

iniquity for ever. Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.' (1.) Do not despond; we are very apt to do so: Ps. lxxvii. 7-9, 'Will the Lord cast off for ever? will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.' The worst kind of despondency is to lie in sin. To lie in the dirt, because we are fallen, is foolish obstinacy. (2.) Pray to God—(1st.) Acknowledging that we have deserved it; (2d.) By supplication. There is nothing which God hath promised to perform, but we may ask it in prayer: Heb. xiii. 5, 'He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' If thou provest me, let me not miscarry; if thou exercisest me, let me not be cut off. Beg his returns. (3.) Give thanks that God is not wholly gone, as certainly he is not, as long as you are sensible of your loss, and have a tender heart left. Though he hath withdrawn the light of his countenance, yet he hath left the esteem of it, a thirst after God, and a desire of communion with himself. As long as there is any attraction left, you may find him by the smell of his ointments.

## SERMON X.

*Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*—VER. 2.

In the former part the Psalmist sheweth that the word of God pointeth out the only true way to blessedness. Now, the main thing which the word enforceth is holiness. This is the way which we must take if we intend to come to our journey's end. This David applieth to the young man in the text, 'Wherewith shall a young man cleanse,' &c.

In the words there is—(1.) A question asked; (2.) An answer given.

In the question there is the person spoken of, *a young man*. And his work, *wherewith shall he cleanse his way?* *Omnis questio supponit unum, et inquiri aliud.* In this question there are several things supposed.

1. That we are from the birth polluted with sin; for we must be cleansed. It is not, 'direct his way,' but 'cleanse his way.'

2. That we should be very early and timeously sensible of this evil; for the question is propounded concerning the young man.

3. That we should earnestly seek for a remedy how to dry up the issue of sin that runneth upon us. All this is to be supposed.

That which is inquired after is, what remedy there is against it? what course is to be taken? So that the sum of the question is this: How shall a man that is impure, and naturally defiled with sin, be made able, as soon as he cometh to the use of reason, to purge out that natural corruption, and live a holy and pure life to God? The answer given is, 'By taking heed thereto according to thy word.' Where two things are to be observed—(1.) The remedy; (2.) The manner how it is applied and made use of.

1. The remedy is the word—by way of address to God, called *thy*

word; because if God had not given direction about it, we should have been at an utter loss.

2. The manner how it is applied and made use of, *by taking heed thereto*, &c., by studying and endeavouring a holy conformity to God's will.

[1.] I begin with the question; for, as the careless world carrieth the matter, it seemeth very impertinent and ridiculous. What have youth and childhood to do with so serious a work? When old age hath snowed upon their heads, and the smart experience of more years in the world hath ripened them for so severe a discipline, then it is time to think of cleansing their way, or of entering upon a course of repentance and submission to God. For the present, *Dandum est aliquid huic ætati*—youth must be a little indulged; they will grow wiser as they grow more in years. Oh! no; God demandeth his right as soon as we are capable to understand it. And it concerneth every one, as soon as he cometh to the use of reason, presently to mind his work, both in regard of God and himself.

(1.) In regard of God, that he may not be kept out of his right too long: Eccles. xii. 1, 'Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth.' He is our creator; we have nothing but what he gave us, and that for his own use and service. And therefore the vessel should be cleansed as soon as may be, that it may be 'fit for the master's use.' It is a kind of spiritual restitution for the neglects of childhood and the forgetfulness of infancy, when we were not in a capacity to know our creator, much less to serve him. And therefore, as soon as we come to the use of reason, we should restore his right with advantage.

(2.) In regard of himself. The first seasoning of the vessel is very considerable: Prov. xxii. 6, 'Train up a child in the way in which he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' When well principled and seasoned in youth, it sticketh by them, before sin and worldly lusts have gotten a deeper rooting. If Solomon's observation be true, a man's infancy and younger time is a notable presage what he will prove afterwards: Prov. xx. 11, 'Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.' Much may be known by our young inclinations. But, alas! this is not full out the case. The vessel is seasoned already; but 'wherewith shall a young man *cleanse* his way?' which presupposeth a defilement. No infant is like a vessel that newly cometh out of the potter's shop, indifferent for good or bad infusions. The vessel is tainted already, and hath a smatch of the old man and the corruptions of the flesh: Ps. li. 5, 'Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' We came polluted into the world; our business is to stop the growth of sin. As a child walloweth in his filthiness, so we do all spiritually wallow in our blood: Ezek. xvi. 4, 5, 'As for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born, thou wert not washed in water, nor swaddled at all. No eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out into the open field, to the loathing of thy person in the day that thou wast born. And when I saw thee polluted in thy own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live,' &c. Therefore the question is very savoury and profitable, 'Wherewith shall a young man,' &c.

But why is the young man only specified?

I answer—All men are concerned in this work. Old men are not left to themselves, nor wholly given over as hopeless; but youth need it most, being inclined to liberty and carnal pleasures, and most apt to be led aside from the right way by the motions of the flesh; and being headstrong in their passions, and self-willed, need to have their fervours abated by the cool and chill doctrines of repentance and conversion to God. And, therefore, though others be not excluded, the young man is expressly mentioned: unbroken colts need the stronger bits. The word is of use to all, but especially to youth, to bridle them, and reduce them to reason.

[2.] The answer—‘By taking heed thereto according to thy word.’ The word, as a remedy against natural uncleanness, is considerable two ways—as a *rule*, and as an *instrument*.

(1.) As the only *rule* of that holiness which God will accept. All other ways are but bypaths, as good meaning, or the suggestions of a blind conscience, custom, example of others, our own desires, laws of men, superstitious observances, and apocryphal holiness. Nothing is holiness in God’s account, how specious soever it be, unless it be according to the word. What doth the word do about all these as the rule? It sheweth the only way of reconciliation with God, or being cleansed from the guilt of sin, and the only way of solid and true sanctification and subjection to God, which is our cleansing from the filthiness of sin. All religions aim at this—*Ut anima sit subjecta Deo, et peccata*<sup>1</sup> *in se*. No true peace without the word, nor no true holiness. The first is proved Jer. vi. 16, ‘Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.’ The second is proved John xvii. 17, ‘Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.’ So that a young man that is, like Hercules *in bivio*, to choose his path to true happiness, will never attain to true peace and sound satisfaction of conscience, nor to true grace or a hearty subjection to God, but by consulting with the word. No other rule and direction will serve the turn. (1.) It is the only rule to teach us how to obtain true peace of conscience. The whole world is become obnoxious to God, and held under the awe of divine justice. This bondage is natural, and the great inquiry is how his anger shall be appeased: Micah vi. 6, 7, ‘Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?’ Now here is no tolerable satisfaction offered, no plaster for the wounds of conscience, no way to compromise and take up the controversy between us and God; but by the propitiation which the gospel holdeth forth all this is effected. The Gentiles were at a loss, the Jews rested in the sacrifices, which yet ‘could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience,’ Heb. ix. 9; therefore they fled to barbarous and sinfully cruel customs, offering their first-born, &c. There was no course to recover men from their entanglements and

<sup>1</sup> Qu. ‘pacata’?—Ed.

perplexities of soul, how to pacify God for sin, but they were still left in a floating uncertainty, till God revealed himself as reconciling the world to himself in Christ. Now, no doctrine doth propound the way of reconciliation with God, and redemption from those fears of his angry justice which are so natural to us, with such rational advantages, and claimeth such a just title to human belief, as the doctrine of the gospel. Oh ! then, if the young man would cleanse his conscience, and quiet and calm his own spirit, he must of necessity take up with the word as his sure direction in the case. Look abroad, where will you find rest for your souls in this business of atonement and reconciliation with God ? What strange horrible fruits and effects have men's contrivances on this account produced ? What have they not invented, what have they not done, what not suffered upon this account ? and yet continued in dread and bondage all their days. Now, what a glorious soul-appeasing light doth the doctrine of satisfaction and atonement by the blood of Christ the Son of God cause to break in upon the hearts of men ! The testimony of blood in the conscience is one of the witnesses the believer hath in himself : 1 John v. 8, 'And there are three that bear witness on earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood ;' and ver. 10, 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.' (2.) It is the only rule of true holiness. Never was it stated and brought to such a pitch as it is in the scriptures, nor enforced by such arguments as are found there ; it requireth such a holiness as standeth in conformity to God, and is determined by his will. Now it is but reason that he that is the Supreme Being should be the rule of all the rest. It is a holiness of another rate than the blind heart could find out ; not an external devotion, nor a civil course, but such as transformeth the heart and subdueth it to the will of God, Rom. ii. 15. If a man would attain to the highest exactness that a rational creature is capable of, not to moral virtue only, but a true genuine respect to God and man, he must regard and love the law of God that is pure. A man that would be holy had need of an exact rule, for to be sure his practice will come short of his rule ; and therefore, if the rule itself be short, there will no due provision be made for respects to God or man. But now this is a rule that reacheth not only to the way, but the thoughts ; that converteth the soul : Ps. xix. 7, 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' Take the fairest draughts of that moral perfection which yet is of human recommendation, and you will find it defective and maimed in some parts, either as to God or men. It is *inferioris hemisphærii*, as not reaching to the full subjection of the soul to God. There is some dead fly in their box of ointment, either for manner or end.

(2.) The word is considerable as an *instrument* which God maketh use of to cleanse the heart of man. It will not be amiss a little to show the instrumentality of the word to this blessed end and purpose. It is the glass that discovereth sin, and the water that washeth it away. (1.) It is the glass wherein to see our corruption. The first step to the cure is a knowledge of the disease ; it is a glass wherein to see our natural face : James i. 23, 'For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass,' &c. In the word we see God's image and our own. It is the

copy of God's holiness, and the representation of our natural faces, Rom. vii. 9. What fond conceits have we of our own spiritual beauty ! but there we may see the leprous spots that are upon us. (2.) It sets us a-work to see it purged ; it is the water to wash it out. The word of command presseth the duty ; it is indispensably required. What doth every command sound in our ears but 'Wash you, make you clean.' ? This is indispensably required : 1 John iii. 3, 'And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure ;' and Heb. xii. 14, 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' Some things God may dispense with, but this is never dispensed with. Many things are ornamental that are not absolutely necessary, as wealth, riches : 'Wisdom with an inheritance is good ;' so learning. Many have gone to heaven that were never learned, but never any without holiness. (3.) The word of promise encourageth it : 2 Cor. vii. 1, 'Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God ;' and 2 Peter i. 4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.' God might have required it upon the account of his sovereignty, we being his creatures, especially this being the perfection of our natures, and rather a privilege than a burden ; but God would not rule us with a rod of iron, but deal with rational creatures rationally, by promises and threatenings. On the one side he telleth us of a pit without a bottom : on the other, of blessed and glorious promises, things 'which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard of, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive.' Therefore the word hath a notable instrumentality that way.

(3.) The doctrine of the scripture holds out the remedy and means of cleansing—Christ's blood ; which is not only an argument or motive to move us to it. So it is urged 1 Peter i. 8, 'Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable,' &c. It presseth holiness upon this argument. Why ? God hath been at great cost to bring it about, therefore we must not content ourselves with some smooth morality, which might have been whether Christ had been, yea or nay. Again, the word propounds it as a purchase, whereby grace is procured for us ; so it is said, 1 John i. 7, He hath purchased the Spirit to bless us, and turn us from our sins. And it exciteth faith to apply and improve this remedy, and so conveyeth the power of God into the soul : Acts xv. 9, 'Purifying their hearts by faith.'

2. The manner how the word is applied and made use of, 'If he *take heed* thereunto according to thy word.' This implieth a studying of the word, and the tendency and importance of it, which is necessary if the young man would have benefit by it. David calleth the statutes of God the men of his counsel. Young men that are taken with other books, if they neglect the word of God—that book that should do the cure upon the heart and mind—they are, with all their knowledge, miserable : Ps. i. 2, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord ; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' If men would grow wise to salvation, and get any skill in the practice of godliness, they must be

much in this blessed book of God, which is given us for direction : 1 John ii. 14, 'I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.' It is not a slight acquaintance with the word that will make a young man so successful as to defeat the temptations of Satan, and be too hard for his own lust; it is not a little notional irradiation, but to have the word dwell in you, and abide in you richly. The way to destroy ill weeds is to plant good herbs that are contrary. We suck in carnal principles with our milk, and therefore we are said to 'speak lies from the womb.' A kind of a riddle; before we are able to speak, we speak lies—namely, as we are prone to error and all manner of carnal fancies by the natural temper and frame of our hearts, Isa. lviii. 2; and therefore, from our very tender and infant-age we should be acquainted with the word of God : 2 Tim. iii. 15, 'And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures.' It may be children, by reading the word, get nothing but a little memorative knowledge, but yet it is good to plant the field of the memory; in time they will soak into the judgment and conscience, and thence into the heart and affections.

3. It implieth a care and watchfulness over our hearts and ways, that our will and actions be conformed to the word. This must be the young man's daily prayer and care, that there be a conformity between his will and the word, that he may be a walking Bible, Christ's living epistle, copy out the word in his life, that the truths of it may appear plainly in his conversation.

All that I have said issueth itself into three points :—

1. That the great duty of youth, as soon as they come to the full use of reason, is to inquire and study how they may cleanse their hearts and ways from sin.

2. That the word of God is the only rule sufficient and effectual to accomplish this work.

3. If we would have this efficacy, there is required much care and watchfulness, that we come to the direction of the word in every tittle; not a loose and inattentive reflection upon the word, careless inconsiderateness, but a taking heed thereunto.

Now, why in youth, and as soon as we come to the use of reason, we should mind the work of cleansing our way?

1. Consider how reasonable this is. It is fit that God should have our first and our best. It is fit he should have our first, because he minded us before we were born. His love to us is an eternal and an everlasting love; and shall we put off God to old age? shall we thrust him into a corner? Surely God, that loved us so early, it is but reason he should have our first, and also our best; for we have all from him. Under the law the first-fruits were God's, to show the first and best was his portion. All the sacrifices that were offered to him, they were in their strength, and young : Lev. ii. 14, 'And if thou offer a meat-offering of thy first-fruits unto the Lord, thou shalt offer for the meat-offering of thy first-fruits green ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears.' God would not stay till ripened. God will not be long kept out of his portion. Youth is our best time. Mal. i. 13, when they brought a weak and sickly offering, 'Should I accept this of

your hand? saith the Lord.' The health, strength, quickness of spirit, and vigour is in youth. Shall our health and strength be for the devil's use, and shall we put off God with the dregs of time? Shall Satan feast upon the flower of our youth and fresh time, and God only have the scraps and fragments of the devil's table? When wit is dulled, the ears heavy, the body weak, and affections are spent, is this a fit present for God?

