.

IN these words you have—(1.) David's prayer ; (2.) David's resolution.

First, David's prayer ; and there take notice of—

1. The petition itself, *let the proud be ashamed*.

2. The reason, *for they dealt perversely with me without a cause*.

In the prayer he beggeth the repression of his enemies. There take notice of—

[1.] The notion by which they are described, *the proud*.

[2.] The event or effect of God's providence desired concerning them, *let them be ashamed*.

The notion is considerable. The wicked, especially the persecutors of God's people, are usually characterised by this term in this Psalm, 'the proud,' ver. 51, 69, 122 ; and will give us this note :—

Doct. That pride puts wicked men upon being troublesome and injurious to the people of God.

But why are the persecutors and the injurious called the proud ?

Ans. 1. Because wicked men shake off the yoke of God, and will not be subject to their Maker, and therefore desist not from troubling his people : Exod. v. 2, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, and let Israel go?' What was in his tongue is in all men's hearts ; they condemn God and his laws. Every sin hath a degree of pride and depreciation of God included in it : 2 Sam. xii. 9, 'Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight?' There is a slighting of God's authority, and a lifting up our will against the will of God.

Ans. 2. Because they are drunk with worldly felicity, and never think of changes : Ps. cxxiii. 4, 'Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.' When men go on prosperously, they are apt wrongfully to trouble others, and then to shout at them in their misery, and to despise the person and cause of God's people, which is a sure effect of great arrogance and pride. They think they may do what they please ; they have no changes ; therefore they fear not God, and put forth their hands against such as be at peace with them, Ps. lv. 19, 20 ; whilst they go on prosperously and undisturbedly, they cannot abstain from violence and oppression. This is certainly pride, for it is a lifting up the heart above God and against God, and without God. And they do not consider his providence, who alternately lifts up and casts down, that adversity may not be without a cordial, nor prosperity without a curb and bridle. But when men sit fast, and are well at ease, they are apt to be insolent and scornful. Riches and worldly greatness make men insolent and despisers of others, and care not what burdens they impose upon them ; they are intrenched within a mass of wealth and power and greatness, and so think none can call them to an account. Solomon speaketh of two sorts of people : Prov.

xviii. 10, 11, 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.' Every man is as his trust is; for, as the Psalmist speaketh of idols in general, 'They that trust in idols are like unto them,' so it is true of spiritual idols. If a man trust in vain things, his heart groweth vain, proud, and insolent; promiseth him an uninterrupted course of felicity, from poor, perishing things, that come and go at God's pleasure. If a man trust in God, then he is kept holy, humble, carried on with a noble and divine spirit, and findeth more safety than another that hath all the strength and power of the world to support and back him. The name of the Lord is a real refuge, but wealth and honour and worldly greatness is but an imaginary refuge. He that hath nothing but the name of the Lord to trust in, worldlings think he buildeth castles in the air; but the godly knoweth that worldlings indeed build castles in the air, while they look big, and think their greatness shall bear them out. Alas! wealth is but a wall and a strong tower in their own conceit; not really so; but this puffeth them up, and they are quite other men when they are at top than what they were when they were under.

Ans. 3. Because they affect a life of pomp and ease and carnal greatness, and so despise the affliction and meanness and simplicity of the people of God. The false church hath usually the advantage of worldly power and external glory, and the true church is known by the divine power, gifts, and graces, and the lustre of holiness: Ps. xlv. 13, 'The king's daughter is glorious within;' is found out by faith, love, patience, sobriety, heavenly-mindedness, humility, purity, and the like, rather than by a splendid appearance; and holiness becomes God's house, Ps. xciii. 5, rather than gold and silver and costly furniture. The false church vaunts itself in costly temples, officers richly endowed with temporal revenues, and a pompous attendance; and so the simplicity of the gospel is corrupted and turned into a worldly domination. As, for instance, the church of Rome boasts of her grandeur and magnificence, and upbraids the Reformed with their abject condition. *Ministris eorum nihil vilius*, saith Campian. They can tell of the pompous inauguration of their popes, their stately train of cardinals, lordly prelates; whereas the poor ministers of the gospel live hardly and precariously. Whereas, indeed, the glory of the true church doth not make a fair show in the flesh, is not external, corporeal, and visible, but internal, incorporeal, and invisible, Cant. i. 5; and like its head, Jesus Christ, who, to appearance, was humble, poor, and afflicted; but in him were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; yea, the fulness of the godhead dwelt bodily. External splendour pleaseth the flesh, and is not a sign of virtue so much as pride, Luke xvi. 19. What shall become of the primitive church for the first three hundred years, if outward greatness be a mark of it? The world is with them, but the faith with us; they have pure gold, but we pure doctrine (Naz. Orat. Con. Aroc.) So Hilary against Auxentius, *Unum monco, cavete antichristum, male enim vos parietum amor cepit, male ecclesiam Dei in teclis artificijsque veneramini, male sub iis pacis nomen ingeritis: anne ambiguum est in iis antichristum cessurum? Montes mihi et sylve et lacus et carceres, et voragines sunt tutiores; in iis enim*

prophetæ aut manentes, aut demersi, Dei Spiritu prophetabant. Well, because of their affectation of worldly greatness, they are called proud; and so it is taken, Mal. iii. 15, 'Ye call the proud happy.' And because of this they hate and molest the people of God, because theirs is a contrary spirit. They hear Christ's voice: Mat. xi. 29, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly.' They hate them because they condemn that felicity which they affect, and so put a scorn on their way: 1 Peter iv. 4, 'Think it strange that you run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.'

Ans. 4. They are called proud because of their insolent carriage towards the Lord's people, partly in their laws and injunctions, requiring to give them more honour, respect, and obedience than in conscience can be afforded them; as Haman would have Mordecai to devote himself to him after the manner of the Persians, Esther iii. 5. The man, though a favourite, was an Amalekite, one that came of that stock whose remembrance God would have to be blotted out, Exod. xvii. 14; and possibly more worship and honour was required than was due to a man. God had forbidden to give divine honour to any but himself. Now, according to the custom of Persia, these honours did somewhat savour of divine worship—*Vide* Brisson, pp. 10–14, with the 18th. So Jeroboam would have his calves worshipped, 1 Kings xii. 32; and yet all that complied with him therein are charged for walking so willingly after the commandment, Hosea v. 11. We dare not offend God to please men; the good Levites are commended, 2 Chron. xi. 14. So it was pride in Nebuchadnezzar to command all men to bow before his image, Dan. iii. 15, 16. God's prerogative must not be incroached upon; there is a superior sovereign. Partly in vexing, molesting, and oppressing them at their pleasure; the formal Christian hateth the spiritual, Gal. iv. 29. Now this cometh from their pride: Ps. x. 2, 'The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor;' would not have their lazy course upbraided and disgraced by the seriousness and strictness of others: they malign what they cannot imitate. And it is carried on by their pride or abuse of power. God counteth it pride: Ps. xii. 5, 'For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy; the Lord will arise to deliver him; and set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.' It is the pride of the oppressor which God taketh notice of, his puffing, scoffing, and mocking at the hopes of God's despised ones; he never dreameth of any checks from any, but despiseth and contemneth all. And partly because of the insulting over their misery and low estate: Zeph. ii. 10, 'This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts.' But God taketh notice of it, and will call them to an account in due time: Prov. iii. 34, 'He scorneth the scorers, but giveth grace unto the lowly;' Ps. xiv. 6, 'You have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge;' *i.e.*, mocked at a man because he is resolved to trust in the Lord, laughed at those that made conscience of their duty, that consulted whether lawful or unlawful, not whether danger and profit, not whether safe or unsafe, but whether pleasing to God or not. They trust in the Lord that, in conscience of their duty, venture upon hazards, expecting their security from heaven; these thoughts seemed foolish

to worldly wisdom; you shamed his counsel, scoff at it: Isa. li. 7, 8, 'Fear ye not the reproach of men, nor their revilings: for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool.' Those that make reckoning of the ways of God need not be discouraged with their spiteful vaunts.

Use. Let us take heed of pride. The Lord, that hated the pride of Moab, doth also hate the pride of Jacob, Amos vi. 8.

1. Take heed of wittingly and willingly opposing any command of God: Ps. cxix. 21, 'Thou hast rebuked the proud, that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments: Neh. ix. 16, 'But our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to his commandments;' so ver. 29. These proclaim a war with the Lord of hosts, especially when not reclaimed by grievous judgments: Isa. xxvi. 19, 'I will break the pride of your power.' And this is that we should lay to heart at this day: Jer. xiii. 17, 'But if ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.' When a people will not be brought to any serious consideration of God's judgments, nor abate their haughty minds, he would bewail their foolish arrogancy, and the miseries ensuing thereupon. This standing out against God is the greatest pride.

2. Take heed of murmuring against his providence. Entertaining crosses with anger and blessings with disdain are sure notes of unmortified pride; when God's dispensations still displease, and the heart swelleth against his sovereignty.