2. Consider the necessity of it. (1.) Because of the heat of youth, the passions and lusts are very strong: 2 Tim. ii. 22, 'Fly also youthful lusts.' Men are most incident in that age to pride and self-conceit, to strong affections, inordinate and excessive love of liberty: 1 Tim. iii. 6, 'Not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.' A man may make tame fierce creatures, lions and tigers; and the fury of youth needs to be tempered and bridled by the word. It is much for the glory of grace that this heat and violence is broken when the subject is least of all disposed and prepared. (2.) Because none are tempted so much as they. Children cannot be serviceable to the devil, and old men are spent, and have chosen their ways; but youths, who have a sharpness of understanding, and the stoutest and most stirring spirits, the devil loveth to make use of such: 1 John ii. 13, 'I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.' They are most assaulted; but it is for the honour of grace when they overcome, when their fervency and strength is employed, not in satisfying lusts, but in the service of God and fighting against Satan. Therefore it is very needful they should be seasoned with the word betimes.

3. Consider the many inconveniencies that will follow if they do not presently mind this work. (1.) Death is uncertain, and therefore such a weighty business as this will brook no delay. God doth not always give warning. Nadab and Abihu, two rash and inconsiderate young men, were taken away in their sins; and the bears out of the forest devoured the children that mocked the prophet. The danger being so great, as soon as we are sensible of it, we should flee from it. When children come to the fulness of reason, they stand upon their own bottom; before, they are reckoned to their parents. Oh, woe be to you if you die in your sins! Certainly as soon as a man is upon his own personal account, he should look to himself, lest God cut him off before he hath made his peace with him. (2.) Sin groweth stronger by custom, and more rooted; it gathereth strength by every act. A brand that hath been in the fire is more apt to take fire again. A man in a drowsy, the more he drinks, the more his thirst increaseth. Every act lesseneth fear and strengtheneth inclination: Jer. xiii. 27, 'Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?' A twig is easily bowed, but when it grows into a tree it is more troublesome and unpliant. A tree newly set may be transplanted, but when long rooted, not so easily. The man that was possessed of a devil from his childhood, how hardly is he cured! Mark ix. 29. (3.) Justice is provoked the longer, and that will be a grief to you first or last. If ever we be brought home to God, it will cost us many a bitter tear; not only at first conversion: Jer. xxxi. 18, 'I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast

chastised me, and I was chastised,' &c., but afterwards, David, though he began with God betimes, Ps. xxv. 7, yet prays, 'Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgression;' and Job xiii. 26, 'For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.' Old bruises may trouble us long after, upon every change of weather, and new afflictions revive the sense of old sins; they may stick by us. We think tricks of youth are not to be stood upon: you may have a bitter sense of them to your dying day. (4.) You will every day grow more useless to God: the exercise of religion dependeth much on the vigour of affections. Again, it is very profitable; it brings a great deal of honour to God to begin with him betimes. All time is little enough to declare your respects to God. And it is honourable for you. Seniority in grace is a preferment: they were 'in Christ before me,' saith Paul. *An old disciple* is a title of honour. To grow grey in Christ's service, and to know him long, it maketh the work of grace more easy. The dedication of the first-fruits sanctified the whole lump: Lam. iii. 27, 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth,' to be inured to strictness betimes. Dispositions impressed in youth increase with us. Again, it will be very comfortable when the miseries of old age come upon you. As the ant provideth in summer for winter, so should we provide for age. Now what a sweet comfort will it be, when we are taken off from service, that while we had any strength and affections, God had the use of them! Then our age will be a good old age.

*Use 1* is for lamentation that so few youths take to the ways of God. No age doth despise the word so much as this, which hath most need of it. It is a rare thing to find a Joseph, or a Samuel, or a Josiah, that seek God betimes. Go the universities, and you will find that those that should be as Nazarites consecrated to God, live as those that have vowed and consecrated themselves to Satan: Amos ii. 11, 'And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites,' &c. The sons of the prophets in their youth were bred for a more strict discipline in their holy calling, separated from worldly delights, to be a stock of a succeeding ministry. But, alas! they spend their time in vanity, bringing nothing thence but the sins of the place, and vainly following the sinful customs of the country. How few regard the education of their youth in knowledge or religious practice! Families are societies to be sanctified to God, as well as churches. The governors of them have as truly a charge of souls as the pastors of churches. They offer their children to God in baptism, but educate and bring them up for the world and the flesh. They bewail any natural defect in them, if their children have a stammering tongue, a deaf ear, or a withered leg; but not want of grace. We have a prejudice, and think they are too young to be wrought upon; but God's word can break in with weight and power on young ones: Luke xi. 1, 'One of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples;' and Mat. xxi. 15, 16, 'When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus said unto them, Yea; have ye never



read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?' They learned it of their parents: Mat. xxi. 9, 'And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David.' We should often be infusing good principles in youth. Corruption of youth is one of the saddest symptoms of approaching judgment.

*Use 2* is exhortation to young ones. You that are to begin your course, begin with God: you have no experience, yet you have a rule; you have mighty lusts, but a stronger spirit. No age is excluded from the promise of the Spirit: Joel ii. 28, 29, 'And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.' Of John the Baptist it is said, Luke i. 15, 'He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb;' and Mark x. 14, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.' There is power to enlighten you, notwithstanding all your prejudices; to subdue your lusts, notwithstanding the power of corruptions: 1 John ii. 13, 14, 'I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father,' &c.; and see Gen. xxxix. 9. It will be a great comfort to you when you die that your great work is over. Oh, what a sad thing is it that, when the body is going to the grave, the soul hath not yet learned to converse with God! Hosea viii. 12, 'I have written to them the great things of my law; but they were counted a strange thing.' God hath written an epistle to us, and we will not read it nor consult with it; are wholly strangers to it. But now, when acquainted with God, it will not be so irksome to go to him.

## SERMON XI.

*With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.*—VER. 10.

THE Psalmist had in the former verse directed the young man to diligence and attention unto the word; but the word doth nothing unless we join prayer; and therefore now he gives an example in his own person. Having spoken of the power of the word to cleanse the way, now saith he, 'With my whole heart,' &c.

Here take notice—

1. Of David's argument, *with my whole heart have I sought thee.*
2. His request, *O let me not wander from thy commandments.*

*First,* For David's argument, 'I have sought thee with my whole heart.' He pleadeth his own sincerity. I showed you largely what it is to seek God, and that with the whole heart, in the second verse. I shall not repeat anything; only, that I may not dismiss this clause without some note, observe, first, that it is the duty and practice of God's children to seek him.

You have David's instance in the text and elsewhere. It is their general character: Ps. xxiv. 6, 'This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.' God's children are a generation of seekers. They find hereafter, but now they seek. Their great business is to be seeking after God, more ample and full communion with him.

Seeking of God implies three things:—

1. There is a more general seeking of God, for relief of our sin and misery by nature.

2. More particular, upon special occasions.

3. There is a constant seeking of God in the use of his ordinances.

1. There is a more general seeking of God, for relief of our sinful and wretched condition by nature. Adam, when a sinner, ran away from God; and therefore all our business is now to seek him, that we may find him again in Christ Jesus. The general address that is made to God for pardon and reconciliation, it is often called a seeking of God in scripture; so it is taken Isa. lv. 6, 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near;' that is, get into favour with God before it be too late. So Amos v. 6, 'Seek the Lord, and ye shall live.' This notes our general address for pardon and reconciliation.

2. There is a more particular seeking of God; that notes our addresses to God either in our exigencies and straits, or in all our business and employment.

[1.] In our exigencies and straits. And so we are said to seek God when in doubts we seek his direction, James i. 5; when in weakness we seek strength; in sickness, health; in troubles, comfort. Asa is blamed that he 'sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.' Paul's messenger of Satan drives him to the throne of grace: 2 Cor. xii. 8, 'For this I sought the Lord thrice.' He would knock again and again, to see what answers he could get from God.

[2.] In all our businesses and affairs God must be sought unto, and we must ask his leave, his counsel, and his blessing. Pagans, before the awe of religion was extinguished, would begin with their gods in every weighty enterprise. *A Jove principium* was an honest heathen principle. Laban consults with his teraphim; Balak sends for Balaam; they had their oracles that they would resort to. So far as any nation was touched with a sense of a divine power, they would never venture upon anything without consulting with their gods. And it is enjoined as a piece of religious good manners to own God upon all occasions: Prov. iii. 5, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him.' It is an acknowledgment of God, an owning him as a God, that we would be asking his leave, counsel, and blessing. His leave must be asked, though the thing be never so lawful and easy. We are taught every day to ask our daily bread, though we have it by us, that we may not, like thieves and robbers, use his goods without his leave. So for his counsel; he is sure to miscarry that makes his bosom his oracle, his wit his counsellor. It is a high piece of spiritual idolatry to lean upon our own understanding, and think to carry even the ordinary affairs of any day without asking counsel from God. And then his blessing. God is not an idle spectator, he disposeth of all events, and giveth the blessing: Jer. x. 23, 'The way

of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;’ that is, as to any happy issue. God doth the more stand upon his right that he may the oftener hear from us, and that we may have many occasions to bring us to the throne of grace. Now this is the constant practice of God’s children. David always ran to the oracle or the ephod when he had any business to do: 1 Sam. xxiii., Shall I do thus and thus, or shall I not? Jacob in his journey would neither go to Laban, nor come from him, without a warrant. Jehoshaphat in the business of Ramoth-Gilead would not stir a foot until he had counsel from God; he sends not only to the captain of the host, but to the prophet of the Lord: ‘Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord to day,’ 1 Kings xxii. 2; Judges i. 1, ii. 28.

I have spoken this to show why the children of God are called the generation of them that seek him.

3. The third thing that may be called seeking of God is our observance of him in the use of his ordinances. It is one thing to *serve* God, another thing to *seek* God; one thing to make God the object, another thing the end of our worship. To seek God only in our necessity, and not to seek God in his ordinances, argueth a base spirit. Christians, our losing God in Adam, that makes us seek him in a way of reconciliation. Our want of God in straits, and in the course of our affairs, maketh us seek him by way of supply. But now our duty to God, and love to him, should make us seek him in his ordinances by way of communion; and in this sense seeking God is often spoken of in scripture: Ps. xxii. 26, ‘They shall praise the Lord that seek him;’ that is, that wait upon him, and maintain communion with him in the means of grace.

Well, then, let us be more in seeking of God. If we would find him in heaven, we must seek him on earth: Heb. xi. 6, ‘He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.’ They that seek his favour, that often resort to him, carry on a constant communion with him; those that are waiting for his power and presence in his ordinances, these are the men God will own. We are not fit to receive so great a blessing as God’s favour if we will not look after it with diligence.

Secondly, Observe, those that seek God aright, must seek him with their whole heart.

But how is that? Besides what hath already been spoken of it in the second use, it noteth three things—

1. Sincerity of aims.
2. Integrity of parts.
3. Uniformity of endeavours.

1. Sincerity of aims. Many pretend to seek God, but indeed they do but seek themselves. As those that followed Christ for the loaves, that take up religion upon base and carnal respects: John vi. 26, ‘Verily I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.’ There was much outward diligence, but a false heart lurking under it; their belly drove them to him. Of all by-ends this is the worst and basest: *Vix diligitur Jesus propter Jesum*.—Jesus Christ is scarce loved for Jesus’ sake. Yet, further, those that prayed to God for corn, wine, and oil, and did not seek his favour and grace in the first place, see what the Lord

saith of them: Hosea vii. 14, 'They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds.' They did seek God, but yet it is counted howling. They only minded the supply of outward wants; and made prayer merely to be an act of carnal self-love. And then it is but howling, such a noise as a dog or a beast would make when he wants his food. Christians, no doubt they were instant, there was a world of earnestness, they were affected when the stroke was upon them, and seriously desired to get rid of it, but 'they have not cried to me with their whole heart.' It was but such a sense of pain and want as the beasts have. If there be anything sought from God more than God, or not for God, we do not seek him with the whole heart, but only for other uses.

2. It notes integrity of parts. We read in scripture of loving God, not only with the heart, but with the 'whole heart;' and of believing, not only with the heart, Rom. x. 10, but of believing with the 'whole heart,' Acts viii. 37; because seeking of God is but a metaphorical term, by which faith is expressed; therefore let us see what it is to believe with the whole heart. The doctrine of the gospel is not only true, to work upon the understanding, but it is good, so as to move and draw the will: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation,' &c. Not only 'a faithful saying'—that is, a true doctrine—that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; but it is 'worthy of all acceptation.' It is an excellent doctrine to ravish the will. Now, observe what a great deal of difference there is between men in believing. Some that hear the gospel, and have only a literal knowledge of it, so as to be able to talk of it, so as to understand the words and syllables, to know what it means; they may have some clearness of understanding this way, but there is not a sound assent. There are others affected so with the gospel, as by the common influence of the Spirit they may assent to the truths delivered concerning God and Christ, and salvation by him, yet do not give it entertainment in their hearts. These may be said to seek God, but not with the whole heart. A speculative, naked, and cold assent they may have, but that is not enough. It is not enough to see food that is wholesome, but you must eat it. Nor is it enough to understand the gospel, and believe that it is true, but we must embrace it; it must be accepted, else we do not believe with the whole heart. The word is propounded to man as *true*. Now, the truth made known may cause a speculative assent. This may draw profession after it; and this we call historical faith, because we are no more affected with the gospel than with an ordinary history which we read and believe. The word is propounded again as *good*, to move and excite the will. Now, there is a twofold good—the good of happiness, and the good of holiness. The good of happiness, that which is profitable and sweet. Then there is the good of holiness. Now, there are many that look upon the gospel as good and profitable, because it offereth pardon and eternal life; such comfort to the conscience, and such good to our whole souls. We may be affected with it as a good doctrine. Naturally, man hath not only a sense of religion, but he hath a hunger after immortality and everlasting blessedness. Therefore, since the gospel doth so clearly promote happiness, it may be greedily catched hold of

by those whose hearts are affected, while they look upon it under these notions; and they may be so far affected that they may for a while not only profess it out of danger, but when some danger doth arise they may defend their opinions with some care. Yet this is not with all the heart. Why? As soon as any great danger doth arise, out of which there is no escape, as gibbets, fires, racks, ignominy, and utter loss—as soon as persecution arose, saith Christ, all this ardour and heat of spirit which they did formerly seem to have, comes to nothing. What is the reason it vanisheth? Because they receive the gospel rather upon those notions of interest and profit, than of duty and holiness; and the impression of the profitableness of the gospel, as a doctrine of happiness, was not so deeply rooted in them, not so durable, that the hope of the future good would be prevalent over the fear of present evil and danger. There may be some desires of heaven in a carnal breast, but they are easily blotted out by worldly temptations; but the true desires of holiness are lasting, and will prevail over our lusts.