[1.] To entertain crosses with anger: 2 Kings vi. 33, 'This evil is from the Lord: why should I wait any longer upon the Lord?' Words of desperate distrust and murmuring.

[2.] Blessings with disdain: Mal. i. 2, 'I hath loved you, saith the Lord; and they said, Wherein hast thou loved us?' as if God owed them more than others, and were a kind of debtor to them: Hab. ii. 4, 'Behold, his soul, which is lifted up, is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.' The lofty and unsound are distinguished from the just, who can tarry God's leisure; those men's souls are lifted up who cannot acquiesce in their lot and portion assigned by God, but censure his way of proceeding, and are loath he should have the disposing of them at his pleasure.

3. Take heed of despising any of Christ's little ones, and scorning and mocking at those that fear the Lord: Ps. cxix. 51, 'The proud have had me greatly in derision.' To make a mock of others upon any account is a sign of pride, though they be meaner in gifts, though differing in judgment, though walking in a lower dispensation; but especially to scorn at them because more godly: 2 Tim. iii. 3, ἀφιλάγατοι, 'Despisers of those that are good.' This is to reflect upon God himself, whose image in his saints is made a byword, and a strict obedience to his will matter of scorn and derision. If a slave should mock a child because he is like his father, would this be well taken? So the jealous God will not long endure this horrible indignity, that his image should be scorned in his children: Isa. lxiii. 9, 'In all reproaches he is reproached.' But they will say, It is not their holiness, but their demure hypocrisy and affected preciseness, which they reproach and scorn. But God seeth the heart: it is as if a leper did

upbraid others with pimples. The infirmities of the godly do not justify your contempt of godliness; and because of their faults, you must not scorn at their holiness and expect indemnity.

4. Take heed of moral pride, which consists in a lofty conceit of ourselves, joined with a contempt of others. This was the Pharisees' sin: Luke xviii. 9, 'He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.' And it is notably personated in the Pharisee and publican who went up to pray, and is daily seen in them who are speaking of their own things, boasting of their own excellences, elevating their own, but extenuating the gifts of others. Most men are too great and too good in their own esteem. Self-love representeth ourselves to ourselves in a feigned shape and likeness, much more wise, and holy, and just, than we are; it maketh us loathe other men's sins rather than our own, to extenuate other men's gifts and graces and cry up our own; but this should not be: Phil. ii. 3 'Let each esteem another better than themselves.' Humility is content to sit in the meanest place: Eph. iii. 8, 'Who am the least of all the saints;' 1 Tim. i. 15, 'Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' We know our own weakness better than others, and they may have secret excellences which we see not. This moral pride discovereth itself in three things:—

[1.] In disdain of inferiors, or contempt of those who are of meaner gifts or rank and place in the world. Every member hath its use in the body, the toe as well as the head, neither can one say to another, 'I have no need of thee,' 1 Cor. xii. 21. All Christians have their peculiar gifts, by which they are rendered acceptable and useful to the body, as every country hath its proper commodities for the maintaining of trade and commerce between all parts of the world; or as to the beauty and use of the universe, there is need of hills and valleys; so all ranks of men contribute to the beauty, use, and service of the whole. The strong should not despise the weak, nor the weak prescribe to the strong. Now, it is impossible to keep all in their due order and proportion unless every one consider their own weakness and want, and the usefulness of others; as, among Christians, some are useful to preserve order, others to keep afoot the life and power of godliness, some to revive the pristine purity, others the old peaceable spirit. God hath so counterbalanced all parties that they may be mutually helpful, but not that we despise and condemn any other, and seek to destroy and subvert another, and so make way for great mischiefs. Every one hath enough to humble him, and enough to render him useful to human society. Therefore we must not set at nought our brother, Rom. xiv. 10. God hath made him something which thou art not, and given him an ability to do something thou canst not do, or wouldst not submit unto. Contempt is the fruit of pride; there are none but deserve some respect: scorn is the bane of human society.

[2.] It betrayeth itself in contention with equals: 'Wrath and contention cometh by pride,' Prov. xiii. 10. Every one seeks to be eminent, and would excel, not in graces and gifts—that is *ἀγαθέψις*, a holy emulation—but in rank and place. We set too high a price upon ourselves, and when others will not come up to our price we are troubled. We ascribe too much to ourselves; and when we meet not with that respect and honour which we affect, we fall into contention, and break

out into stripes, supposing ourselves neglected. We see often what a makebait this is in the world, if others do not accommodate themselves to our sense, if they approve not all things we say, if their opinion differeth a little, or, it may be, nothing from ours. Men pertinaciously obstinate in their preconceptions will not change opinion upon apparent evidence; but humble men are always peaceable, they can better give and take those respects which are done to one another than others can. The apostle saith, Eph. v. 21, 'Submit yourselves to one another in the fear of God.' There is a service of love which every one oweth to another for their mutual good and advantage, and is called submission, though it be to equals, because our proud and lofty spirits look upon it as below us. There are none living whom God alloweth to live only to themselves. Now, that there may be an equality, we are to stoop and condescend to one another; others are to live to us, and we to them: 1 Peter v. 5, 'Be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.' This mutual subjection to another in the duties of love can never be obtained till we learn to moderate our esteem of ourselves, and heighten our esteem of others; we can neither advise nor instruct, nor esteem one another, nor maintain peace in our relations, and perform all Christian offices to each other, till this spirit prevail with us.

[3.] By undutifulness to superiors, or those that are preferred in honour before ourselves. Proud men would be admired of all, well thought of and spoken of by all, and preferred above all; and if it be not so, they are discontented, and a secret enmity and malignity invadeth their spirits and settlenth itself there; it is an apparent fruit of natural corruption: James iv. 5, 'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.' Men cannot endure either the real or reputed excellency of others; the proud creature would shine alone. Therefore we are secretly nibbling at the credit of others, blasting their reputation, and desire by all means to lessen them, or that they should be lessened; and where this disposition prevaieth into any degree of strength and tyranny, it groweth outrageous: Prov. xxvii. 4, 'Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?' For when we are grieved at the prosperity and excellency of others, we seek to undermine them by all the means we can devise; as when the brothers of Joseph sought to put him out of the way; and when Saul envied David, he was still plotting his destruction. So when the Pharisees envied Christ, 'If we let him alone, all men will run after him.' This brought them to crucify the Lord of glory. Anger venteth itself in sudden flashes, and wrath in some present act of violence, but envy is injurious and treacherous. Anger and wrath suppose some offence, but envy is troubled at the goodness and excellency of others. Anger and wrath are assuaged by degrees, and when the raging billows and tempest ceaseth, there is a calm; but this groweth by time, and is exasperated more and more the longer those whom we envy are in good condition. Now this affection reigned in us in our natural estate, Titus iii. 3, and remaineth in some degree in the best.

5. Another expression of pride is impatience of admonitions and reproofs; that is the cause of the wicked's hatred of the godly, because their lives are a real reproof: John vi. 7, 'The world hateth

me, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil ;' Heb. xi. 7. But surely it argueth a proud spirit when men cannot endure friendly counsel, and will not have their privy sores touched, but they grow fierce and outrageous, especially when they excel others in rank and power : as when the prophet reproved Amaziah, 2 Chron. xxv. 16, 'Art thou made of the king's counsel? forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten?' so 2 Chron. xviii. 23, 'He smote him on the cheek, and said, When went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?' So the Pharisees hated Christ because of his free reproofs : John ix. 40, 'Are we blind also?' They cannot endure to hear of their faults, especially from one in an inferior condition, and think every reproof to be a reproach, though never so wisely and compassionately managed, and that it is beneath their rank to stoop to it ; though Job despised not the cause of his maid-servants, Job xxxi. 13, if they had anything to say against him ; and David stopped upon Abigail's motion, 1 Sam. xxv. 26.

6. Take heed of building too securely upon earthly enjoyments, as if your estate were so firm and secure that it could not be altered, because you are high and great in wealth, power, honour, and esteem. Confidence in our outward estate is a sure note of pride : Ps. x. 4-6, 'The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God : God is not in all his thoughts. His ways are always grievous ; thy judgments are far above out of his sight : as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. He hath said in heart, I shall not be moved ; I shall not be in adversity.' There the Psalmist chargeth pride on the wicked, and such a pride as ariseth from confidence in outward prosperity ; and mentioneth a double effect, not only slighting their adversaries, but God himself. It is no matter for any terms of peace or moderation towards their adversaries, his ways are always grievous ; therefore are they violent, fierce and high, and severe towards them. Do not need the protection of God ; therefore cold, flat, negligent in prayer ; yea, scorn to implore God by prayer for any blessing. They are so high in place and power, that they are able to oppress their underlings, and so think they can bring to pass what they would have to be done in despite of God. Now somewhat of this may be found in the people of God : Ps. xxx. 6, 'In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.' They drink in some of this poison, are apt to rest and sleep on a carnal pillow. By this you may see that none of us have perfectly put off this sin. Plato saith a man doth put it off, as *τελευταίον χιτῶνα*, it groweth out of the conquest of other sins. But if we would not be proud—

[1.] Let us pray often, for in prayer we profess our subjection and dependence. Where prayers are fervent, earnest, frequent, it argueth great humility ; where rare, cold, unfrequent, little humility ; where none, no humility. Seeking to God, who is so excellent, mindeth us of our own baseness ; seeking his daily relief and succour mindeth us of the changeableness of all worldly things, and the several vicissitudes of this life, Ps. x. 4. A man serious in prayer, living in a constant dependence upon God, must needs be a humble man.