3. Believing with all the heart implies uniformity of endeavours. Oftentimes the soul may be strongly moved and affected for the present, and carried out to the gospel under the notion of holiness; but it is but the lighter part of the soul that is so moved, not the whole heart, therefore it is not durable. The people meant as they spake when they were willing to come under the obedience of the word. God gives them that testimony: 'The people have well said; but oh! that there were such a heart in them,' Dent. v. 28, 29. They may receive it, and may seem affected with it, and have a sense of reformation; but, saith the evangelist, Luke viii. 14, 'It brings no fruit to perfection.' It was not so deeply rooted as to prevail strongly over their carnal distempers. And, therefore, here comes in another sort of men, that are affected with the word as a holy doctrine. They may have a liking to the holiness of it, and have some consolation thereupon; they have their beginnings, and some good offers towards sanctification; but it brings nothing to perfection. They may have such a hope of heaven as that they may be said to 'taste the powers of the world to come,' Heb. vi. 5, 6; yet because it is not deeply rooted in the heart, and only begets some raw motions, and moves the lighter part of the soul, and doth not show itself in a uniform course of obedience, therefore it is not with all the heart. It may be it was but for a time, or cast in upon some eminent trouble. Therefore that is only believing, and seeking God with all the heart, when the doctrine of life is so acknowledged to be true, good, and holy, as to be closed with upon that account; not only because of its suitableness to our eternal good and interest, but as it is a rule of our duty. And then it enters upon the heart when every faculty of it is subdued to God. It is not some colouring of the outside, but a deep dye when it soaks into the whole soul, and subdues the affections to God, which is manifested by a uniform course of obedience. Now David urgeth this to God as an argument, 'I have sought thee with my whole heart.' Hence observe—

*Doct.* We may mention the good which is wrought in us, and urge it to God in prayer.

It is a useful case. How may we mention our own gracious qualifications, and the good that is wrought in us?

*Negatively*—1. Not by way of boasting. There is no such thing here; no presumptuous boasting of his own perfections; for it was accompanied with a deep sense of his weakness, wandering, and straggling condition; he acknowledgeth his infirmities. There is no such thing allowed as boasting. The apostle's argument is convincing, 'Why boastest thou? What have we that we have not received?' If we can boast of anything, it is that we are most in debt, that we have received more: 1 Cor. i. 31, we must 'glory in the Lord.'

2. Not pleading of merit, as if he had deserved anything of God. So the Pharisee speaks of his good works, Luke xviii. 11. It is not to such a purpose as if we could challenge a reward as a due debt upon any good that we have done.

But *positively*—How then may we make mention of our qualifications?

1. We may mention what is wrought in us for God's glory. Surely, however we humble ourselves, we must not belie his bounty. To be always complaining of spiritual evils, it doth not argue a good temper of soul: Ps. cxvi. 7, 'Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.' We may own the Lord's bounty, and take notice what good we have done to the glory of his grace: 'Not I, but the grace of God which was with me,' 1 Cor. xv. 10.

2. We may mention it to our own comfort. Thus Paul, 2 Cor. i. 12. Jesus Christ is our rejoicing, but in one sense this is also our rejoicing, 'the testimony of our conscience.' Wherefore is grace given us, but for the furtherance of our comfort? To bear false witness against ourselves is naught. Though the duties of the first table neither begin nor end in us, yet the whole law of charity begins at home.

3. For our own vindication. Thus Hezekiah: Isa. xxxviii. 3, 'Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee with a perfect heart.' This was his plea; but I suppose it was not before God as a judge, but before God as a witness. He called God to witness that he had walked before him with a perfect heart. He was slandered by Rabshakeh. They thought, when he broke down the altars of Baal and cut down their groves, that he had cut down the altars of the God of Israel; therefore, saith Rabshakeh, speaking to the humour and discontent of the people—and we must look upon it as a politic insinuation—'Is not this he whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away and demolished?' 2 Kings xviii. 22. Now, saith Hezekiah, 'I have walked before thee with an upright heart.' Many a good magistrate is often put upon such pleas for God's honour, in things distasteful to the popularity.

4. What God hath wrought in us may be urged as an argument in prayer to obtain further grace many ways. Partly because God loves to crown his own mercies, and make one to be a step to another. We are endeared to God by his own mercies; he is very tender and choice of them. In whom he hath begun a good work he will perfect it: Zech. iii. 2, 'Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' What! shall all my former mercies be in vain? It is God's own argument, and he takes it well when his people urgeth it. In many cases, *Deus donando debet*—by giving one mercy, he makes himself a debtor to give another. Plutarch gives us a story of the Rhodians, when they came to sue to the Romans for help, that one urged what good turns they

had done to the Romans; but the people urged what good turns the Romans did to them, and they obtained relief. Such a plea is acceptable and honourable to God, when we urge what God hath done for us. And partly because sincerity, by the consent of all, hath the full room of an evidence and gospel-plea in the court of justification. When the business is how a sinner shall be accepted with God, for a law-plea we can only plead the merits of Christ and God's mercy; there all we have and can do is but dung and dross, Phil. iii. 8, 9, as to an acquittance from sin. But as to our acquittance from hypocrisy, as to the plea of a gospel-evidence, we may produce our sincerity and the fruits of our obedience, to show our title is good as the matter is ordered by the Lord's grace, that we have the gospel-title. To all the other our title is by the righteousness of Christ, but the evidence of our title is sincere walking.

*Secondly*, Let us come to David's request, 'Let me not wander from thy commandments.' It may be translated, 'Make me not to err;' that is, 'by the suspending of thy grace;' for that will necessarily follow. The Septuagint reads, 'Do not repel from thy commandments.' God seems to repel and cast off those that he doth not assist with his grace. Here David saith, 'I have sought thee.' Observe the mischief that a heart which truly seeketh God desireth to fly from—sin, or wandering from the path of obedience. There is a communion with God, but in the way of his commandments; therefore they do not desire establishment of their interest and happiness only, but of God's glory, that they might not wander. Hence observe—

*Doct. 1.* The more experience men have of the ways of God, the more sensible will they be of their readiness to wander.

David, a man of so much experience, that sought God with his whole heart, 'Lord, let me not wander.' What is the reason?

1. Because they have a larger sense of duty.

2. A more tender sense of dangers and difficulties that do attend them.

First, They have a larger sense of duty to God. At first, while we are carnal, we take up duty by the lump, and by the visible bulk of it; we look only to *ἔργον νόμου*, 'the work of the law,' Rom. ii. 15, and to avoid gross sins, or perform outward acts of worship. Oh! if I do sin, I am no adulterer, no extortioner, Luke xviii. 11. We think then it is well. But when we begin to have grace wrought in our heart, then we begin to serve God in the spirit, Phil. iii. 3: 'And my God, whom I serve with my spirit,' Rom. i. 9, then we begin to look after the regulation of the inner man, and subduing of the soul to God; and we cannot be contented with the visible bulk of obedience, and with some general conformity. Ay! but at first there is only a general purpose to serve God in the spirit; but afterward, when they begin to look into the breadth of the commandment, still they are sensible of their coming short, and how apt they are to wander in this and that point; still their sense of duty is increased, because their light, their love to God, and their power is increased, and because they draw near to their everlasting hopes.

1. Because their light is increased. By communion with God they see more of his holiness. The more a man is exercised in obedience,

the clearer is his light and understanding, both to God and the will of God : Mat. v. 8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' All sight of God, it is, as Nazianzen speaks, according to the proportion of our purity ; and therefore the more communion we have with God, the more sight into the nature of God, and the will of God, and the more they are held under the awe of God. In moral disciplines, the further we wade in them, the more we see of our defects. Those that went to Athens, first they counted themselves σοφοί, wise men ; afterward only φιλόσοφοι, lovers of wisdom ; then they were only men that could talk a little ; afterward they found themselves nothing. So a Christian in communion with God, the longer he converseth with God, the more he doth see of his perfection and holiness : 'Surely I am more brutish than any man,' was the expression of wise Agur, Prov. xxx. 2. This holy man of God, saith Chrysostom, speaks it not only humbly, but truly, as he thinks. Sure they did not compliment with God. These holy men, in the serious actings of their souls, they speak as they think. Why ? Because they have a high sense of God's holiness, therefore a deeper sense of their own vileness. They think there are hardly any so bad as themselves. Now they are convinced that the holy God will not be put off with any slight matter ; and they are become sensible of that precept, Mat. v. 48, 'Be perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

2. Their love to God is increased by acquaintance with him, and therefore their hearts are more tender and sensible of the least deflection. The more a man loves God, the more he will do for God : 1 John v. 3, 'This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.' That is a clear rule ; the more we love God, the more chary we will be of his commandments ; and therefore they cannot sin upon such easy terms as before, nor go to heaven upon such easy terms as they thought before.

3. Their power is increased. He that is grown to a man's estate minds other work than what he did when a child ; and as they have more strength, they look after more work. At first it was only to prevent excesses and breaking out of sin, but afterwards to subdue every thought to the obedience of Christ.

4. They are nearer to heaven, and therefore they look after greater suitableness to their everlasting estate. They think of that sinless and pure estate they shall enjoy there, therefore have a greater sense of duty upon them. Natural motion, saith the philosopher, is slower in the beginning, and swifter in the end and close ; so spiritual motion in the end and close ariseth to a greater vigour of holiness ; that which served before will not serve their turn now : Phil. iii. 14, they are 'pressing forward toward the mark,' &c. ; they are hastening apace, and strain themselves when the prize is so near.

Secondly, As they have a larger sense of duty, so they have a greater experience of the dangers and difficulties that do attend them. Aristotle observes of young men, that they are more given to hope than the old are. They are of great and strong hopes. He renders three reasons for it—because they are eager of spirit, have little experience, and look but to a few things ; and therefore they are forward to get abroad in the world, and to entangle themselves in the early cares of a family, until their rashness be confuted by their own miscarriage. So it is



true of young Christians; they are all on a flame, ready to run into the mouth of danger upon the confidence of their present affections; and till they have smarted often, this confidence is not abated.

But men that have been exercised and experienced are more sensible of the naughtiness and inconstancy of their own hearts: Ps. li. 6, 'In the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom;' and therefore are more diffident of their own strength, and desire the Lord to keep them from wandering. We see, then, a cautelous fear is necessary to the last; it is useful to us not only to begin, but to work out our salvation: Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;' not only when we are novices, and so weak, and more liable to temptation, but to the close of our days: Prov. xxviii. 14, 'Blessed is the man that feareth always.' That fear which causeth diffidence, and doubting, and despair, is a torment, not a blessedness; yet the fear that is opposite to carnal security and presuming on our own strength, is a fruit of grace and spiritual experience. This is that which stirreth up care and diligence in our heavenly calling, and dependence upon God, and constant addresses to him; that keepeth us humble and waiting for the supplies of his grace.

*Doct. 2.* It is God alone that can keep us from wandering.

*Reas.* There is in man's heart a mighty proneness thereto: Jer. xiv. 10, 'ye have hearts that love to wander.' Man is a restless creature, that loveth shifts and changes. For weakness they are compared to children, Hosea xi. 3, and for wandering compared to sheep, Isa. liii. 6. There is no creature so apt to go astray as sheep, and so unable to return. This is the disposition of men by nature. And mark, much of the old nature remains still with the saints. Have they not this wandering property to the last? David acknowledgeth it, though there were some good in him: Ps. cxix. 176, 'I have gone astray like a lost sheep.' Consider the saints; though they have sincerity, yet not perfection; and sometimes they wander through inadvertency; they are overtaken, Gal. vi. 1, as Noah was—they do not run of their own accord. And sometimes we err through the darkness that is in us. Though a child of God be 'light in the Lord,' yet he hath a great deal of darkness still. It may be he is wise in generals, but ignorant in particulars, as the heathen; in general they had good notions of an infinite and eternal power, but they were 'vain in their imaginations,' Rom. i. 21, in their practical inferences and discourses, when they came to rest upon this God. So a child of God may have a general sense of his duty, but as to particulars he is apt to miscarry; the mind may be blinded by lust and prejudice.

Sometimes they err through frowardness of their own lust: there is 'a law in their members which wars against the law of their minds,' Rom. vii. There are boisterous lusts, and a man hath much ado to keep his path: Ps. lxxiii., 'My foot had well-nigh slipped.' Therefore we had need God should keep us continually. And the Lord hath undertaken to guide us: Isa. lviii. 11, 'The Lord shall guide thee continually;' and Ps. xlviii. 14, 'He will be our guide even unto death;' and Ps. lxxiii. 24, 'Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterward receive me to thy glory.' We need this constant guidance and direction from God, that he may still lead us, and keep us from wandering and turning aside.

*Use.* You see, then, what need we have of a guide and shepherd, and of constant dependence upon God. Of all titles, this is the title given to the saints; they are a 'flock, and the sheep of God's pasture;' and Christ is called 'the shepherd of souls,' 1 Peter ii. 25. There is no creature of such a dependence as sheep. Dogs and swine can roam abroad all the day, and find their way home again at night, but sheep must have a guide to keep them in the fold, and to reduce them when gone astray, Luke xv. The good shepherd brought him home upon his shoulders. Lord, saith Austin, I can go astray of myself, but I cannot come back of myself. We need often to put up this request, 'Oh, let me not wander from thy commandments.'

## SERMON XII.

*Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.*—VER. 11.

IN this verse you have David's practice, and the aim and end of it.

1. His practice, *I have hid thy word in my heart.*
2. The aim and end of it, *that I might not sin against thee.*

In the first; his practice, observe these circumstances—

1. The object or matter, *the word.*
2. The act of duty, *I have hid.*
3. The subject, *the heart.*

I shall open these circumstances.

1. The object, *the word.* The revelation of God's mind to his people is called his law, his testimonies, his ways, his precepts, his statutes, his commandments, his judgments, and now his word; whereby is meant God's expounding his mind as if he himself did speak to us. The expression is general, and compriseth promises, threatenings, doctrines, counsels, precepts. All these must be hid in the heart.

2. The act of duty, *I have hid.* A thing may be hidden two ways, either to conceal it, or else to cherish and keep it.

[1.] To conceal it; hid so as the unprofitable servant did hide his talent in a napkin, Mat. xxv. So David, typifying Christ, saith, 'I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and truth from the great congregation.'

[2.] To be kept as things of price, as jewels and treasures are hidden in chests and secret places, that they may not be embezzled or purloined. And herein there may be an allusion to the law, which was kept in a chest or ark, Exod. xxv. 21. Thus the word is hidden, not in order to concealment, but safety. As to the conceit of hiding our knowledge, that we may not lose it by vainglory, which Chrysostom and Theodoret mention on the place, it is a conceit so foreign, that it need not to be mentioned. What we value most precious we save most carefully.

3. The subject or place where the word is hidden, *in the heart.* Not the brain, or mind and memory only, but the heart, the seat of affec-

tions. To hide the word in our hearts is to understand and remember it, and to be affected to it and with it. Christ saith, John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' First we must have them, and then keep them. First we know them, then assent to them, and then approve them, because of the authority of the lawgiver, and the excellency of the thing commanded; and then respect them as a treasure that we are chary of; and having them still in our eye, do thereby regulate our practice and conversation. In short, by holding it in our hearts is meant not only a knowledge of the word, but an assent to it; not only an assent to it, but a serious and sound digestion of it by meditation; not only a digestion, but a constant respect to it, that we may not transgress it as it is a rule, nor lose it as it is a treasure, but may have it ready and forthcoming upon all occasions.

The points are these:—

*Doct. 1.* One duty and necessary practice of God's children is to hide the word in their hearts.

*Doct. 2.* That in hiding the word in our hearts, there must be a right end; our knowledge of it and delight in it must be directed to practice.

1. That one duty and necessary practice of God's children is to hide the word in their hearts. See it confirmed by a scripture or two: Josh. i. 8, 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night;' Job xxii. 22, 'Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thy heart.' By the law is meant the whole word of God. 'Lay up his words,' as we would do choice things, that they may not be lost or embezzled; and lay them up as treasure to be used upon all occasions. 'In the heart;' let them not swim in the brain or memory only, but let the heart be affected with it: Col. iii. 16, 'Let the word of God dwell in you richly;' be so diligent in the study of the scripture, that it may become familiar with us, by frequent hearing, reading, meditating, conferring about it. As a stranger, let it not stand at the door, but receive it into an inner room; be as familiar as those that dwell with you. God complaineth of his people: Hosea viii. 12, 'I have written to them the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.' To be strangers to the word of God, and little conversant in it, is a great evil. What is it to hide the word in our hearts? (1.) To understand it, to get a competent knowledge of it; we take in things into the soul by the understanding: Prov. ii. 10, 'When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul.' There is first an entrance by knowledge. (2.) When it is assented unto by faith. The word is settled in the heart by faith, otherwise it soon vanisheth: Heb. iv. 2, 'The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' (3.) When it is kindly entertained: John viii. 37, Christ complains, 'Ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you,' οὐ χωρεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν. Men are so possessed with lust and prejudice, that there is no room for Christ's word. Though it break in upon the heart with evidence and power, yet it is not entertained there, but cast out again as an unwelcome guest. (4.) When it is deeply rooted. Many men have flashes

for a time; their affections may be much aloft, and they may have great fits and elevations of joy and delight, but no sound grace: John v. 35, 'Ye rejoiced in his light for a season.' But now the word must be settled into a standing affection, if we would have comfort and profit by it. We read of 'the ingrafted word,' James i. 21. There is a word bearing fruit, and a word ingrafted. Till there be the root of the matter in us, in vain do we expect fruit.

The reasons why this is one duty and practice of the saints, to hide the word in their hearts, are two:—

*Reas. 1.* First, that we may have it ready for our use. We lay up principles, that we may lay them out upon all occasions. Man hath an ingestive and an egestive faculty; when it is hid in the heart, it will be ready to break out in the tongue and practice, and be forthcoming to direct us in every duty and exigency. When persons run to the market for every pennyworth, it doth not become good housekeepers. To be to seek of comforts when we should use them, or to run to a book, is not so comfortable as to hide it in the heart. As Christ saith, 'A good scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old,' Mat. xiii. 52. He hath not only this year's growth, but the last year's gathering (for so is the allusion made); he hath not only from hand to mouth, but a good stock by him. So should a Christian have not only knowledge from hand to mouth, but a good stock and treasure in his heart, which is a very great advantage in these seven things.

1. It will prevent vain thoughts. What is the reason evil is so ready and present with us? Because our stock of knowledge is so small. A man that hath a pocket fuller of brass farthings than pieces of silver, will more readily draw out farthings than shillings; his stock is greater. So vain thoughts will be more ready with us, unless the word dwell richly in our hearts: Mat. xii. 35, 'A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.' The workings of our spirits are as our treasure and stock. The mind works upon what it finds in itself, as a mill grinds whatsoever is put into it, chaff or corn. Therefore, if we would prevent wicked thoughts, and musings of vanity all the day long, we must hide the word in our heart.

2. When you are alone and without outward helps, your hearts will furnish you with matter of counsel, or comfort, or reproof: Ps. xvi. 7, 'My reins instruct me in the night season.' When we are alone, and there is a veil of darkness drawn upon the world, and we have not the benefit of a bible, a minister, or Christian friends, our reins will instruct us; we may draw out of our heart that which will be for our comfort and refreshing. A Christian is to be a walking bible, to have a good stock and treasure in himself.

3. It will supply us in prayer. Barrenness and leanness of soul is a very great defect, which God's children often complain of. One great reason is, because the word of God doth not dwell plenteously in them, so that in every prayer we are to seek. If the heart were often exercised in the word, the promises would hold up our hearts in prayer, enlarge our affections, and we should be better able to pour out our spirits before him: Ps. xlv. 1, 'My heart is inditing a good

matter.' What then? 'My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.' When the heart is full, the tongue will be loosed and speak freely. What is the reason we are so dumb and tongue-tied in prayer? Because our heart is so barren. When the spring is dry, there will be little water in the stream: Eph. vi. 17, 'Take the sword of the Spirit, that is the word of God;' then presently, 'praying with all manner of supplication.' When we have a good store of the word of God it will burst out in prayer.

4. It will be a great help to us in all businesses and affairs. Prov. vi. 21, 22, speaking of the precepts of God, 'Bind them upon thy heart; when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.' Upon all occasions the word will be ready to cast in seasonable thoughts. When we awake, our most early thoughts in the morning will begin with God, to season the heart all the day; and as we are about our business, the word will hold our hearts in the fear of God; and when we sleep, it will guard thee from vain dreams and light imaginations. In a wicked man sin engrosseth all the thoughts; it employs him all the day, plays in his fancy all the night; it solicits him first in the morning, because he is a stranger to the word of God. But a man that is a bible to himself, the word will be ever upon him, urging him to duty, restraining him from sin, directing him in his ways, seasoning his work and employment. Therefore we should hide the word in our hearts.

5. It is a great relief against temptations to have the word ready. The word is called 'The sword of the Spirit,' Eph. vi. 17. In spiritual conflicts there is none to that. Those that ride abroad in time of danger will not be without a sword. We are in danger, and had need handle the sword of the Spirit. The more ready the scripture is with us, the greater advantage in our conflicts and temptations. When the devil came to assault Christ, he had scripture ready for him, whereby he overcame the tempter. The door is barred upon Satan, and he cannot find such easy entrance, when the word is hid in our hearts, and made use of pertinently: 1 John ii. 14, 'I write to you, young men, because ye are strong.' Where lies their strength? 'And the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.' Oh, it is a great advantage when we have the word not only *by us*, but *in us*, ingrafted in the heart! When it is present with us, we are more able to resist the assaults of Satan. Either a man forgets the word or hath lost his affection to it, before he can be drawn to sin. The word of God, when it hath gotten into the heart, it will furnish us with seasonable thoughts.

6. It is a great relief in troubles and afflictions. Our faintings come from ignorance, or our forgetfulness: Heb. xii. 5, 'Ye have forgotten the consolation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.' If we had a herb growing in our gardens that would ease our smart, what are we the better if we know it not? There is no malady but what hath its remedy in the word. To have a comfort ready is a great relief.

7. It makes our conference and conversation with others more gracious: Mat. xii. 34, 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth

speakeſt.' When we have a great deal of hidden treaſure in the ſoul it will get out at the tongue ; for there is a quick intercourſe between the heart and the tongue. The tap runs according to the liquor where-with the veſſel is filled. Come to men of an unſavoury ſpirit, pierce them, broach them, give them occaſion again and again for diſcourſe, and you get nothing but frothy communication from them and vain talk. But now a man that hath ſtored his heart with the word is ever and anon interpoſing for God. Like a bottle filled with wine, he muſt have vent. As the ſpouſe's lips are ſaid to 'drop as honey-combs,' they are ever putting forth ſavoury expreſſions in their converſe with others : Col. iii. 16, 'Let the word of God dwell in you richly, teaching and admoniſhing one another in psalms and hymns and ſpiritual ſongs.' It will burſt out preſently if the word of God dwell in your hearts.

Before I go to the ſecond reaſon, let me answer an objection : But is not this to take from the Spirit, and to give it to the word ? and that to the word, not as written in God's book, but as it is in our hearts ? Will not this be to aſcribe all to created grace ? I answer—

1. Queſtionleſs it is the office of the Spirit to bring things to our remembrance, and the great help of the Spirit of God is by ſuggeſting ſuch paſſages as may be of moſt ſeaſonable relief to the ſoul in temptations, in prayer, and in buſineſs, John xiv. 16. But what is given to the ſcriptures and grace is not to the wrong of the Spirit, for the ſcripture is of his inditing, and grace is of his working ; yea, we ſtill reſerve the chief honour to the Holy Ghoſt, for he not only worketh grace, but worketh by grace. He not only indites the ſcripture, but works by it ; it is he that quickeneth prayer ; and therefore it is ill truſting to our own underſtanding and memory, for it is the Spirit that is the great remembrancer, and impreſſeth upon the mind ſavoury and ſeaſonable thoughts.

2. I grant further, the children of God are ſubject to much forgetfulneſs of the truth that is impreſſed upon their hearts. Partly through the preſent cloud and miſt which the temptation raiſeth. The Pſalmiſt had truths enough to ſupport him, Ps. lxxiii. 17 ; yet he ſaith, 'Until I went into the ſanctuary of God, I was fooliſh and ignorant ; I was as a beaſt before thee.' There is ſo much dulneſs upon the children of God that they cannot remember ſeaſonable thoughts ; as Hagar had a fountain by her, yet ſhe did not ſee it till God opened her eyes, Gen. xxi. So under the temptation all are benighted, and the light that is in the underſtanding is obſcured. And partly through the little ſenſe they have for the preſent of the need of the comforts which the word propoundeth ; few ſo wiſe as to lay up for a dear year. And partly through ſloth and negligence, being taken up with other things. It is poſſible ſometimes that we may be guided by the Spirit, and act right merely by the guidance of the Holy Ghoſt, without any interpoſing and concurrence of our own underſtandings ; as John xii. 13, compared with ver. 16, 'They took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him ; and cried, Hoſanna, bleſſed is the King of Iſrael that cometh in the name of the Lord.' 'Theſe things underſtood not his diſciples at the firſt ; but when Jeſus was glorified, then remembered they that theſe things were written of him, and that they had done theſe things unto him.' Mark, they were guided by the

Spirit to do that they knew not for the present ; they had only a back-look, not a foresight ; they were ignorant of what they were doing until afterward ; thoughts came not in their mind but only in the review : John ii. 22, ' When he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them.' They did not take up the meaning of them, yet they were guided aright. They did not carp against Christ, as the Jews did. They were guided by the Spirit in a case they were wholly ignorant.

3. The Holy Ghost makes use of a sanctified memory, bringing scriptures to our remembrance as we have need. It is made their act, because the Holy Ghost made use of their memories : ' They remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,' John ii. 17. They that neglect to search and hide the word in their hearts, they have not such seasonable refreshment ; for God works more strongly with the strongest graces ; there where there is the greater receptivity, there is the greater influence ; those that are ignorant cannot expect such help as those that have the word dwell richly in their hearts.

The second reason is, therefore should we hide the word in our hearts, because God doth so in the work of conversion : Heb. viii. 10, ' I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.' The mind is compared to tables of stone, and the heart to the ark ; and so this is required of us to ' write them upon the table of our heart,' Prov. vii. 3 ; and here, ' I have hidden thy word in my heart.' How doth this follow ? because God doth so in conversion, therefore it is our duty ?

I answer—(1.) God requires what he works, to show the creature's duty, as well as the power of his own grace. God is to convert and turn ; yet do you turn, circumscribe your heart, and I will circumscribe ; mortify your members, &c. ; and yet, ' If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' He gives and requires ; to engage the subserviency of our endeavours, and to make us sensible of our duty and obligation. (2.) This followeth because this work must be gone over again and again that it may be more explicit. We must revive the work, and put a fresh copy of the law into our heart, to keep the old work a-foot.

Use 1. To persuade you to study the scripture, that you may get understanding, and hide the word in your hearts for gracious purposes. This is the book of books ; let it not lie idle and unemployed. The world can as well be without the sun as the bible. Ps. xix., first he speaks of the sun, then of the law of God. This is to the Christian and gracious world as the sun is to the outward world. The use and profit of it should make us look after more acquaintance with it. Consider the great use of the word for informing the understanding and reforming the will. For informing the understanding : 2 Tim. iii. 17, the word of God is ' able to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished.' Who should have more knowledge than the man of God, that is to stand in God's stead, and teach the people ? Then for reforming the will : ver. 9 of this psalm, ' Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way ? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.' A young man that is so heedless and headstrong, and in the very ruff and heat of his lusts, yet there is enough in the word to cleanse and tame him, and subdue him to God. Oh ! therefore, let us

get it into our hearts; let it not only move the lighter part of the soul, but get rooting, that it may have its full power and force, that we may not only have a little knowledge to talk of it; but we are to hide it deeply, that it may take root, and spring up again in our lives and conversations. To this end meditate often of it, and receive it in the love of it.

1. Meditate often of it: Luke ii. 19, 'Mary kept all these sayings.' How did she keep them? She 'pondered them in her heart.' Musing makes the fire to burn, and deep and constant thoughts are operative; not a glance or a slight view. The hen which straggles from her nest when she sits a-brooding produceth nothing; it is a constant incubation which hatcheth the young. So when we have only a few straggling thoughts, and do not sit a-brooding upon a truth; when we have flashes only, like a little glance of a sunbeam upon a wall, it doth nothing; but serious and inculcative thoughts, through the Lord's blessing, will do the work. Urge the heart again and again; as the apostle, when he had laid down the doctrine of justification and the privileges thereof: Rom. viii. 31, 'Now what shall we say to these things?' Is this a truth?—then what will become of me if I disregard it? Thus to return upon our heart when any light begins to shine in our minds from the scripture: is this the word of God, and doth it find no more entertainment in my heart?

2. Receive it in the love of it. The apostle makes that to be the ground of apostasy: 2 Thes. ii. 10, 'Because they received not the truth in the love of it,' &c. Oh! let it soak into the affections. If it lie only in the tongue or in the mind, only to make it a matter of talk and speculation, it will be soon gone. The seed which lies upon the surface, the fowls of the air will pick it up. Therefore hide it deeply; let it get from the ear into the mind, from the mind into the heart; let it soak further and further. First men have a naked apprehension of truth, then it gets into the conscience, and then it lies in the heart, then it is laid up; but when we suffer it only to be made matter of speculation, it is soon lost. Know this, a man may receive a thing in the evidence and light of it, when he doth not receive it in the love of it. When it rests in naked speculation, then he receives a thing in the evidence and light of it; but when it hath a prevailing sovereignty in the heart, then we receive it in the love of it. When it is dearer than our dearest lust, then it will stick by us; when we are willing to sell all for the pearl of price, Mat. xiii. 46. We are often put to it what we will part with—our lusts or the truth. When it breaks in upon the heart with evidence and power, you cannot keep both. Therefore let it soak into the affections, and hide the word in your hearts, that you may not sin against God.