[2.] Let us be contented with a little, and not seek great things for ourselves ; for interest is the great makebait. I am sure a worldly

portion is the usual fuel of pride. A worm may grow in manna, but usually it is some worldly excellency which giveth us such great advantages here below which puffeth us up. If riches increase by the fair allowance of God's providence, we are not to grow proud of them: 1 Tim. vi. 17, 'Charge them that are rich in the world, that they be not high-minded.' Moses saith, Deut. viii. 12-14, 'Take heed when thou hast eaten, and art full, and thy gold and silver is multiplied, lest thy heart be lifted up.' Our hearts are mighty apt to be lifted up by a full estate.

[3.] If we excel in gifts and graces, double caution is necessary; this is a real excellency, 2 Cor. xii. 7. Pride maketh us not only unthankful to God, but perverse to men: Prov. xxi. 24, 'Proud and haughty scorner is his name who dealeth in proud wrath.' Men conceited of their gifts make their own fancy and conceit their rule; and if anything be done that pleaseth not them, they rend and tear all, and trample upon the unquestionable interest of Jesus Christ to wreak their spleen.

It is a question whether real grace may make a men proud. Gifts, to be sure, may: 'Knowledge puffeth up;' yea, grace, through corruption. They need caution that have the great presence of God with them as to success when eminently employed in God's service. Credit by worldly eminency and esteem falleth in with their services, and secretly insinuates high thoughts of their own excellences.

[4.] Consider how much pride hath cost us. They that are proud and burdensome to other people, God will pull down their pride: Isa. xiii. 11, 'And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.' It is spoken of the Chaldeans, who in bravery and force offered violence to others. God loveth to pull down the pride and insolency of roysterers, that have been formidable and burdensome to other people. The Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt the honourable of the earth. What hath God been doing, not in former, but latter times?

[5.] Consider that Christianity was sent into the world not to set up a kingdom of power, but patience. Mat. xviii. 4, 'Whosoever, therefore, shall be humble as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven;' Luke i. 51-53, 'He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart; he hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree; he hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.'

[6.] Consider who made us differ: 1 Cor. iv. 7, 'For who made thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou hast not received? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?' Who would be proud of a borrowed garment? he becometh the more in debt. Nothing is ours but sin, all other things are the free gift of God. Shall the wall boast itself because the sun shines upon it? or the pen arrogate the praise of fair writing? The more we have received from God the more we are obliged to acknowledge his goodness, and confess our own unworthiness.

Secondly, The event, or effect of God's providence desired, together with the reason of it. That which he desired was that they might 'be ashamed;' the reason, because they have 'dealt perversely without a cause.' Let us explain both.

1. The event of God's providence prayed for, that they may be ashamed; that is, that they may not prosper and succeed in their attempts; for men are ashamed when they are disappointed, and all their endeavours for the extirpation of God's people are vain and fruitless, and those things which they have subtly devised have not that effect which they propounded unto themselves: Ps. lxx. 3, 'Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame, which say, Aha!'

2. The reason urged, 'For they dealt perversely with me without a cause.' The Septuagint hath it *ἀδίκως*, unjustly. Ainsworth readeth, 'With falsehood they have depraved me.' It implieth two things—(1.) That they pretended a cause; (2.) David avoucheth his innocency to God; and so, without any guilt of his, they accused, defamed, condemned his actions, as is usual in like cases. Elsewhere he complaineth, Ps. lvi. 5, 'They every day wrest my words, and their thoughts are against me for evil.' They condemned him for wicked, perverted his sayings and doings. Men pretend causes of their oppression, heresy, schism, rebellion; but mere malice and perverseness of spirit incline them to seek the destruction of the people of God.

Doct. That when the proud are troublesome and injurious to God's people, they may boldly commend their cause to God.

The reasons:—

1. The effects of their pride are grievous to be borne. Now, it is well when any grief findeth a spiritual vent, when it puts the godly upon praying: Phil. iv. 6, 'In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God;' Jer. xx. 12, 'O Lord of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I opened my cause.' We may exhibit our bill of complaint at God's tribunal, carry the fact thither.

2. The Lord may be appealed unto upon a double account. Partly as he is an enemy to the proud, and as a friend to the humble: James iv. 6, 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble;' and Ps. cxxxviii. 6, 'Though the Lord be high, yet he hath a respect to the lowly, and the proud he knoweth afar off.' Partly as he is the portion of the afflicted and the oppressed: Ps. cxl. 12, 'I know the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.' When Satan stirreth up his instruments to hate whom the Lord loveth, the Lord will stir up his power to protect and defend them. So Ps. x. 14, 'Thou hast seen it, for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself to thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.' When they have laid forth their desires, poured forth their heart before the Lord, they quiet themselves. It is God's office, practice, nature, to relieve poor helpless creatures that commit themselves to his custody.

3. Innocency giveth confidence in prayer, when we are molested and troubled without a cause. The testimony of conscience giveth boldness towards God and men, 2 Cor. i. 12; and Heb. xiii. 18,

‘Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.’ If God’s children would carry it more holily and meekly, they might cut off occasion from them that desire occasion, and in their addresses to God experience more humble confidence.

But is not this a revengeful prayer? *Ans.* No.

First, Because directly they pray for their own deliverance, that they may more freely serve God by consequence. Indeed, by God’s showing mercy to his people, the pride of wicked ones is suppressed, Ps. cxix. 134.

Secondly, As it concerneth his enemies, he expresseth it in mild terms, ‘That they may be ashamed;’ that is, disappointed, their counsels, hopes, machinations, and endeavours. And therefore it is not against the persons of his enemies, but their plots and enterprises; and shame and disappointment may do them good. They think to bring in the total suppression of God’s people; that would harden them in their sins. Therefore God’s people desire he would not let their innocence be trampled upon, but they disappointed, that the proud may be ashamed in the failing of their attempts.

Thirdly, The prayers of the faithful for the overthrow of the wicked are a kind of prophecies; so that in praying, David doth in effect foretell that such as dealt perversely should be ashamed; as a good cause will not always be oppressed: Isa. lxvi. 5, ‘But he shall appear to your joy, but they shall be ashamed;’ they met with despiteful usage at the hand of their brethren, for their loyalty and fidelity to God.

Fourthly, Saints have a liberty to imprecate vengeance, but such as must be used sparingly and with great caution: Ps. lxxi. 13, ‘Let them be confounded and consumed who are adversaries to my soul.’ Malicious enemies may be expressly prayed against.

SERMON LXXXVII.

But I will meditate in thy precepts. Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.—VER. 78, 79.

WE now come to David’s resolution, *but I will meditate in thy precepts.* The word *precepts* is not taken strictly, but largely, for the whole word of God.

Doct. It is a blessed thing when the molestations we meet with in the world do excite us to a more diligent study of the word of God, and a greater mindfulness of spiritual and heavenly things.

1. I shall show what advantages we have by God’s word and precepts, for the staying and bettering of our hearts.

2. How this cometh by deep and serious meditation.

3. How afflictions and troubles in the flesh do quicken us to it.

First, In the word of God there are notable comforts and supports, as also clear directions how to carry ourselves in every condition. I shall show what good thoughts do become as a ground of comfort and support and direction.

1. That God hath a fatherly care over us. Be once persuaded of that, and trouble will not be so grievous and hard to be borne. This our Saviour opposeth to worldly cares and fears: Mat. vi. 32, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things;' and Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom.' There are two notions, and they are both Christian, which are the great support of the heart under any trouble—adoption and particular providence. The heirs of promise are cared for in their nonage; and, by the way, once be persuaded of this, and it will allay our distrustful cares. Carking and shifting is a reproach to your heavenly Father, as if your child should beg or filch. God knoweth our wants, is able to relieve them, willing to supply us; this God is my Father.

2. That the humble soul which casts itself into the arms of God's providence shall either have a full and final deliverance or present support: Isa. xl. 31, 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.' To wait on the Lord is with patience and tranquillity of spirit to expect the performance of the promises. Now these shall have what they wait for, or a supply of strength enabling them to bear up or hold out when they seem to be clean spent: Ps. cxxiii. 2, 'Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their master, and the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until he have mercy upon us;' it was in a time when they were filled with the contempt of the proud. Let us be patiently submissive to God's dispensations, there is hope of help.