*Use 2.* To direct you what to do in reading, hearing, meditating.

1. In reading. Hide the word in your hearts. The word may be reduced to doctrines, promises, threatenings. (1.) For doctrines, lay up knowledge, Prov. x. 14. It is a notable preservative against sin, and an antidote against the infection of the world, when we have a good stock of principles: Ps. xxxvii. 31, 'The law of God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.' As long as truth is kept lively and active, and in view of conscience, we shall not slide, or not so



often slide. We have many temptations to divert us from the truth and obedience; but here we are in safety, when the law of God is in our heart. How often was the word of God in Joseph's heart: 'How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' Against God, that is of such a sovereign majesty!—against God, of such infinite goodness and mighty power, so able to save and to destroy! Every time you read the scriptures you should lay up something. The best way to destroy ill weeds is by planting the ground with right seed. Everywhere we shall meet with notable passages. Therefore, stock yourselves with good principles. (2.) Then for promises, that part of the word. What have you hidden in your heart for comfort against temptations, desertions, afflictions? What have you laid up against a dear year? Job xxii. 22, 'Lay up his word in thine heart.' In a time of trial you will find one promise will give you more comfort and support than all the arguments that can be produced by reason: Ps. cxix. 50, 'This is my comfort in my affliction; thy word hath quickened me.' He had a word to support him. Therefore let us treasure up all the promises; all will be little enough when we need comforts. That we may not have them to seek in a time of distress, it is good they should be familiar. As you read the word, collect for your comfort and profit; happy is the man that hath his garner full of them. (3.) And so for threatenings, especially against the sins we are most inclinable to: 'Who among you will give ear, and hear for the time to come?' Isa. xlii. 23. You should think of what will come afterward. It is well with you for the present, but matters to come are put off, little cared for, Amos vi. 3.

2. In hearing. Do not hear slightly, but hide the word in your heart, that it be not embezzled by thy own negligence, forgetfulness, running into carnal distractions; that it be not purloined by Satan, that he may not snatch away the good seed out of thy soul. When the word is preached, there is more company present than is visible; there are angels and devils in the assembly. Whenever the sons of God meet together, Satan is present with them. The devil is present to divert the mind by wandering thoughts, by raising prejudices, that we may cast out the word; or by excuses, delays, evasions, putting it off to others when we begin to have some sensibleness of our sin and danger. The devil is loath to let us go too far, lest Christ get a subject into his kingdom. Oh! therefore, labour to get something into thy heart by every sermon; some fresh notion or consideration is given out to set you a-work in the spiritual life. A conscientious waiting upon God will find something every time. It is sad to consider how many have heard much, and laid up little or nothing at all; it may be they have laid it up in their note-books, but not laid up the word in their hearts.

3. For meditation. Meditate upon the word; do not study the word in a cursory manner, or content yourselves with a slight taste, or a little volatile affection; but ponder it seriously, that it may enter into your very heart. Hasty and perfunctory thoughts work nothing. Meat must be well chewed and digested, if you would have it turn into good blood and spirits. You must follow it close till it settle into some affection.

So much for David's practice, *I have hid thy word in my heart.*

The second thing is the aim and end of it, *that I may not sin against thee.*

*Doct. 2.* In hiding the word in our hearts there must be a right end; our knowledge of it and delight in it must be directed to practice.

1. We must not study the word merely out of curiosity, that we may know what is said there, as men will pry into civil art and discipline. So the Athenians flocked about Paul, Acts xvii. 18-21; so for novelty's sake men may have an affection and a delight in the word: John v. 35, 'Ye rejoiced in his light for a season.' There are certain adulterous affections we have to the word when it is new and fresh, but when it grows stale we loathe it. This affection to the word is soon spent.

2. We must not hide the word in our heart merely that we may be able to teach others, that we may make a gainful trade of it. Alas! a man may teach others and be himself a castaway. Look, as in coining of money, an iron stamp may impress the character and print upon a piece of gold and silver, so God may use the gifts and knowledge of some men to beget faith in others, and perish themselves: Mat. vii. 21, 'We have prophesied in thy name;' yet 'Depart from me; I know you not.'

3. This must not be our end neither, not merely for delight. Largeness of knowledge brings a content with it, as it is an addition to our perfection. Truth is the object of our understanding, and may please an unsanctified mind. Not merely out of subserviency to some base and inferior ends, that we may get esteem in the world, or the repute of knowing persons, but as it is an elevation of the understanding. Every delight in truth is not a delight in God. There is a natural oblectation we have in the contemplation of any sublime truth; this is merely a delight in the work of our own faculties, when the affections are terminated in bare knowledge; as it is a high and mysterious truth, as it is a delectation to the understanding.

4. We are not merely to study the word for the comfortableness of it, and the suitableness to the conscience. As man is a reasonable creature, he will delight in knowledge; and as he hath a conscience presageous of death and judgment to come, he may delight in the comfort of it. Many search out promises that do not affect precepts. The stony ground seemed to have a joy; they may delight in the comfortable part of religion; but this joy comes to nothing—this glad-some forward spring is no sure prognostication of a plentiful harvest. Then do we receive the word aright when we look to the holy part, and mortify our natural desires and affections. Many deal with the word as great men do with fleshly companions—are willing to entertain them at their tables to hear their discourse, because of the pleasantness of their mirth; but to enter into bonds for them, and discharge them from debt, or better their fortunes, that they will not do. So many will give Christ and the word, and the comfortable part of it, entertainment; but they are loath to take the duty of the gospel upon themselves. Therefore, it is not enough to study the word merely that we may cherish our own persons with the comfort-

able part of it ; but we must also study the holy part of it, and that which doth require our duty. Let us labour to hide the word in our hearts, as David did : ‘ I have hid thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.’

### SERMON XIII.

*Blessed art thou, O Lord : teach me thy statutes.*—VER. 12.

IN these words you have :—

1. A compellation, *blessed art thou, O Lord.*

2. A supplication, *teach me thy statutes.*

*First*, The compellation carrieth the force of an argument : Because thou art blessed, O Lord, therefore teach me. And therefore I shall open the sense of this title that is here given to God, so as I may still make good the argument.

For the sense, God may be said to be blessed objectively or subjectively.

*First*, Objectively, as he is the object of our blessedness. It is our blessedness to enjoy God : Ps. cxliv. 15, ‘ Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.’ That is our blessedness, to have God for our portion. As soon as we are admitted into covenant with God, we have a right to him : ‘ I am thy God ;’ and we have the full consummation of it when we enter into heaven : there we have the highest enjoyment of God that we are capable of. We have many fruitless and unquiet cares to enjoy the creatures, which are neither blessed in themselves, nor can make us blessed ; but now God is our *summum bonum*, our chief good ; the enjoyment of him is the chiefest good. Still we are capable of a higher happiness until we enjoy God. In other things we can neither have satisfaction nor security : the creature cannot satisfy, nor yet secure us in the enjoyment of itself. In this sense the argument will hold good : ‘ Blessed art thou, O Lord ;’ that is, Thou art the object of my blessedness ; my blessedness lieth in the enjoyment of thee ; therefore teach me thy statutes. If God be our chiefest good and our utmost end, it concerns us nearly to learn out the way how we may enjoy him : John xvii. 3, ‘ This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.’ It concerns believers to study that wherein their eternal happiness consisteth, and what is the way to get it : ‘ Thou art blessed, and therefore teach me thy statutes.’

*Secondly*, Subjectively ; and so again God is blessed either in an active or in a passive sense.

1. In an active sense. And here we must distinguish again ; for so God is blessed either with respect to himself or with respect to us.

[1.] Blessed in himself, as he hath the fulness of perfection and contentment. Blessedness is often ascribed to God : 1 Tim. i. 11, ‘ The glorious gospel of the blessed God.’ I will open that place by and by : 1 Tim. vi. 15, ‘ Who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.’ Now, how is God blessed in him-

self? God's blessedness is that attribute by which the Lord, from himself, and in his own being, is free from all misery and enjoyeth all good, and is sufficient to himself, and contented with himself, and doth neither need nor desire the creature for any good that can accrue to him by us. Or, more shortly, God's blessedness is the fruition of himself, and his delighting in himself. Mark, it lieth not in the enjoyment of the creature, but in the enjoyment of himself. God useth us, but doth not enjoy us. As we enjoy a thing for itself, but we use it for another; so *uti* and *frui* differ: we use the means, but enjoy the end. God useth the creature in subserviency to his own glory. So it is said: Prov. xvi. 4, 'God made all things for himself.' His happiness lieth in knowing himself, in loving himself, in delighting in himself.

But how is this used as an argument, 'Blessed art thou, O Lord; therefore teach me thy statutes'? Either thus: God, that is blessed, hath enough for himself; surely there is enough in him for us too: Gen. xvii. 1, 'I am God all-sufficient; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' I say, if God finds satisfaction enough in himself, our souls surely will find satisfaction in him. That which will fill a pottle, or greater measure, will fill a pint or a lesser measure; that which will satisfy a prince, and be enough for him in that estate, will satisfy a beggar, and supply his wants. God hath an infinite fulness of knowledge, comfort, and holiness; therefore surely enough to satisfy us, as empty as we are. Therefore we should desire to receive of this fulness in God's way. Or, again, thus: If God be blessed, we had need to inquire after his statutes, for these teach us the way how we may be blessed in God's blessedness, how we may be conformed to the nature of God, and live the life of God, and then surely we shall be happy enough. (1.) How we may be conformed to the nature of God: 2 Peter i. 4, 'That we may be partakers of the divine nature,' according to our measure, that ours may be such as his is. The promises, or the word, have an influence that way. If we see a man hath a rich trade, and secret ways of gain, every one would be acquainted with the mysteries and art of his getting, and desirous to know it. God is eternally blessed, therefore we should study to be like him. (2.) That we may live the life of God. Surely if we could learn to live such a life as God doth, we should be happy. However our prejudices darken it, yet the life of God cannot be a gloomy life. Now, ignorance of God's statutes is a great hindrance to the life of God: Eph. iv. 18, 'Being alienated or estranged from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.' Well, then, the consideration of this, that God is blessed, will certainly make us prize his statutes, prize his word, for by that we are conformed to the nature of God, and to the life of God; we are engaged in the same design wherein God himself is engaged: God loves himself, and acts for himself, and pursueth his own glory. Now when the word of God breaks in upon the heart, we pursue the same design with God. Men are prejudiced against a course of holiness; it seems to look upon them with a sour and austere face. Surely God loves a pleasant life; whoever is miserable, he hath a full contentment. Doth he that made all things want true joy and contentment?

Who should have happiness if God hath not? Now, when we learn God's statutes, we come to be conformed to the nature of God; we love what he loves, and hate what he hates, and then we begin to live the life of God. The happiness of God lieth in loving himself, enjoying himself, and acting for his own glory; and this is the fruit of grace, to teach us to live as God lives, to do as God doth, to love him and enjoy him as our chiefest good, and to glorify him as our utmost end. This is the first sense wherein God may be said to be actively blessed, as he hath infinite complacency in himself.

[2.] God is actively blessed with respect to us as he is the fountain of all blessedness. He is not only blessedness itself, but willing to communicate and give it out to the creature, especially his saints. He fills all created things with his blessedness: Ps. cxlv. 16, 'Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.' There is not a creature in the world but hath tasted of God's bounty, but especially the saints: Eph. i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.' These are vessels into which God is still pouring more, until they be completely filled up. Now, this communicativeness that is in God, without any irking of mind, is a certain argument or encouragement to move us to seek of God grace to keep his statutes. This is often urged in this case, his communicativeness to all his creatures: ver. 64, 'The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy; teach me thy statutes.' Thou art bountiful to all creatures; and, O Lord, show thy bounty to me. The same again: ver. 68, 'Thou art good, and dost good; teach me thy statutes.' Every good, the more good it is, the more it is diffusive of itself. And it is a part of God's blessedness that he is still of the giving hand: Acts xx. 35, 'Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.' It was a maxim which Christ commended to his disciples: 'Remember the words of the Lord Jesus;' that which he often inculcated, 'That it is more blessed to give than to receive.' The words formally indeed are not found in any evangelist; only there we may see the whole drift of Christ's doctrine was to press men to give; it is a more blessed thing. This is the happiness of God, that he gives to all, and receives of none; that he is so ready to communicate of his own fulness upon such free terms: John i. 16, 'Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace;' that is, grace for grace's sake. Thus we have seen how God is actively blessed.

2. God is passively blessed as he is blessed by us, or as worthy of all praise from us, for his goodness, righteousness, and mercy, and the communications of his grace. There are two words by which our thanksgiving is expressed—praise and blessing. You have both in Ps. cxlv. 10, 'All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee.' *Praise* relateth to God's excellency, and *blessing* to his benefits. His works declare his excellency: but his saints, which are sensible of his benefits, they bless him: they count him worthy of all honour and praise, and are ever ascribing to him, Rev. v. 13, 'Blessing, honour, glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' Why blessing? As for other things, so it was for opening the book which was sealed with

seven seals, and revealing his mind to his people ; as you may see, ver. 9. So David here, 'Blessed art thou, O Lord : teach me thy statutes.' As if he had said, Lord, thou art, and thou shalt be blessed : I bless thee that thou hast taught me ; and I desire thou wouldst teach me still, that I may ever bless thee. Thus it may be taken in a passive sense, as he is the object of our blessedness.<sup>1</sup>

Well, then, all that I have said upon this compellation may be reduced to these six propositions :—

1. That God is over all, and above all, blessed enough in himself, and needeth nothing from us to add to his happiness and perfection.

That he is blessed enough in himself: Rom. ix. 5, 'God over all, blessed for ever.' That he needs nothing from us to add to his happiness and perfection: Ps. xvi. 2, 'My righteousness, my goodness, extendeth not to thee.' He is above our benefits and injuries. If there could result any one happiness to God from the creature, surely then he would have made the world sooner ; what hindered him ? for why should he keep himself out of his own happiness ? And therefore he made the world, not that he might be happy, but that he might be liberal. Before ever there was hill or mountain, man or angel, God was happy enough in himself. The divine persons took infinite delight and complacency in each other ; as their rejoicing is expressed: Prov. viii. 30, 31, 'I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.' God had infinite complacency in Christ, and Christ in God, both in the Spirit, all in each, and each in all, before ever there was hill or mountain. The world is upheld, as stones are in an arch, by a mutual dependence, by a combination of interests. We need one another, but God doth not stand in need of us. 'The head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee ;' the greatest stand in need of the meanest, of their labours, their service ; the meanest parts have their use in the body. But now, God standeth in no need of us, for he giveth all, and he receiveth nothing back again ; as the fountain hath no need of the stream, but the stream hath need of the fountain. The sun fills the lap of the earth with blessings, and the earth returns nothing but vapours, that obscure its beams rather than add anything to its brightness. God filleth every living thing, especially his saints, with blessing, and receiveth nothing from us again.