3. That God doth wonderfully disappoint the designs of wicked men: Ps. xxxvii. 12, 13, 'The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him; for he seeth that his day is coming.' Haman's plot was destroyed, so was the conspiracy of them that would have killed Paul: 'There is no wisdom, nor counsel, nor understanding against the Lord,' Prov. xxi. 30. What is God now doing in heaven but defending his own kingdom? Ps. ii. Wherefore doth Christ sit at his right hand, but to promote the affairs of his church, and to blast the devices of the wicked? Mat. xvi. 18, 'The gates of hell shall never prevail against it.'

4. That the proud are near a fall: Prov. xvi. 5, 'Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, they shall not go unpunished.' Sometimes they seem to be supported by such combined interests, so woven in the laws and constitutions of a nation; but who can keep up him whom God will pull down? Pride is a sure note and forerunner of destruction, Prov. xvi. 18; Prov. xv. 25, 'The Lord will destroy the house of the proud; but he will establish the border of the widow.' Weak and oppressed innocence standeth upon surer terms than the proud, though they excel in wealth and opulency.

5. That God will never leave us wholly destitute, and to difficulties insupportable: Heb. xiii. 5, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;' and 1 Cor. x. 13, 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able to bear; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.' To the eye of sense we are lost and gone and have no helper, but God is never wholly

gone. Hagar set herself over against the lad, would not go too far from him. God seems to throw us away, but he keeps himself within sight, he will not totally or finally forsake us.

6. That God's usual way is by contraries. The gospel way to save is to lose, John xvi. 25; Mat. xvi. 25, 'He that will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it.' Joseph was made a slave that he may be made governor of Egypt; his brethren sell him that they may worship him; and he is cast into prison that he may be preferred at court. Thus God by shame bringeth to honour, by misery to happiness, by sorrow to comfort, and by death to life, to teach us to hope against hope, Rom. iv. 18, and to trust in him though he kill us, Job xiii. 15; for death is ours, as well as other things. If calamities shorten our lives, they hasten our glory. Persecution is the nearest way to heaven in the eye of faith, and the sword of the enemy is but the key to open the prison doors and let out the soul, which hath long desired to be with Christ.

7. That it is better to suffer than to sin. In suffering, the offence is done to us; in sinning, it is done to God. The evil of suffering is but for a moment; the evil of sin for ever. In suffering we lose the favour of men; in sinning we hazard the favour of God. Suffering bringeth inconvenience upon the body, but sinning upon the soul. The sinful estate is far worse than the afflicted, Heb. xii. 28; the evil of sufferings for the present, the evil of sin for afterwards.

8. That holiness, faith, meekness, and patience are better treasures than any the world can take from us. Certainly a Christian is to reckon himself by the inward man; if he have a healthy soul, he may the better dispense with a sickly body, 3 John 2. If the inward man be renewed, 2 Cor. iv. 16, if sore troubles discover reality of grace. Sound and saving faith discovered to the soul is better worth than the world's best gold, 1 Peter i. 9. If carnal sense were not quickest and greatest, we would judge so, and not look to the sharpness of the affliction, but to the improvement of it. If the bitter water be made sweet; if you be more godly, wise, and religious, it is enough: Heb. xii. 11, 'No affliction for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.' If the loss of worldly comforts make us apply ourselves to heavenly consolations; if, being disburdened of worldly incumbrances, we go on in our way of serving God with more liberty and delight, and, when our dangers are greatest, we draw near to God, and adhere to him most closely, and being persuaded of his love, vigilancy, and power, with these and such kind of thoughts will a man be stocked who is with seriousness and delight conversant in the scriptures, and so will go on undisturbed in the course of his obedience.

Secondly, These things must be improved by meditation; so saith David, 'I will meditate on thy precepts.'

1. Sleepy reason is unuseful to us, and truths lie hid in the heart without any efficacy or power till improved by deep, serious, and pressing thoughts. Non-attendance is the bane of the world: Mat. xiii. 19, 'When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that

which was sown in his heart.' Those invited to the wedding, Mat. xxii. 5, made light of it. Men will not suffer their minds so long to dwell upon holy things as to procure a good esteem of them; then in 'seeing they see not, and in hearing hear not;' as when you tell a man of a business whose mind is taken up about other things. A sudden carrying a candle through a room giveth us not so full a survey of the object as when you stand a while beholding it. A steady contemplation is a great advantage. Attending is the cause of believing, when we grow serious: Acts xvi. 14, 'Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things spoken by Paul;' Acts xvii. 11, 'And these were more noble than they of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind.' If people would often return to consider, they would not be hardened in sin: Ps. iv. 4, 'Commune with your own heart upon your bed;' Hag. i. 5, 'Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.' God's complaint was, they would not consider his ways, Job xxxiv. 27; Isa. i. 3, 'My people doth not consider.' Running thoughts never work upon us, nor leave any durable impression, like the glance of a sunbeam on a wave. When the soul is besieged by a constant battery of truths, it yieldeth; but a mind scattered upon impertinent vanities groweth not up to any considerable strength of faith, or joy, or comfort, or holiness.

2. God will not be served by the by and at hap-hazard. David taketh a resolution to study his duty. The more deliberate our resolutions are the better: Ps. cxix. 59, 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.' We shall never stumble upon a good course by chance: Isa. lvi. 4, 'And choose the things that please me;' not take them upon some sudden motion, but after mature and serious deliberation.

3. To divert the mind from other things. Afflictions and troubles stir up a multitude of thoughts in us: Ps. xciv. 19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts.' Sometimes self-oppressing thoughts, carking thoughts, envious thoughts, and repining at God's providence; the object of our trouble is ever before us. Now, there is no way to get rid of these but by exercising them upon better things. Troubles make us concerned about matters of weight; they employ our minds usefully, which before were scattered to impertinent vanities: Ps. xxxix. 3, 'My heart was hot within me; whilst I was musing the fire burned.' That our minds may not be a prey to inordinate passions; we pore upon the trouble, and the heart is heated like an oven stopped up; and therefore keep the mind well employed.

4. Frequent meditation keepeth our principles in view and memory. We are apt to forget in our sorrows: Heb. xii. 5, 'And ye have forgotten the consolation.' It is not ready at hand to support us in the time of trouble. A seasonable remembrance of truths is a great relief to the soul; it is the Spirit's office.

Thirdly, That afflictions and molestations have a great tendency and subserviency to promote and advance these holy thoughts where they are sanctified and work the right way.

1. They make us understand the word more fully and clearly than before. *Vexatio dat intellectum; qui tribulantur*, saith Luther, *sacras literas melius intelligunt; securi et fortunati eas legunt, sicut*

Ovidii carmen. A full third part of the scriptures are lost to the secure and fortunate.

2. As they clear the sight, so they purge the taste, and give us a spiritual relish. Carnal comforts cloy the spiritual appetite; when they are removed from us, then we taste heavenly things: Ps. xciv. 19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.'

3. They quicken the heart to our duty, and so make us more awe-ful and watchful: Ps. xciv. 12, 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law;' Ps. cxix. 167, 'My soul hath kept thy testimonies, and I love them exceedingly.' If God write his law upon our hearts by his stripes on our backs, it is a blessed effect. Our happiness is to be measured by our great end, which is conformity to God and enjoyment of God; and therefore it doth not consist in outward comforts, riches, honour, health, civil liberty, and comfortable protection, but acceptance with God, and enjoyment of God. Now, as afflictions increase grace and holiness, we are the more approved of God, and enjoy more of God.

Use. Let all our troubles drive us to the word of God; there we shall find—

1. Grounds of comfort and support.

2. Hopes of deliverance.

3. Quickenings to duty, which being concocted by serious thoughts, and blessed to us by the Spirit of God, will enable us to ride out the storm cheerfully, and allay our cares and fears, and then we shall put ourselves into the way wherein God hath engaged his protection, and so shall not be afraid of what man can do unto us.

I now come to the 79th verse, *let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.* When troubled by the wicked, he prayeth for the help and comfort of the godly. There is an elegant allusion between the two words, *יִשְׁבֵּן*, Let the proud be ashamed; and *יִשְׁבֵּן*, Let the godly be turned to me; that is, let them desert the society of these proud men, and join to me.

In these words God's people are described by a double character—(1.) 'Those that fear thee;' (2.) 'Those that have known thy testimonies.' David's petition concerning those, that they may turn to him. I shall deliver the importance of these words in certain propositions.

1. Observe the godly are described by two properties—the fear or worship of God, and the knowledge of his word. Those are godly who fear to offend God, and have the sound knowledge of his will; those are fittest for God's use in the general, and for David's use in the particular condition in which he was. For God's use: Fear and knowledge do make up a godly man. Knowledge without fear breedeth presumption, and fear without knowledge breedeth superstition and blind zeal, as a blind horse may be full of mettle, but is ever and anon stumbling. Knowledge must direct fear, and fear must season knowledge, then it is a happy mixture and composition. *Deum cognoscere et colere*—to know God, and worship him, is the whole duty of man, saith Lactantius. When we know God's testimonies so as to regard, love, and believe them, and dare not dispense with our duty to him for all the world, this is a good frame; our knowledge and fear of God must be according

to his word. And these were fittest for David's case; fit comforters and strengtheners of the godly in persecution. There are many whom we cannot exclude from all fear of God, who yet know not his testimonies, run into error, darken and blemish a good cause; but those that know and fear understand their duty, and are loath to violate it; with these should our souls close. Well, then, David doth in effect say, Those whom thou hast joined to thyself, let them join to me; they will acknowledge the equity of that cause which God owneth, and will converse with him whom thou disdainest not to take into favour; because they reverence thy providence, and are taught out of thy testimonies; and so, weighing the cause, as well as regarding the event, will be sooner won to the truth when God showeth mercy to his people; other godly ones will be allured to join themselves to those whom they find to be so dear to God.

2. Friendship and fellowship with such godly ones is a great blessing. Partly as it conduceth to mutual spiritual strength: Rom. i. 12, 'That I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.' It is a comfort to see our Father's children wherever we come, and to behold their faith, zeal, self-denial, mortification; the godly are a strength to one another in evil times: Mal. iii. 16, 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.' There are many advantages attend the communion of saints; their very sight and presence is a confirmation to us. Many times that temptation befalleth us which befell Elias; we think we are left alone, 1 Kings xix. 10, that godliness is gone out of the world. To have company is an encouragement; but we have not only company, but help. Every one hath his peculiar gift to help others, 1 Cor. xii. One hath quickness of parts, but not so solid a judgment; another is solid, but not of so ready, present, and good utterance: one is zealous, but ungrounded; another well-principled, but timorous: 1 Cor. xii. 21, 'The eye (the knowing man) cannot say to the hand (the active man in God's cause), I have no need of thee.' All have their use, by mutual gifts and graces, to profit one another, as the curtains of the tabernacle were coupled to one another by loops, Exod. xxvi. 3, or as a body fitly joined and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, Eph. iv. 16. Every Christian hath need of another's help. And partly as it conduceth more to public safety and honour: Phil. i. 27, 28, 'Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.' When the members are cut off, the body is less powerful: Acts iv. 33, 'And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus,' when they were met with one heart. And the apostle prayeth, Rom. xv. 5, 6, 'Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Jesus Christ; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;' as if God could not be glorified by them where there is not this amen. Well, then, if David did so earnestly desire the company of God's children, so should we.

3. Though it be so great a blessing, yet often it falleth out that there are great discords and estrangements between those that fear God and know his testimonies; godly men may be strange one to another. David complaineth, Ps. lxi. 8, 'I am become a stranger to my brethren, and an alien to my mother's children;' and Ps. xxxviii. 11, 'My lovers and friends stand aloof from my sore;' they stood afar off then when wicked men had wounded him. Now this may come to pass—

[1.] Through carnal fear, as the godly may be deterred by the fear of the proud; therefore he desireth they may recover their courage. An afflicted condition, as it might increase the violence of the proud, so it might diminish the affections of the godly. Affliction is harsh to flesh and blood, and good men in their sharpest conflicts may be deserted, not only of those who make fair profession, but are really godly, and stand in the gap alone. Christ himself hath paved the way; he was left alone; so Paul complaineth, 2 Tim. iv. 16, 'At my first answer no man stood with me, but all did forsake me: I pray God it be not laid to their charge.' The godly may forsake our fellowship, though they wish well to us when we are persecuted, as the rest of the herd forsake the wounded deer; they may shrink from us and our afflictions. It will be a great mercy if owned in our troubles. Paul took notice of Onesiphorus's not being ashamed of his chain, when some turned away, 2 Tim. i. 15, 16.

[2.] They may be alienated by prejudice. Persons truly godly may be deceived by the proud. His enemies had depraved his cause; as in the former verse, his enemies represented him as a strange person: so they might be seduced by their slanders, and so engage against him, till they were disabused and reduced, as now he beggeth God in mercy to do for him. The equity of my cause being known, let them join themselves to me; as Job to his friends: Job vi. 29, 'Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity; yea, return again, my righteousness is in it;' that is, in this matter. Every good man would desire this; but David was the head of the party, and chief of the godly's sight. Often it falleth out that the godly may take distaste and offence at us.

[3.] There may be some offence given by us. Chrysostom and Theodoret think it relateth to David's sin after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba, and plotted the murder of Uriah. Theodoret thinks that he was withdrawn or separated from the communion of the church, according to his foul act; and therefore prayeth for a redintegration, and that they might return to intimacy with him again, and he gathereth it from Symmachus's translation, who doth not read it, Let them turn unto me, but Let them converse with me as freely as before. Thus the disciples were offended with Paul, till God hardened¹ their hearts towards him, Acts ix. 13. Saul was ashamed to see any of those whom he had persecuted; Ananias was afraid, as the lamb to come near the wolf, till God prepared both by an internal vision; so ver. 21–27.

[4.] From difference in judgment about lesser things. We should, Phil. iii. 15, 16, 'Be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same

¹ Qu. 'softened'?—Ed.

things.' There should be a union in heart, way, and scope, Rom. xiv., but often it doth fall out that passion, because of lesser differences, may occasion an unkindness between very brethren : Acts xv. 37-39, ' And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other ; and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.' That paroxysm between Paul and Barnabas.

[5.] From the providence of God permitting it for wise reasons. Job owneth God in it : Job xix. 13, 14, ' He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me.' So doth Heman : Ps. lxxxviii. 8, ' Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me ; thou hast made me an abomination to them.' Partly to humble us and try us, for our depending too much upon man, and making us ourselves again with our party. A winnowing storm may be sent to this purpose. We think our faith and resolution strong, now God will try how we can stand alone. And partly to drive us to God : ' With thee the fatherless find mercy,' Hosea xiv. 3 ; Ps. lx. 11, ' Give us help from trouble ; for vain is the help of man ;' Ps. xii. 1, ' Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth ; the faithful fail from among the children of men.' We shall not have too much comfort by any creature, to turn us to believe in God alone. We are prone to look to the creature, and to have our hearts drawn away from God. And partly to conform us to Jesus Christ : John xvi. 32, ' Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone ;' Mat. xxvi. 56, ' But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.' This is part of the bitter cup.

4. When this falleth out, we should use all due means to recover those that have deserted us, and draw them unto us again ; the favour is worth diligence. A man would not be cast out of the hearts of God's people. The apostle saith, Heb. xii. 14, ' Follow peace with all men,' *διώκετε εἰρήνην*, not only embrace it when it is offered to us, and fairly droppeth into our mouths, but pursue it with earnestness ; we must pursue it as a man pursueth something running from him to take it. It is explained, Ps. xxxiv. 14, ' Seek peace, and pursue it.' If the issue answer not our first attempt, we must seek it again ; not giving up the cause for desperate, lest despair quench our endeavours.

5. One great means to recover a good understanding among God's people is prayer. David goeth to God about it, ' Lord, let them turn to me.' The Lord governeth hearts and interests, both are in his hands, and useth this alienation or reconciliation either for judgment or mercy. God, when he pleaseth, can divert the comfort of godly friends, and when he pleaseth he can bring them back again to us. The feet of God's children are directed by God himself : if they come to us it is a blessing of God ; if not, it is for a correction. He made Jacob and Laban meet peaceably, Gen. xxxi., and in the next chapter Jacob and Esau.

Use. The use is direction to us in these times, when there are such

distances and alienation of hearts and affections between the people of God.

1. Let us not be troubled at it over-much. Godly men were estranged from David, either being misled by delusions and false reports, or loath to come to him because of his troubles and low condition. And partly because it is no strange thing for a good man to be forsaken of his friends; so Job, chap. vi. 15-17, 'My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away, which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid: what time they wax warm, they vanish; when it is hot, they are consumed out of the way;' so David: Ps. xxxi. 11, 'I was a reproach among all mine enemies, and a fear to mine acquaintance;' yea, so Christ himself. I know the temptation is very great. Man is ζῶον πολίτικον, a sociable creature. To go alone in our duty is very hard; but we ought not to look on ourselves to be alone while God is with us, John xvi. 32. Christ is a pattern of all dispensations as well as trials: Heb. xiii. 5, 'I will not leave thee nor forsake thee.' He is so far from forsaking, that he will not leave us.

2. Let us recommend the case to God: Zeph. iii. 9, 'That they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent;' Rom. xv. 6, 7, 'That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God: wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.' *Non sunt ista litigandi, sed orandi tempora.* Beg a coalition of all those that fear God, that, laying aside prejudice, they may turn one to another. The spirit of concord is God's gift. Christ prayeth, John xvii. 21, 22, 'That they may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe thou hast sent me: and the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one as we are one.'