2. Though God stand in no need of us, yet he is willing to communicate his blessedness, and to make us happy in the enjoyment of himself.

There is a threefold consideration which doth advance the bounty of God—that *to us*, that *himself* to us, and that so readily and freely.

[1.] That to us, who can neither hurt him nor help him: Ps. viii. 3, 4, 'Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man that thou visitest him ?' What a poor sorry creature is man ! wilt thou set thine eyes upon such a one ? What would God lose if we were all damned ? or what would he gain if all were saved ? He would lose no more by us than a bounteous man doth by the death of a company of beggars and maimed persons, which live upon his expense and charge. Wherein can we be useful to God ?

[2.] Herein lieth the bounty of God, to give us such a blessing as the enjoyment of himself. When he had no greater thing to swear

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'blessing'?—ED.

by, saith the apostle, he sware by himself. When God hath no greater thing to give us, he gives us himself: 'I am thy God.' He scatters and sheds abroad some common influences upon all creatures; but to us he gives not only that which is his, but gives us himself, that when our happiness is at the highest, we may immediately enjoy him.

For the opening of this blessedness in giving us the fruition of himself, consider we enjoy God two ways—mediately and immediately; one proper to this world, the other to the next.

(1.) Mediate. We enjoy God when he communicateth himself to us by secondary means, or the interposition of the creature between him and us. Thus in common mercies, when he feeds us by his meat and drink, and enlighteneth us with his sun. Here in the world we have blessings at second or third hand: 'I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth,' &c., Hosea ii. 21, 22. Whatever one creature affordeth to another, it hath it first from God. The creature is but an empty hollow pipe through which the blessing runs, and it passeth from pipe to pipe. God poureth out his influences to the heavens, and the heavens pour out their influences upon the earth; and the strength of the earth runneth up into corn, wine, and oil, and by corn, wine, and oil Israel hath his refreshments. So still from pipe to pipe is the blessing conveyed to the creature. So for special mercies; we have them by degrees; life, comfort, grace by the word and seals. But the Lord will not only supply us at second and third hand, but—

(2.) Immediately. When God communicates himself to us without any other thing between us and him; when we are immediately present with God, and have immediate influences from God, this is the happiness of heaven. In the heavenly state 'God shall be all in all,' 1 Cor. xv. 28. He shall be both the dispenser and the dispensation. There we see him face to face, 'and in his face and presence there is fulness of joy,' Ps. xvi. 11. That is our happiness in the next world, where immediate influences and virtue doth pass out from him. In heaven there is no temple, Rev. xxi. 22, 'But the Lamb is the temple of it.' There is a service of God, and constant influences in that God supplieth all immediately from himself.

[3.] This is upon free terms: John i. 16, 'Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace.'

3. The word of God, especially the gospel part, doth only teach us the way how we may be blessed in the enjoyment of God.

That is a notable place to this purpose: 1 Tim. i. 11, 'The glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.' Mark there, first, he calls it 'the glorious gospel.' When he speaks of the law in that place he saith, 'We know that the law is good,'—compare it with ver. 8; but when he comes to speak of the gospel, he calls it 'the glorious gospel.' The law is *good*, but the gospel *glorious*, because more of the glory of God is displayed and discovered to the creature. And 'the glorious gospel of the blessed God.' Titles are always suited to the case in hand; therefore it is called 'The glorious gospel of the blessed God,' because there God is discovered as ready to bless us; there is the way how we may come to be blessed in God, how he may with respect to us be a fountain of blessedness; there we have the highest discoveries of this mystery, the most moving argu-

ments to persuade us to look after it; and with this gospel there is a grace, a virtue dispensed to enable us to walk in this way. So that if we would enjoy the blessed God, we must consult with his statutes, and especially the gospel.

4. If we would profit by the word of God, we must go to God, and desire the light and strength of his grace.

If we would enjoy the blessed God, according to the direction of his word, we must not only consult with the word, but with God. Nothing else can draw us off from the world, and persuade us to look after heavenly things; nothing else will teach us the vanity of the creature, the reality of spiritual privileges. Until we see these things in a divine light, the heart hangs off from God; and therefore saith David, Ps. xvi. 7, 'I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel.' He had chosen God for his portion, and then 'I will bless the Lord,' &c. We shall still run after lying vanities until God doth open your eyes to see the mysteries of the word, and to be affected with the way. Those that are drawn to God must first be taught of God: John vi. 44, 'No man cometh to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him;' for Christ adds presently, 'They shall be all taught of God.' Our hearts can never be drawn unto God until he take us into his own hands.

5. The more we are brought to attend upon the word, and the more influence the word hath upon us, the nearer the blessing.

Christians, we are not far from the kingdom of God. There is some blessedness when we begin to look after the directions of the word, and to wait upon the teachings of God: Prov. viii. 34, 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.' Then you are in a hopeful way to true blessedness when you begin to be careful to attend upon God's teaching, much more when you have the fruits of it, when you know him so as to love him, so as to have your hearts drawn off from sin and folly: Acts iii. 26, 'Him hath God sent to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' The great business of Jesus Christ is to make us blessed in the enjoyment of God. But how is it? only by bare knowledge? No, it is by turning every one from his iniquity. So the more this teaching of God prevails upon the heart, the more blessed we are: Ps. cxix. 1, 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.' Otherwise, to have a golden head and feet of clay, that is monstrous, as in Nebuchadnezzar's image; to have a naked knowledge of God, and not brought under the power of it. You read of the heathens, when they sacrificed to their gods, they were wont to hang a garland upon the heads of the beasts, and to crown them with roses, so they were led on to sacrifice. Many may have garlands upon their heads, ornaments of knowledge, yet are going on to destruction; therefore that light and teaching which conveyeth blessedness is such as prevaieth upon the heart, and doth effectually turn us to God.

6. It is not only an affront put upon God, but also a great wrong, to neglect the word of God, and the way he prescribes, and to seek blessedness in temporal things.

Here you have the true way to blessedness set down in God's



statutes; but in outward things there wants fulness, sincerity, eternity.

[1.] There wants fulness. That which makes us blessed, it must fill up the heart of man. As a vessel is never full until it have as much as it can hold, so we can never be said to have a full happiness and contentment until we have as much as we can hold. That which fills must be greater than the thing filled. Now man's heart is such a chaos of desires, that it can never be filled up but in God: Ps. xvi. 11, 'In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' Therefore, of the joy and happiness we have in God, it is said, 'Enter into thy master's joy,' Mat. xxv. When we speak of a cup of water, that enters into the man, that is taken down into the man; but if we speak of a river of water, or tub of water, that is greater than the man is capable of, or can receive,—the man enters into it; so this joy and happiness, which is truly and genuinely so, it must exceed our capacity, greater than we can receive, that we may enter into it; it is the infinite God can only satisfy the heart of man. In temporal things there is no kind of fulness; you have not one worldly comfort, but you desire more of it. Ahab was a king, yet still he wants something, Naboth's vineyard. A man is not satisfied with abundance, neither is his soul filled with increase of worldly things; yet we may desire more, Eccles. v. ; and if we have one thing to the full, yet we shall need another. If a man be strong, he may need learning; it may be though he hath some kind of learning and knowledge, yet he hath not wisdom. Naaman was rich, wise, valiant, and honourable, but he was a leper. There is a *but* upon all worldly happiness; therefore there is no fulness in these things.

[2.] There is no sincerity in them. All that is in the world is but a semblance and an appearance, that which tickles the senses; it doth not go to the heart. You would have thought Belshazzar was merry at the heart when he was quaffing and carousing in the cups of the temple; but how soon is the edge of his bravery taken off, Dan. v. 5, 6. Haman in the midst of his honours was troubled at the heart for want of Mordecai's knee. Those things which seem to affect us so much cannot allay one unquiet passion, certainly cannot still and pacify the least storm of the conscience; and therefore, whatever face men put upon temporal enjoyments, if they cannot see God's special love in them, they want sincere joy. There is many a smart lash they feel when the world hears not the stroke: Prov. xiv. 13, 'Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.' All the laughter and merriment which men seem to receive from the creature, it is but a little appearance, not such as will go to the conscience, that will indeed and thoroughly rejoice and comfort a man, and give him solid joy.

[3.] There wants eternity. An immortal soul must have an eternal good, 'pleasures for evermore,' Ps. xvi. 11. In this world we have but a poor changeable happiness: Luke xii. 20, it was said to the rich fool, 'This night thy soul shall be required of thee.'

Thus much for the first branch, *blessed art thou, O Lord.*

*Secondly*, I come from the compellation to the supplication, *teach me thy statutes.* And here observe—(1.) The person teaching; he speaks

to God, 'Do *thou*, O God, teach.' (2.) We may consider the person taught, 'Teach *me*;' I, that have hid the word in my heart. David, that was a prophet, is willing to be a disciple. Those that teach others have need that God should teach them. The prophet saith, 'Teach me, O Lord.' David, a grown Christian, he desires more understanding of God's will. Certainly we should still 'follow on to know the Lord,' Hosea vi. 3. Heathens, that only knew natural and moral things, yet they saw a need of growth; and the more they knew, the more they discovered their ignorance; and always as they grew older, they grew wiser. How much more sensible would they have been of their defects in the knowledge of spiritual things, if they had in a little measure been acquainted with the mysteries of godliness, that pass all understanding, and are so much from human sense, and above the capacities of our reason! Prov. xxx. 3, Agur said, 'I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.' There is very much yet to be learned of God, and of his ways. Many think they know all that can be taught them. David, a great prophet, a man after God's own heart, yet is earnest that God would teach him his statutes. (3.) The lesson or matter to be taught, 'thy statutes;' so he calls the word, because the doctrines of it have the force of a law published; they do unalterably bind, and that the soul and conscience; and therefore the precepts, counsels, and doctrines of the word are all called statutes.

The point is—

*Doct.* If we would know God's statutes so as to keep them, we must be taught of God.

Here I shall inquire—

1. What it is, or how doth God teach us?
2. The necessity of this teaching.
3. The benefit and utility of it.

First, How doth God teach us?

Outwardly, by his ordinance, by the ministry of man.

Inwardly, by the inspiration and work of the Holy Ghost.

1. The outward teaching is God's teaching, because it is an ordinance which is appointed by him. Now both these must ever go together, external and internal teaching: 'Despise not prophecy, quench not the Spirit.' If you would have any enlightening and quickening of the Spirit, you must not despise prophecy. We teach you here, and God blesseth. Jesus Christ, when he comes to teach his disciples, first he openeth the scripture, Luke xxiv. 37; and then, ver. 45, 'he opened their understandings.' Of Lydia it is said, 'God opened her heart in attending to the things spoken by Paul,' Acts xvi. 14. She was attending, and then God openeth her heart. When the eunuch was reading, then God sends an interpreter. The outward means are necessary; it is God's teaching in part; but the inward grace especially. Both these must go together; for it is said, John vi. 45, 'Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' There must be a hearing of the word, and so there is a teaching from God. But—

2. The inward teaching, which is the work of the Spirit, that needs most to be opened. What is that? It consists in two things—(1.) When God infuseth light into the understanding, so as we come to

apprehend the things of God in a spiritual manner: Ps. xxxvi. 9, 'In thy light shall we see light.' There is no discerning spiritual things spiritually, but in God's light. There may be a literal instruction which one man may give to another, but 'in thy light only shall we see light;' such a lively affective knowledge as disposeth the heart for the enjoyment of God. There is a seeing, and a seeing in seeing: Isa. vi. 10, 'Lest in seeing they shall see.' A man may see a truth rationally that doth not see it spiritually. Now, when we have the Spirit's light, then in seeing we see. Or, as the apostle calls it, Col. i. 6, 'A knowing of the grace of God in truth,' since you did not only take up the report, but feel it, and had some experience of it in your hearts. Again, (2.) God's teaching consisteth not only in enlightening the understanding, but in moving and inclining the heart and the will; for God's teaching is always accompanied with drawing: John vi. 44, 'No man cometh to me, except the Father draw him;' which Christ proves, ver. 45, because 'they shall be all taught of God.' The Spirit's light is not only directive, but persuasive; it is effectual to alter and to change the affections, and to carry them out to Christ and to his ways; he works powerfully where he teacheth. When the Holy Ghost was first poured out upon the apostles, there was a notable effect of it; it came in the appearance of cloven tongues, like as of fire, Acts ii. 3, to show the manner of the Spirit's operation by the ministry; not only as light, but as fire: it is a burning and a shining light; that is, such a light as is seasoned with zeal and love, that affects the heart, that burns up our corruptions. And therefore, you know, when Christ would put forth a divine effect in his conference with his two disciples, it is said, 'Their hearts burned within them while he talked with them,' Luke xxiv. 32. There is a warmth and heat conveyed to the soul. Thus for the nature of this teaching.

Secondly, The necessity of this teaching will appear in several things.

1. If we consider the weakness of a natural understanding: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned.' They must be spiritually understood. There must be a cognation and proportion between the object and the faculty. Divine things cannot be seen but by a divine light, and spiritual things by a spiritual light, else they shall have no savour and relish. Can sense, which is the light of beasts, trace the workings or the flights of reason? Can you see a soul or an angel by the light of a candle? There is no proportion between them. So, can a natural man receive the things of the Spirit? He receives them not. Why? Because spiritual things must be spiritually discerned.

2. There is not only blindness, but obstinacy and prejudice. When we come to judge by sense and reason, the whole business of Christianity seems to be a foolish thing to a carnal heart. To give up ourselves to God, and all our interests, and to wait upon the reversion of a happiness in another world, which is doubtful whether there will be any such thing or no, is a folly to him. To deny present lusts and interests, to be much in prayer, and be often in communion with God, is esteemed a like folly. When the apostle came to preach the gospel

to the wits at Athens, they scoffed at him ; they entertain his doctrine as fire is entertained in wet wood, with hissing and scorn. To do all, and suffer all, and that upon the account of a happiness to come, to a carnal heart this is but a fancy and a mere imagination.

3. As blind and obstinate, so we are apt to abuse truth. Carnal hearts turn all to a carnal purpose. As spiders assimilate and turn all they suck into their own substance, so doth a carnal heart turn all, even the counsels and comforts of the word, to a carnal purpose. Or as the sea, whatever comes into it, the sweet rivers and droppings of the clouds, turns all into salt water : Hosea xiv. 9, ‘ Who is wise, and he shall understand these things ; prudent, and he shall know them ; but the transgressors shall stumble therein.’ As right excellent and as notable as the doctrines of the word are, yet a carnal heart finds matter in them to stumble at ; he picks that which is an occasion of ruin and eternal perdition from the scripture ; therefore the apostle saith, Eph. iv. 21, ‘ If ye have learned of him as the truth is in Jesus.’ We are never right, and truth never works us to regeneration, but it is only fuel for our lusts, until we have learned it as it is in Jesus. Carnal men undo themselves by their own apprehensions of the truths of God. Luther calls some promises bloody promises, because of the mistakes of carnal men by their perverse application. Therefore, that we may maintain an awe of God in our soul, we need to be taught of God.

4. We are apt to abuse our knowledge. Saving knowledge makes us more humble, but carnal knowledge more proud. Where it is in gift rather than in grace, there men are puffed up. The more we know God or ourselves by a divine light, the more humble we shall be : Jer. xxxi. 18, 19, ‘ When I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh ; I was ashamed, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.’ The more light we have from God, the more we look into a vile heart. When Adam’s eyes are opened, he runs into the bushes ; he was ashamed. So when God opens the eyes, and teacheth a Christian, this makes him more humble.

5. There needs God’s teaching, because we are so apt to forsake when we have known the things of God : Ps. cxix. 21, ‘ The proud do err from thy commandments.’ What is the reason David was so steadfast in the truth ? He did not take it up from the teachings of man, but from the teachings of God. When a man leads us into any truth, another man may lead us out again. But now, when God hath taught us, and impressed truth upon the heart, then it is durable. What is the reason believers are not as fickle as others, and not led away by the impure Gnostics, and like those libertines now among us ? 1 John ii. 20, ‘ Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.’ They had an unction which came down from Jesus Christ upon their hearts ; and then a man is not led away by every fancy, but begins to grow stable in spirit.

6. We cannot tell how to master our corruptions, nor restore reason to its dominion again. It is not enough to bring light into the soul, but we must have power and efficacy, or true conversion will not follow. Man’s reason was to govern his actions. Now, all literal instruction is weak, like a March sun, which draweth up the vapours, but cannot

scatter them ; it can discover sins, but cannot quell them : Rom. vii. 9, ' When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' He could not tell how to bridle his lusts ; he found them more outrageous : ' The good that I would do, I do not ; and the evil which I would not, that I do.'

Thirdly, The benefit and utility of God's teaching. When God teacheth, truth cometh upon us with more conviction and demonstration, 1 Cor. ii. 6, and so hath a greater awe and sovereignty. Those that have made any trial can judge between being taught of God and men. Those that are taught of men, the charms of rhetoric may sometimes stir up some loose affection, but it doth soon vanish and wear away again ; but the work of God makes deep impression upon the soul, and truths are then more affective. Man's knowledge is sapless, dry, and unsavoury : 2 Peter i. 8, ' For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' There may be an empty belief, and a naked and inactive apprehension of Christ, which stirs up no affection ; but the light which comes from God enters upon the heart, Prov. ii. 10 ; it affects the whole soul. It doth not only stay in the fancy, float in the brain, but affect the heart. And then it is renewing. Man's light may make us more learned but God's light more holy. We are ' changed by beholding the glory of God into the same image,' 2 Cor. iii. 18.

## SERMON XIV.

*With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.—*

VER. 13.

For the coherence of these words, you may refer them either to the 11th or 12th verse. If to the 11th verse, there he speaks of hiding the word in his heart, and now it breaks out in his tongue. First it must be in the heart, and next in the tongue. First in the heart. It is but hypocrisy to be speaking and talking of good things, when we have not been refreshed and warmed by them ourselves. Christianity is not a religion to talk of, but to live by. There are many rotten-hearted hypocrites that are all talkers ; like the moon, dark in themselves, whatever light they give out to others ; or like negroes, that dig in rich mines, and bring up gold for others, when themselves are poor. The power of grace in the heart is a good foundation for grace on the lips. This is the method and order wherein David expresseth it : ' I have hidden thy word in my heart ;' and then, ' With my lips have I declared,' &c. And as it must be first in the heart, so next in the tongue. John vii. 38, Christ speaks of ' him that believeth in him, that out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' By the belly is meant the heart. When there is true grace in the heart, the sweet influences thereof will flow forth in their common discourse for the refreshing of others ; as a spring sendeth forth the streams to water the ground about it. If the heart be full,

the tongue will drop what is savoury. I say, certainly if it be within, it will break out. The word is to be hid, but not like a talent in a napkin, but like gold in a treasury, to be laid out upon all meet occasions. Thus referring it to the 11th verse, there may be a fair connection.

Or if you refer it to the 12th verse, 'Blessed art thou, O Lord : teach me thy statutes : ' teach me that I may teach others. Our requests for knowledge are like to speed when we are willing to exercise this knowledge for the glory of God and the good of others. Talents thrive by their use : 'To him that hath shall be given,' Mat. xxv. 29 ; that is, to him that useth his talents. Trading brings increase ; and so it may be used as an argument to back that petition, Lord, teach me ; for I have been ever declaring with my lips all the judgments of thy mouth.

Again, none can speak of God with such savour and affection as he that is taught by God : Teach me, and I have or will declare (it may be read either way) all the judgments of thy mouth. A heathen could say, *Non loquendum de Deo sine lumine*—we must not speak of God without light. The things of God are best represented with the light of his own grace. David shows that he would perform the duty of a good disciple ; that he would teach others if God should teach him.

In the words two things are to be explained—

1. What he will declare, *all the judgments of thy mouth.*
2. In what sense he will *declare* them.

First, What he will declare. God's will, revealed in the scripture, is called 'The judgments of his mouth,' his judgments. I have showed that, ver. 7, at large. Briefly now I will add two reasons:—First, Because it is the rule according to which we must judge of all spiritual truth : Isa. viii. 20, 'To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' Secondly, It is the rule according to which we must look to be judged both here and hereafter. Here, 'I will chastise them (or judge them) as their congregation hath heard,' Hosea vii. 12. According to the sentence of the word, so will the course of his providence be, and according to which we shall be judged hereafter : John xii. 48, 'The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.' God's providences are a comment upon the scriptures. The scripture is not only a record of what is past, but a calendar and prognostication of what is to come. You may read your doom, your judgment there ; for the statutes of the Lord are all called judgments, because of an answerable proceeding in the course of God's providence : if men escape here, they will not escape the judgment of the last day, when the sentence of that God shall infallibly be made good. Now, the verdict of the word is called the judgments of his mouth, as if God himself had pronounced by oracle, and judged from heaven in the case ; and these judgments of his mouth the Psalmist saith shall be the matter of his discourse and conference with others.

Secondly, In what sense it is said that he will declare all the judgments of his mouth. In this speech David may be considered as a king, as a prophet, or as a private believer.

1. As a king; so some conceive that whenever he judged or gave sentence upon the throne, he would declare the judgments of God's mouth; that is, decree in the case according to the sentence of the law. In favour of this sense it may be alleged—

[1.] That certainly the king was bound to study the law of God, as you shall see, Deut. xvii. 18, 19, 'When he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites; and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life.' Every king was bound to have a copy of the law, the Rabbis say, written with his own hand, carried about with him wheresoever he went, in city or camp.

[2.] That the kings of Judah were bound up by the judicials of Moses, 'out of that which is before the priests and Levites;' that is, according to thy judicial laws, so will I pass sentence upon malefactors.

[3.] That, proceeding according to this rule, their declarations in court were the judgments of God's mouth: 2 Chron. xix. 6, 'He said to the judges, Take heed what ye do; for ye judge not for man but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment.' If this sense did prevail, we might observe hence, that a godly man useth the word to season the duties of all his relations. And again, that a good magistrate is so to judge upon the throne that his sentences there may be as the judgments of God's own mouth. But that which caused this misconceit was the word *judgments*, which is not of such a limited import and signification as those that pitched upon this interpretation did conceive, and therefore mistook the meaning of this place.

2. David may be considered here as a prophet, and so a pattern of all teachers. He asserts his sincerity in two respects—(1.) As to the matter of his doctrine; it should be the judgments of God's mouth, such as he had received from God. (2.) As to the extent; that he would declare all the judgments of his mouth.

[1.] As to the matter of his doctrine, it should be the judgments of his mouth. That which should be declared and taught in the church should not be our own opinions and fancies, but the pure word of God; not the vanity of our thoughts, but the verity of his revelations; otherwise we neither discharge our duty to God, nor to the children of God. Not to God, when we come in his name without his message: Jer. iv. 10, 'Ah Lord! thou hast greatly deceived this people,' saith the prophet Jeremiah to God. Thou hast done it; because the false prophets had done it in his name. The dishonour reflects upon him when his ordinance is abused to countenance the fancies of our own brain. Nor to the children of God, whose appetite carrieth them to pure unmixed milk: 1 Peter ii. 2, 'As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby,' λογικὸν ἄδολον γάλα—unmixed milk. The more natural the milk is, and without any mixture, the more kindly to a gracious appetite. To mix it with sugar, and the luscious strains of a human wit, doth but disguise it, and hide it from a spiritual taste. But to mix it with lime, as Jerome saith of heretics, makes it baneful and noxious. Thus he speaks of his faithfulness as a prophet, a public teacher in the church.

[2.] As to the extent; *all* the judgments of thy mouth, without adding or diminishing. No part of God's counsel must be forborne, either out of fear or favour. Our work is not to look what will please or displease, but what is commanded: Acts xx. 27, 'I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.' If it be the counsel of God, let it succeed how it will, it must be spoken. So David here, *all* the judgments of thy mouth.

3. David may be considered as a private Christian; and so, I would declare all the judgments of thy mouth in a way of conference and gracious discourse. This is the sense I shall manage. The consideration I shall insist upon is this:—

*Doct.* It concerns all that fear God to declare upon meet occasions the judgments of his mouth.

How? In the way of public teaching? Shall every one that hath knowledge and parts teach? I answer—No. There are some separate for that work: Acts xiii. 2, 'Separate unto me Paul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have called them.' Paul and Barnabas were gifted and called by the Spirit, yet were to be solemnly authorised by prophets and teachers at Antioch, by officers of the church.

Was it not enough that they were called by the Holy Ghost? What can man add more?

There must be order in the church. Though they were called, yet they were to be ordained, and to have a solemn commission. It is true, all Christians are prophets, yet they are not to invade the office ministerial; as they are also all kings, yet they are not to usurp the magistracy, or to disturb the ruler in his government. If Christians would but meditate more, and see how much they have to do to preach to their own hearts; if they would but regard the unquestionable duty that they owe to their families more, this itch of public preaching would be much abated, and many other confusions and disorders among us would be prevented; and they would sooner find the Lord's blessing upon interchangeable discourse, gracious conferences, than this affectation of sermoning and set discourses.

Well, then, we are to declare the judgments of his mouth, not by way of public teaching, but by way of private conference, edifying others, and glorifying God by the knowledge and experience that we have—

First, In our own families.

Secondly, In our converses.

1. In our own families, in training up children and servants in the way of the Lord, and inculcating the doctrine of God upon them. This is a commanded duty, as you may see, Deut. vi. 6, 7, 'And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart.' What then? 'And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' Morning and evening, rising up and lying down, at home and abroad, they should be instructing their families. When the word of God is in the heart, thus it will break out. And chap. xi. 19, you have the same again. This is a duty God reckoneth upon, that you will not omit such a necessary piece of service: Gen. xviii. 19, 'I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his



household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.' God promiseth himself, that from Abraham and his family he should have respect. God hath made many great promises to Abraham, as he doth now to all believers; but if you would have him bring upon you that which he hath spoken, you must not disappoint him. The seasoning of youth betimes in your families is a very great advantage. The family is the seminary of the church and state; and usually those that are ill-bred in the family, they prove ill when they come abroad. A fault in the first concoction is not mended in the second; and therefore here you should be declaring the mind and counsel of God to them. Many that afterwards prove eminent instruments of God's glory will bless you for it to all eternity. It is the best love you can express to your children, when you take care to season them with the best things. A husband is charged to love his wife. How shall he express this love? Eph. v. 25, 26, 'Even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it,' &c. I suppose the degree is not only commended for a pattern, but the kind; it must be such a love as Christ bore to his church: 'He gave himself for her, that he might sanctify her.' It must be such a love as tends to sanctification. It is a poor kind of love parents express to their children in providing great estates and portions for them, or bringing them up in trades that they may thrive in the world. But when you train them up for heaven, there is the best love: Prov. iv. 3, 4, 'For I was my father's son' (he was the darling), 'tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.' And wherein was that love expressed? He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live.' So for servants; it is not enough to provide bodily maintenance for them—so we would do for the beasts if we would use their strength and service; but we are to instruct them according to our talents. And that is the best love we can show, to provide for their souls.

2. In our converses, speaking of God and of his word in all companies, instructing the ignorant, warning and quickening the negligent, encouraging the good, casting out some savoury discourse wherever we come. So Ps. xxxvii. 30, 'The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.' A good man studieth in his speeches to glorify God, to edify those he speaks to: 'I will declare thy judgments,' saith David. Wise and gracious discourse drops from him. So Cant. iv. 11, 'Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under thy tongue.' The passages of that song are to be understood in a spiritual sense. Now the lips and the tongue being instruments of speech, and milk and honey things by which the word is expressed, I suppose it is meant of a conference; and because the word of God is compared to milk and honeycomb, it shows that their conference should be gracious and edifying. This is that which drops from a sanctified mouth.

For the reasons of this:—

1. I shall argue from the interest which God hath in the lips and tongue, and therefore they must be used for God. He made them, bought them, and, if we belong to him, we gave them up with other

things to him. We did not reserve our tongues. When we resigned and surrendered ourselves to the Lord's use, we did not make exception. The same argument which holds good for the whole body, why it should be possessed in sanctification and honour, holds good for every part of it: 1 Cor. vi. 20, 'Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies, and in your spirits, which are God's.' Thy whole is God's, thy spirit, thy body, and every part; thy wit, strength, hand, tongue, all are God's; and therefore he expects to be glorified by thy tongue. They were rebels that said, Ps. xii. 4, 'Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?' There is nothing we have that is ours, but God's. Our hearts are not our own, to think what we will; nor our tongues our own, to speak what we will. God expects service from the tongue, otherwise we must be answerable for it when our sovereign Lord calls us to an account. Now, it is strange God should have so clear a right to our speech and language, and yet so little a share therein: 'Give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' Thy tongue and thy lips, whose are they? If thou couldst make thy tongue of thyself, then thou mightst use it for thyself; but since you had it from God, you must use it for God. But, alas! how little are men mindful of this! Follow them all the day, you get not one word of God from them; they use their tongues as if they were their own, not God's.