3. Let us carry it so that the children of God may have no occasion to turn from us. Scandalous sins are roots of bitterness: Heb. xii. 15, 'Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.' Encourage the godly to pray for you: Heb. xiii. 18, 'Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly.' To love you. Good men are not unworthy of our prayers, and incapable of the benefit of them; the more you excel in grace the more they will delight in you: Ps. xvi. 3, 'But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.'

SERMON LXXXVIII.

Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.—

VER. 80.

In this verse we have—(1.) A petition, *let my heart be sound in thy statutes*; (2.) An argument from the fruit and effect of granting it, *that I be not ashamed*; that is, then I shall not, otherwise I certainly

shall, be ashamed. He would avoid that inconveniency that was so grievous to him in the eyes of wicked men.

First, In the petition I shall take notice—

1. Of the person praying, David.
2. His qualification, intimated in the word *my heart*.
3. The person prayed unto, intimated in the word *thy*.

Secondly, Here is the benefit asked, *a sound heart*; in which you have—

1. The nature of it.
2. The value of it.

Doct. That sincerity and soundness in a holy course is a great blessing, and earnestly to be sought of God in prayer.

First, This will appear if we consider the benefit asked, the nature and value of it.

First, The nature of it, what is a sound heart? It noteth reality and solidity in grace. The Septuagint hath it, Let my heart be without spot and blemish; what is here, Let my heart be sound. It implieth the reality of grace, opposed to the bare form of godliness, or the fair shows of hypocrites, and the sudden and vanishing motions of temporaries.

1. I shall briefly show what it is not, by way of opposition.

[1.] It is opposed to the form of godliness: 2 Tim. iii. 4, 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.' Their religion is only in show and outside, as apples, that may be fair to see to in the skin, but rotten at the core; so their hearts are not sound within. When we are sound within as well as beautiful without, this is the sound heart; when not only in show and appearance we are for God, but in deed and truth. Solinus telleth us that the apples of Sodom are to sight very beautiful and fair, but the compass of the rind doth only contain a sooty matter, which flitters into dust as soon as touched. This is a fit emblem of a hypocrite, or a heart not sound with God. Or, as the priests under the law, they were to look whether the sacrifices were sound at heart, otherwise they were to be rejected, Lev. xxii. 22, 23. So David here begs a sound heart in God's statutes, lest it should be rejected of God. The world thinketh, if there be a little external conformity to the law of God, it is enough. Oh, no! There must be a sound heart; no other principle of obedience pleaseth God.

[2.] This sound heart is opposed to the sudden pangs and hasty motions of temporaries. The graces of temporaries are for matter true, but slightly rooted, and therefore are not sound. There wanteth two things in the graces of temporaries—(1.) A deep and firm radication; (2.) A habitual predominancy over all lusts.

(1.) A deep and firm radication. Temporaries are really affected with the word of God, and the offers of Christ and life by him; but the tincture is but slight, and soon worn off; they have the streams of grace, but not the fountain; a draught, but not the spring: John iv. 14, 'The water that I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up to everlasting life.' A dash of rain or a pond may be dried up, but a fountain ever keepeth flowing. They have something to do with Christ; he giveth them a visit, but not that constant communion; he doth not 'dwell in their hearts by faith,' Eph. iii. 17, nor take up

his abode there; it is but a slight tincture, not a deep and permanent dye of holiness, or a constant habitual inclination to that which is holy, just, and good. There is not the remaining seed, 1 John iii. 9. There is a great deal of difference between sudden motions stirred up in us by the Spirit, and the remaining seed; that is, a constant disposition of heart to please God.

(2.) A habitual predominancy over all lusts. Temporaries still, with those kind graces which they have, retain their interest in the world, and their inclinations to the pleasures, honours, and profits thereof, unbroken and unsubdued; as Simon Magus cherisheth the same corruptions under his new faith that he did under his old sorceries, Acts viii.; still he did desire to be thought some great one among the people. You must not think that he altogether dissembled, but he had some sense upon him, for he believed, and beheld the miracles, and wondered; but the same inclinations remained with him. Evermore some temporal interest or worldly advantage is laid closer to the heart, and hath a deeper rooting therein than the word of promise; and this in time prevaieth over the interest of God. And therefore, whatever good affections we have, till we get a command over our base and carnal delights, our hearts can never be sound with God.

2. Positively. What the sound heart is not, or to what it is opposed, we have seen. You may from hence easily gather what it is; it is such a receiving of the word into the heart that it is rooted there, and diffuseth its influence for the seasoning of every affection, and beareth a universal sovereignty over us. Sometimes it is described by its radication, and sometimes by its sovereign prevailing efficacy.

[1.] Sometimes it is described by its radication, and so it is called *λόγος ἐμφυτός*, 'The engrafted word, that is able to save our souls,' James i. 21. The root of the matter is within; it is not tied on, but engrafted: so in that promise of God, Heb. viii. 10, 'I will put my law into their minds, and write it upon their hearts.' There is something written: I will write my law; and there are tables, and they are the hearts and minds of men; that is, the understanding and the will, or the rational appetite; and this with God's own finger: I will write upon their hearts and minds. There where is the spring and original of all moral operations, of all thoughts, affections, and inward motions, there is the law of God written; in those parts of the soul where the directive counsel and the imperial commanding power of all human actions lieth, there doth God write his laws, and engrave them in lively and legible characters. And what is the effect of this, but that a man becometh a law to himself? He carrieth his rule about with him, and as ready and as willing a mind to obey it. So Ps. xxxvii. 31, 'The law of God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.' The truth is rooted in him, and his heart is suited and inclined to it. He knoweth and loveth what is commanded of God, and hateth what is forbidden of him: thus a man becometh a bible to himself. Indeed this planting and engrafting the law upon our hearts, it sometimes made our work, because we use the means. God doth not write his law upon our hearts by enthusiasm, rapture, and inspiration, as he wrote in the hearts of the apostles and prophets, but maketh use of our reason, reading, hearing, meditation, conference, and prayer. It

is made our work, because we work under God: Ps. cxix. 11, 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee;' and Prov. vi. 21, 22, 'Bind his commandments upon thy heart; tie them upon thy neck.' When we look for the deep implanting of the word in our hearts, this is the sound heart here described.

[2.] The efficacy of this word so radicated, and the power and dominion it hath over the soul to subdue it to the will of God, and that is when the heart is transformed into the nature of God: Rom. vi. 11, 'Ye have obeyed from the heart the form of sound doctrine that was delivered unto you.' When the form of the word is delivered to him, he delivereth up himself to be moulded and assimilated to the nature of it; as that which is cast into the fire is changed into the colour, heat, and properties of fire. Thus where the word is incorporated and rooted in us, the heart is assimilated to the object seen and discerned therein; the image of God is stamped and impressed upon us: 2 Peter i. 4, 'Having these great and precious promises, that we might be partakers of the divine nature;' and 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'We are changed into his image' (or likeness) 'from glory to glory, by the Spirit of our God.' Well, then, you see what the sound heart is.

But yet more distinctly, if you would have me unfold what this sound heart is, there is required these four things:—

1. An enlightened understanding; that is the directive part of the soul; and it is sound when it is kept free from the leaven and contagion of error: Prov. xv. 21, 'A man of understanding walketh uprightly.' A sound mind is a good help to a sound heart. Light breedeth an awe of God, and mindeth us of our duty upon all occasions: 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 'And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.' First know him, and then serve him. He can never shoot right that taketh his aim contrary. The understanding doth direct all the inferior powers of the soul; if that be infected with error, the affections must necessarily move out of order. A blind horse may be full of mettle, but is ever and anon apt to stumble; and therefore, 'Without knowledge the heart is not good,' Prov. xix. 2.

2. There is required an awakened conscience; that warneth us of our duty, and riseth up in dislike of sin upon all occasions: Prov. vi. 22, 'When thou goest it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest it shall keep thee; when thou walkest it shall talk with thee;' to have a constant monitor in our bosoms to put us in mind of God; when our reins preach to us in the night season, Ps. xvi. 7. There is a secret spy in our bosoms, that observes all that we do, and think, and speak, a domestical divine that is always preaching to us; his heart is his bible. Such an awakened conscience is a bridle before sin, to keep us from doing things contrary to God; and a whip after sin. If we keep it tender, so it will do. Indeed it is easily offended, but it is not easily pleased; as the eye, the least dust soon offends it, but it is not so easily got out again. Till men have benumbed their consciences, and brought a brawn and deadness upon their hearts, their conscience, according to its light, will warn them of their danger, and mind them of their duty. It is a great misery to have a speaking, stirring conscience, otherwise it is stupid and senseless.

3. There is required a rightly disposed will, or a steadfast purpose to walk with God in all conditions, and to do what is good and acceptable in his sight: Acts xi. 23, 'He exhorted them with full purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord.' Many have light inclinations or wavering resolutions, but their hearts are not fixedly, habitually bent to please God. Therein chiefly lieth this sound heart, that doth inseparably cleave to God in all things: 1 Chron. xxii. 19, 'Now set your hearts to seek the Lord God of your fathers.' This is the obedient heart, when the heart is set and fixed. So David speaketh of it: Ps. cxix. 112, 'I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always to the end.' When the heart is poised this way, not compelled by outward force, but inclined; and this always, not by fits and starts. Many have good motions, and temporise a little, but their righteousness is like the morning dew. Many approve what is good, and condemn themselves for not doing of it, but their hearts are not inclined; nay, further, they can wish it were better with them, but the heart is not swayed and overpowered by grace. Here is the ground of a cheerful, uniform, and constant obedience, when we do not force ourselves now and then to good actions, but the heart hath a habitual tendency that way.

4. There is required that the affections be purged and quickened; these are the vigorous motions of the will, and therefore this must be heedfully regarded: purged they must be from that carnality and fleshliness that cleaveth to them. This is called in scripture the circumcision of the heart, Deut. x. 10: 'The Lord thy God shall circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, that thou mayest live.' It was figured in the cutting of the foreskin, or the circumcision of the flesh, which, because it was an action done with pain, sometimes noteth the humbling of the heart and soul-affliction, Lev. xxvi. 41; but because it was done not only with pain, but the foreskin was cut off, so it noteth the purging the heart from that fleshliness and carnality that cleaveth to us: Acts xv. 9, 'Purifying their hearts by faith.' Sin is wrought out more and more by the blood of Christ applied to the conscience. And sometimes this is expressed in scripture by ploughing up the fallow ground, Jer. iv. 4. There are perverse inclinations, like briars and thorns, that grow in us, and the strength of vile affections; now unless these be abated and broken we shall soon be transported by them. It is an allusion to ground broken up for tillage: till the ground be ploughed, and the noisome weeds destroyed, the good seed will not grow. Secondly, the affections must be quickened, acted, and set awork by the love of God: Gal. v. 6, 'Prepared ready to serve the Lord,' Eph. ii. 20. *Amor meus est pondus meum*—love and delight in God's ways go together.

Thus much of the nature of the sound heart.

Secondly, Let me now come to show you the value and worth of this privilege. It is a great blessing; that will appear by two things:—

1. The respect that God hath to it.

2. The evil it freeth us from, 'That I be not ashamed.'

1. The respect that God hath to it. This is the thing that God

delights in and looks after : 1 Chron. xxix. 17, 'I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness.' He can discern integrity, and preferreth it before all manner of service and pomp in worship that is yielded to him. Now this delight of God is not only in the thing itself, in the uprightness, but in the persons of the upright, upon account of their uprightness : so Prov. xi. 20, 'The upright is his delight.' That person that is upright for the main, though otherwise he hath many failings, is of great esteem with God. But can the holy God delight in any of the sinful sons of Adam ? Before the fall God rejoiced in us, as in the work of his hands. But since sin marred us and defiled us, how can God take pleasure in us ? The love of good-will may fall upon sinful unworthy creatures, but the love of complacency cannot fall upon these. A fit object the sinner is not, and exactly perfect none can be ; there is therefore a middle person, the upright and sincere man ; and this delight of God passeth from the person to his actions : 'The prayer of the upright is his delight,' Prov. xv. 8. Alas ! our prayers are, as our persons, poor slender things at the best ; yet a little findeth acceptance with God ; it is welcome for the person's sake, who is accepted in Christ. Now, how will God manifest this delight ? In his providence : 2 Chron. xvi. 9, 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro, that he may show himself strong in the behalf of those whose hearts are upright with him.' He looks up and down in the world to find out such persons to do them good, that he may employ all his power and grace for them : so God shows it in his word. God's work is to assure them of a blessing : Micah ii. 7, 'Do not my words do good to them that walk uprightly ?' There he comforts, and strengthens, and revives their hearts. He doth not only speak good, but doth good to them that walk uprightly. Nay, that is not all, but by his Spirit and internal grace he doth more encourage them, and renew strength upon them in their way to heaven : Prov. x. 29, 'The way of the Lord is strength to the upright.' The more they walk with God, the more easy and sweet they find it so to do. So that if all these promises will encourage us, we had need to look after this sound heart. What honour and esteem soever others purchase with men, these obtain favour with the Lord, and are more regarded in all his dispensations.

2. Let us come to the evil it freeth us from ; in the argument of the text, 'That I may not be ashamed.' They whose hearts are not sound with God, one time or other they shall be put to shame ; but others shall be kept from this effect, which is so grievous to nature. Let me open this. A man may be ashamed either before God or men, ourselves or others.

[1.] Before God, either in our addresses to him at the throne of grace, or when summoned to appear at the last day before the tribunal of his justice.

(1.) If you understand it of our present approach to him, we cannot come into his presence with confidence if we have not a sound heart : 1 John iii. 21, 'If our hearts condemn us not, then have we boldness towards God.' We lose that holy familiarity and cheerfulness, when we are unbosoming ourselves to our heavenly Father, when our hearts are not sound. An unsound heart, through the consciousness of its

own guilt, groweth shy of God, and stands aloof from him, and hath no pleasure in his company. But when we sincerely set ourselves to keep a good conscience in all things, we have this liberty towards God; though our failings humble us, yet they do not weaken our confidence of our Father's mercy. St Paul thought himself a fit object of others' prayers on this account: Heb. xiii. 18, 'Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly.' That is his argument to prove that he was not altogether unworthy of their prayers, nor incapable of the benefit of their petitions. There are some whom no prayers or intercession can help or profit, some that have no encouragement to pray for themselves, or give others an encouragement to pray for them. But Paul was none of these. Why? Because the reason of his request is modestly expressed. He doth not say, I have, but 'I trust I have, a good conscience;' and he doth not justify himself in all things, but appeals to the bent of his will, 'Willing in all things to live honestly.' He was willing so to do, that is, to direct his life according to the will of God in all things; his heart was willingly disposed and predominantly bent unto righteousness, and he knew it to be so. Such may, without blushing, come into God's presence, and have encouragement to pray for themselves, and encourage others to pray for them.

(2.) When we are summoned to appear before the tribunal of his justice. Many now with a bold impudence will obtrude themselves upon the worship of God, because they see him not, and have not a due sense of his majesty; but the time will come when the most impudent and outbraving sinners will be astonished, even then, when 'the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open and made manifest, and hidden things brought to light,' 1 Cor. iv. 5. And every one is to receive his judgment from God, according to what he hath done, either good or evil. Conscience now, like a clock when the weights are down, is silent, and makes no noise; but then it shall speak, and tell men their own, and then they will be ashamed; unsound hearts will not be able to stand in the judgment. When God sets any judicial judgment afoot in the world now, it reviveth men's guilty fears: Isa. xxxiii. 14, 'The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrite: who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' In some terrible judgments that are a foregoing pledge of judgment to come, men of an unsound heart are soon possessed with fears and frights, as the unsound parts of the body are pinched most in searching weather. When God's wrath is once kindled, none so terrified and amazed as they. Much more at the great day, when there is no allaying of their fear, and they must undergo the final judgment of the most impartial God. Who will be able to hold up the head, and to say, 'Then shall I not be ashamed?' They that unfeignedly give up themselves to do the whole will of God: Ps. cxix. 6, 'Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy commandments.' A man that desires to do the whole will of God will not be confounded and amazed with terror before the judge of all the earth. The philosopher defines shame to be a fear of a just reproof. Who more just than the judge of all the earth? and when is there a greater reproof in the conviction of sinners than at the last judgment?

[2.] Before men a man may be ashamed; and so before ourselves and others.

(1.) Ourselves. It was a saying of Pythagoras, Reverence thyself. Be ashamed of thyself. God hath a spy and deputy within us, and taketh notice of our conformity and inconformity to his will, and after sin committed, lasheth the soul with the sense of its own guilt and folly, as the body is lashed with stripes: Rom. vi. 21, 'What fruit have ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?' There is an emphasis in the particle *now*; that is, now after grace received, or now after the commitment of sin. Take either sense. Sin enticeth us before we fall into it, but afterwards it flasheth terror in the face of the sinner, and filleth his soul with horror and shame; or now, after grace received, a Christian cannot look back upon his past life without shame and blushing. Tertullian hath a saying, that a man's heart reproacheth him when he doth evil. As soon as our first parents had sinned, they were ashamed of it, and sought fig-leaves to cover it; they seek to hide with the leaves what the fruit had uncovered. Well, then, there is an eye and an ear that seeth and heareth our secret sins, and lasheth the soul for them till we grow into a sturdy impudence. But now the upright man, that sets his heart to serve the Lord and do his will, hath comfort and peace in himself: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is our rejoicing, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.' He can look his conscience in the face without fear and amazement. He hath sorrow for his failings, but can look upon himself as sound before God for the main.

(2.) Before others; and so our shame may be occasioned by our scandals or our punishment: it is hard to say which is intended here.

(1st.) By scandals. When the heart is not sound with God, disorders break out before men, and many that make a fair show for a while afterwards shipwreck themselves and all their credit; for God will at length uncase the hypocrite, Prov. xxvi. 26; God will pull off his disguise one time or other, and that which is counterfeit cannot long be hidden; there will a time of dissection come, when that which is hidden shall be made manifest. The apostle telleth us that 'that which is lame is soon turned out of the way,' Heb. xii. 13. Men of an unsound heart have some temptations or other to carry them quite off from God, and then, as old Eli, they fall back, and break the neck of their profession, whereby they dishonour God and shame themselves. As Christ telleth us of the builders, that the house fell, and great was the fall of it; so these, by some shameful and scandalous fall, discover themselves to the world.

(2d.) There is a shame before others by their punishment and disappointment of their hopes. God's punishment, in the language of scripture, is a putting to shame: Ezek. xxxvi. 7, 'When the heathens that are about you shall bear their shame.' So Jer. xiii. 26, 'I will discover thy skirts that thy shame may appear.' So when God visits his people for scandalous and enormous offences: Ps. xlv. 9, 'Thou hast cast us off, and put us to shame.' The reason of that expression is this: A man in misery is a laughing-stock to others, and exposed

to contempt and ignominy. Especially is this a shame to God's people, when they seem to be disappointed in the hope of protection and assistance which they expected from God ; then God puts them to shame, makes them to be a despised people. And this is their portion whose hearts are not sound and upright with God ; they are rejected of the Lord, and grow despicable. Well, then, the point is made good by what hath already been said ; but now the other circumstance.

Secondly, Here is the qualification of the person asking, David.

1. David was a holy, good man, Acts xiii. 22. He goes and begs 'Let my heart be sound.' The hearts of the best men are so perverted with natural corruption, which is not fully abolished in any, that they have need to pray for a sound heart : Eph. iv. 22, 'Put off the old man with his deceitful lusts.' The old man is not so put off but there will be many warpings and deceitful workings still, and therefore David prays thus. The more upright any man is, the more sensible of his weakness, and the more suspicious of his own heart's deceitfulness. The best have lodged sin, vanity, and pleasures, and the world in their hearts, which are the closets that should be kept entirely for the Lord. They find their purposes towards that which is good very weak, their resolutions variable, their inclinations to evil very strong : Prov. xx. 9, 'Who can say, My heart is clean ?' And therefore they go to God, if there be any degree of insincerity, any spared sin, any remainings of lust not striven against and not bewailed, that he would discover it, and mortify it, that they may be more steadfast, being sensible of their fickleness and turning aside in the several conditions they pass through.

2. This was the request of David, who was so much in the knowledge and study of God's law, and had so often said, 'Teach me thy statutes,' now 'Make me sound in thy statutes.' Sound knowledge of the statutes of God, and a sound purpose of heart to follow them, must be joined together. Affection without knowledge is not good, much less knowledge without affection and practice. All our knowledge will but increase our punishment, Luke xii. 48, and take away all pretences of excuse. First a heart enlightened, and then a heart bent : David often prays for both in this psalm ; so must we pray, that as we have greater knowledge than others, so we may have better affections than others, and our hearts more upright. 'If ye know these things, happy are you if you do them,' John xiii. 17. God's scope in giving the law, was not to make trial of men's wits, who could most sharply conceive ; nor of their memories, who could most faithfully retain ; nor of their eloquence, who could most neatly discourse ; but of their hearts, who could most obediently submit to his statutes. Stars were not made for sight only, but influence. So man was not created to know only, but to walk according to his knowledge. God's precepts are best learned when most circumspectly practised.

3. This was the request of David, a man afflicted, opposed, and persecuted. Compare the text with the 78th verse, 'Let the proud be ashamed ; for they have dealt perversely with me.' 'Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.' Above all things we should study to be sincere in our carriage and defence of a good cause.

An unsound heart will not bear out, but fall off to its own shame: James i. 8, The apostle telleth us, that ‘a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.’ Between God’s supplies and carnal shifts he goeth backward and forward, or this way and that, as occasion requireth. We need truth of grace, that we may be able to endure all weathers; and when we are put to trial we should be the more earnest with God for soundness of heart.

Thirdly, Here is the person of whom it is asked—of God: ‘Make my heart sound in *thy* statutes.’ Uprightness is the gift of God, and the work of his Spirit: Ps. li. 10, ‘Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.’ We are like a pewter vessel, battered by the fall; and till we be cast anew we cannot be right with God. God worketh it in us at first, and still keepeth us and guideth us by his Spirit, or else we shall soon turn aside to our old bent and bias again. God beginneth the work of holiness, and maintaineth it against remaining corruption and outward temptations; he still keepeth afoot a constant purpose, and steady endeavour in the heart, to walk so as may please God. Men of themselves have a kind of humour towards good for a fit; but to go on sincerely to the end needeth grace from above.

Use. To press us to look after this firm established spirit. Now to this purpose—

1. Heartily resign yourselves to be directed and guided by God in all things whatsoever: Ezra vii. 10, ‘He prepared his heart to seek the Lord.’ To do it needeth such a fixed purpose.

2. Let us offer ourselves to God’s trial. Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24, ‘Search me, O Lord, and try me, know my heart and know my thoughts, see if there be any way of wickedness in me.’ We must not only rest upon the testimony of our own consciences, but desire our hearts may be searched by God over and over. Besides, there are many ill humours mixed with our best affections, which we see not, and a secret approbation and indulgence we give to them. We are apt ever to deal favourably with ourselves; and therefore desire God to pry into your most retired and reserved thoughts.

3. Let us walk still as in God’s eye: Ps. cxix. 168, ‘I kept thy precepts and thy testimonies, for all my ways are before thee.’ Whatever praise we have with men, we must see that our hearts be right with God, who is witness, approver, and judge, and searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, and will not be put off with shadows; God’s all-seeing eye is a special means to make a man upright.

4. Observe how often we step awry, Jer. xvii. 9, in those actions we perform. How careless are we of the spiritual part; we regard the outside of the duty, but slightly pass over that affection that should accompany it. In resistance of our corruption, we rather deal with the fruit of it, that it break not out to our disgrace, than the root of it that secretly lurketh in our hearts. There is a great deal of guile of spirit in the best, and therefore we had need to ‘make straight steps to our feet,’ Heb. xii. 13. There is some defect in matter, manner, or aim. We are many times set awork by others, yet expect wages of God.

5. Let us be often and earnestly dealing with God for this sincere heart; it is called ‘godly sincerity,’ 2 Cor. i. 12. Why? Because it

comes from God, and carries the soul to God again. 'The new man is created in righteousness and true holiness, after the image of God,' Eph. iv. 24, and hath a tendency in it to draw us to God again.

SERMON LXXXIX.

My soul fainteth for thy salvation ; but I hope in thy word.—

VER. 81.

THIS verse is wholly narrative, and consists of two branches:—

1. The first clause sheweth how he stood affected to God's salvation, *my soul fainteth for thy salvation.*

2. His support till that affection was satisfied, *but I hope in thy word.*

Before we can make any further progress in explaining and applying this scripture, we must first see what is this salvation which is here spoken of. Salvation in scripture hath divers acceptations ; it is put—

1. For that temporal deliverance which God giveth, or hath promised to give, to his people. So it is taken Exod. xiv. 13, 'Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord that he will show you to-day ;' that is, the wonderful deliverance which he will work for you. So Lam. iii. 26, 'It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord ;' meaning by salvation, their recovery out of captivity. It was their duty to wait for this deliverance ; and though it were long first, yet, having a promise, they were to keep up their hope.

2. For the exhibition of Christ in the flesh : Ps. xcvi. 2, 3, 'The Lord hath made known his salvation : his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered his mercy and truth to the house of Israel : all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.' Clearly that psalm containeth a prediction of the setting up of Christ's kingdom, and a bringing of the Gentile world into subjection to it ; which was first to be offered to the people of the Jews, and from thence to be carried on throughout all the regions of the world. So old Simeon expresseth himself, Luke ii. 29, 30, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word : for mine eyes have seen thy salvation ;' meaning thereby Christ actually exhibited or born in the flesh, which was the beginning of the kingdom of the Messiah.

3. For the benefits which we have by Christ on this side heaven ; as the pardon of sin, and the renovation of our natures ; these are called salvation, as Mat. i. 21, 'He shall save his people from their sins ;' and Titus iii. 5, 'He hath saved us by washing in the laver of regeneration ;' and in the Old Testament, Ps. li. 12, 'Restore unto us the joy of thy salvation ;' that is, the joy which we have because God hath freed us from our sins.

4. For everlasting life : Heb. v. 9, 'He is become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him ;' and 1 Peter i. 9, 'Re-