2. It is the glory of the tongue to serve God in this kind. It is the most excellent member in the body when it is well used for the glory of God and edification of others; therefore called our glory often in the psalms: 'Awake, my glory;' that is, my tongue; and what is glory in the Old Testament is rendered tongue in the New, Acts ii. Our tongue is our glory. Why? Because we have this advantage by it, we may speak for God: 'Therewith bless we God,' James iii. 9. The benefit of speech is our privilege above angels and beasts. Angels they have reason, but no tongues; and beasts they have tongues, but no reason to guide them and act them. But now we have tongues and reason both, that we may declare our maker's praise. Surely this member and instrument was not given us to savour meats and drinks—that is not the highest use of it—but to express the sense and affections of the mind; not to utter vain, frothy, frivolous things—what an abuse is that!—but to comfort and instruct one another in the things of God. It is our glory.

3. Every creature hath a voice like itself, and therefore so should the new creature have. The ox bellows, the ass brayeth, goats and sheep may be known by their bleat, and so is a man by the tenor of his discourse. As the constitution of the mind is, so are the words. A wicked man hath a vain heart, and therefore his discourse is idle and frivolous: Prov. x. 20, 'The tongue of the just is as choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is little worth.' The antithesis shows it should have been said, 'The tongue of the wicked is little worth;' but he would point at the cause of it, 'the heart of the wicked.' There is a quick intercourse between the tongue and the heart. Now, because the heart of the wicked is nothing worth, all his thoughts and musings are vain; he goes grinding chaff in his mind all the day; his mind, like a mill, is always at work, not upon corn, that it might be bread for his

soul, but upon chaff; therefore, because his heart is nothing worth, his tongue is nothing worth. The tongue of the just is as choice silver, it brings in a great deal of treasure. But take a wicked man, all the workings of his heart, his thoughts and discourses, when summed up together, the product and total sum at night is nothing but vanity: 'The Lord seeth all their thoughts are but vain.' A vain heart will have vain speeches, and so a cankered sinner will have cankered discourse, as a putrid breath discovereth rotten lungs. Every man's speech is as his humour is. Come to a covetous person, he will be discoursing of farms, oxen, bargains, wares, and such like. Come to an epicurean gallant, to a voluptuary, and he will be telling you of horses, games, dogs, meats, drinks, merry company. Go to the ambitious, they will be talking of honours, offices, and the like. As they are of the flesh, so their talk savours of fleshly things. Every man hath a voice like himself, he speaks according to the constitution of his mind. Go to the discontented man, he will be talking of his adversaries, telling of affronts, wrongs, and public offences received. But a godly man hath a voice too like himself; he will be declaring the judgments of God's mouth; he will be speaking out of the word of God, of things within his sphere, and suitable to his kind: Mat. xii. 35, 'A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things.' Still the tap runs according to the liquor with which the vessel is filled, and a man's speech bewrays him of what kind he is; and therefore, since every creature hath a voice like himself, so should the new creature have.

4. I shall argue from the nature of good, which is communicative, and loves to propagate itself—*omne bonum sui diffusivum*: Luke xxii. 32, 'Thou being converted, strengthen thy brethren.' He had had experience of a changeable heart; now go strengthen others. Fire turneth all things about it into fire; leaven pierceth through the whole lump. So grace seeks to propagate and diffuse itself. Therefore, when the work of God is written upon a man's mind and laid up in his heart, he will be declaring and speaking of it to others. Naturalists observe that mules and creatures which are of a mongrel race do not procreate after their kind; so the false Christians are not for propagating and enlarging Christ's interest; they are not so warm, spiritual, and heavenly in their discourses. Andrew, when acquainted with Christ, calls Peter, and both call Nathanael: John i. 41–45, 'We have found the Messiah.' John calls his disciples. As a hen, when she hath found a worm or a barleycorn, clucks for her chickens that they may come and partake of it with her, so a man acquainted with Christ, who hath tasted that the Lord is gracious, he cannot hold; he will be calling upon his friends and relations to come and share with him of the same grace. As they have more of God, they will improve it for the comfort of others, and are willing to take hold of all opportunities to this end.

5. It discovereth plenty of knowledge and a good esteem of the word. (1.) Plenty of knowledge, when it is so apt to break out. When these living waters run out of the belly, it is a sign of a good spring there: Col. iii. 16, 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.' It is a sign

we have gotten the riches of understanding ; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. So Prov. xvi. 23, 'The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.' When our speech hath weight and worth in it, and we are ready upon all occasions, it argueth a good stock of the word. You know a man that puts his hand in his pocket, and brings up gold at every draught, it is a sign he hath more plenty of it than silver ; so when we are ready to bring out gracious discourses, it argueth a treasure and stock within. (2.) It argueth a good esteem of the word. Things that are dear and precious to us, we use to discourse of them. What we love, admire, and affect, the tongue will be occupied about such things : John iii. 31, 'He that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth ;' and 1 John iv. 5, 'They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world.' I know it is spoken in the first place of ordinary teachers. All men, whose original is of the earth, they savour of it in their speech ; when they speak of divine things, there is some earthiness in it. The other scripture is meant of false teachers, they savour of the world, all their teaching doth savour of their affections. But both places give this general truth : What a man's affections are upon, it is most ready in his mouth. Therefore it argueth we are affected with the word of God when we are declaring it upon all occasions.

6. It is for our benefit to be talking of good things to others. The breasts that are not sucked do soon grow dry, but the more they are milked out and drawn, the greater is the increase ; so in spiritual things, we gain by communicating ; by discourse, truths are laid more in view. We find in any art of common learning, the more we confer about things with others, the more understanding we get ourselves : Prov. xi. 25, 'The liberal soul shall be made fat ; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.' It is spoken of alms ; it is true of spiritual alms, as plain experience shows. By watering and refreshing others, the more are we comforted and refreshed ourselves. The loaves were increased in the dividing. Solomon compares conference to the whetting iron upon iron ; the more one iron is whetted upon another, both are sharpened ; so by conference our gifts are increased. Earthly goods, the more they are given out, we have the less in view and visible appearance, though God can increase them ; but now, in heavenly and spiritual things, in the very giving out to others, they are increased upon our hands.

*Use 1.* To shame us for our unprofitableness in our relations and converses ; for these are two things wherein a Christian should take occasion to declare the judgments of God's mouth.

1. In our relations, that we do no good there in declaring the judgments of God's mouth to one another. Surely every relation is a talent, and you will be accountable for it, if you do not improve it for your master's use. The husband is to converse with his wife as a man of knowledge ; 1 Peter iii. 7 ; and the wife to gain upon the husband, 1 Peter iii. 2 ; and both upon the children and servants. The members of every family should be helping one another in the way to heaven. With what busy diligence doth an idolatrous family carry on their way and their course ! See Jer. vii. 18, 'The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire,' &c., saith the Lord. Every one

will have his hand in the work, and are quickening and inflaming one another. Fathers, children, husbands, wives, all find some employment or other about their idolatrous service. Oh, that every one would be as forward and zealous and helpful in the work of God! Oh, that we were as careful to train and set our families a-work in a course of godliness! Christians should reason thus: What honour hath God by making me a father, a master of a family? Every such an one hath a charge of souls, and he is to be responsible. It will be no grief of heart to you when by your means they become acquainted with God: 'Ye are my crown and my rejoicing,' says the apostle, of the Thesalonians converted by his ministry. It will be a crown of honour and rejoicing in the day of the Lord, when you have been instrumental, not only for their prosperity in the world, but of their increasing in grace.

2. In our converses, how little do we edify one another! If Christ's question to the two disciples going to Emmaus were put to us: Luke xxiv. 17, 'What manner of conversation had you by the way?' what cause should we have to blush and be ashamed! Generally our discourse is either—(1.) Profane and sinful; there is too much of the rotten communication which the apostle forbids: Eph. iv. 29, 'Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearer.' Rotten discourse argueth a rotten heart. Or, (2.) Idle and vain, as foolish tales. The apostle bids Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 7, to 'refuse profane and old wives' fables,' or 'vain compliments,' though we are to give an account for idle words, Mat. xii. 36. Or else, like the Athenians, we 'spend our time in hearing and telling news,' Acts xvii. 21. Or we please and solace ourselves with frothy flashes of wanton wit, and 'jesting that is not convenient,' which the apostle forbids, Eph. v. 4. The praise of a Christian lieth not in the wittiness, but in the graciousness of his conversation. That which is Aristotle's virtue is made a sin with Paul—foolish jesting. You should rather be refreshing one another with what experiences you have had of the Lord's grace; that is the comfort and solace of Christians when they meet together. But when men wholly give up themselves to move laughter, all this is idle and vain discourse. It is not enough to say it doth no hurt, but what good doth it do? doth it tend 'to the use of edifying'? A Christian that hath God and Christ, and his wonderful and precious benefits to talk of, and so many occasions to give thanks, he cannot want matter to discourse of when he comes into company; therefore we should avoid vain discourse. Or, (3.) We talk of other men's matters or faults, as the apostle speaks of those, 1 Tim. v. 13, that wandered from house to house; that were not idle only, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not: Lev. xix. 16, 'Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people.' The Hebrew word signifies a merchant, or one that goeth about with spices to sell; thence the word is used for one that wandereth from place to place, uttering slanders as wares. These pedlars will always be opening their packs. Men fill up time by tattling and meddling with others: Thus have I heard of such or such an one. Or, (4.) our discourse is wholly of worldly business, not a word of God: 'They are of the earth, and speak of the earth,' John iii. 31. The

habituating ourselves to worldly discourse together, without interposing something of God, is a great disadvantage. Or, (5.) vain jangling; if we speak of anything that hath an aspect upon religion, we turn it into a mere dispute about opinion; we do not use conferences as helps to gracious affections. How many are there sick of questions, as the apostle saith, and 'dote upon strife of words'? 1 Tim. vi. 4. Thus if we did put ourselves to question at night, What have I spoken? what good have I done? what good have I received from such company?—it would make the word more sensible and active upon our souls.

*Use 2.* To press us to holy conference, both occasional and set.

1. Occasional. We are not left at random in our ordinary discourse, to speak as we will; but at all times and with all persons we should have an eye to the good of those with whom we speak: Col. iv. 6, 'Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.' In visits, walks, journeys, let your speech be always with grace. We should ever be drawing to good discourse, as remembering we must give account: James ii. 12, 'So speak as those that shall be judged by the law of liberty.' Certainly a gracious heart will thus do. He that doth not want a heart will not want in occasion of interposing somewhat for God. This was Christ's manner: Luke xiv. 15, when he was eating bread in the Pharisee's house, he discourseth, 'Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.' There will be a feast in heaven, when we shall 'sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God.' So when Christ was at Jacob's well, John iv. 14, he discourseth of the 'well of living waters which springeth up to eternal life'; still he draweth towards some gracious improvement of the occasion. So John vii. 37, when he was at the feast of tabernacles, and it was the custom there to fetch water from Siloa, and pour it out upon the altar of burnt-offerings—they were to make a flood of it—Christ improves it: 'If any man will come to me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water;' he spiritualiseth the occasion. If our hearts were as they ought to be, we would have a gracious word more ready; we would either be beginning or carrying on good conference wherever we came. But Christians are to seek, either through barrenness or leanness of soul; they have not that good treasure or stock of knowlege in them, or through the custom of vain speech. And the great cause of all is the prevalency of an unsanctified and worldly heart; this hindereth us from being more fruitful in our converse.

2. It should press us to holy conferences set. There may be, and should be, some set time for mutual edification. It is not the duty only of the ministers, but also of private Christians, keeping within the bounds of their station and the measures of their knowledge, to teach and to instruct one another. The scriptures are full of this: Col. iii. 6; Col. i. 5–11; Heb. iii. 13; Jude 20. Christians should often meet together for prayer and spiritual edification. So Heb. x. 24, 25; Rom. xv. 14. I heap up these places because of the error of the Papists, who will not have the laity speak of scripture, or things pertaining to scripture. Whereas you see these injunctions are plain and clear, and it is a great part of that holy communion that should pass between saints, this mutual exhorting, quickening, and strengthening one another's

hands in the work of the Lord. These places are not to be understood of public communion, of church societies, but of private conferences, by way of interchangeable discourse and mutual edification. It is not necessary these set conferences should be always, and all the members of the church meet and confer together; but a company of savoury Christians, whose spirits suit best in commerce, and most likely to help one another. Though I am to love all the brotherhood, and carry a respect to all in relation to me, yet I am to single out for my advantage some of the most eminent, or the most suitable; for great regard is to be had to that. Christ made a distinction in his little flock, in his family, shall I call it; some he singlet out for more immediate converses, as Peter, James, and John, in his transfiguration, in Mat. xvii. 1, and in his agonies; these were the flower, the choice, that he singled out for his special converse. I speak not of public meetings, in public societies, but set conferences with gracious Christians with whom our spirits suit best, and are likely to be of greatest help in maintaining of the spiritual life. These set times the people of God have ever made conscience of. It is a great comfort and refreshing to be conscious to the exercise of each other's grace: Rom. i. 12, 'That I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.' And it is a mighty strengthening in evil times: Mal. iii. 16, 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it.' And you will find the benefit of the manifold graces of God, that what one wants will be supplied by the help of another. God doth not so give his gifts to one but that he needs others' help. Paul calls Aquila and Priscilla 'fellows or helpers in Christ Jesus;' and Apollos, a mighty man in the scriptures, had a great deal of help by Aquila and Priscilla, Rom. xvi. 3; 1 Cor. xii. 21, 'The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you.' The meanest have their use, quickening and strengthening one another. This mutual edification differeth from ministerial or church society; because the one is an act of authority, the other of charity; the one in the face of the congregation, the other by a few Christians in private; and it may be improved to awaken each other to consider of God, of the ways of God, the word of God, the works of creation and providence, redemption, the judgments he executes in the world, mercies towards his people, the experiments and proofs of his grace in your Christian warfare: Ps. lxvi. 16, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.' Ferus speaks of some old monks, *Conveniebant in unum, audiebatur verbum Dei, &c.*—they were wont to meet together, and after they had read the word of God, every one did acquaint one another with his weaknesses, with his temptations, and mutually asked counsel, and comforted one another out of the word of God; and after this they concluded all with prayer, and so every man went to his home. These examples, did we observe them, they would be most useful to us; we might drive on a trade to heaven, and be of very great profit in the spiritual life; if the gifts of private Christians were managed without pride, vainglory, and without despising of the weak, it would be of exceeding honour to God, use and comfort to the saints.

## SERMON XV.

*I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments, as much as in all riches.*—VER. 14.

THESE words may respect the 12th verse, as another argument wherewith to back his request, 'Teach me thy statutes; for I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments as much as in all riches.' Many are for worldly wealth, but I have other desires: Lord, teach me how to understand and keep thy statutes, and this will be a greater benefit than any worldly possession whatsoever. Or you may refer them to the 13th verse, as a reason of his practice; every man will be speaking of that wherewith he is delighted: 'Lord, thy testimonies are my rejoicing;' therefore, I have and will be speaking of them upon all occasions. Or this may be the fruit of what was mentioned before: those that are exercised about the word, the study, and practice of it, and conference about it, have a sweet sense of the goodness of it in their own souls, so as they delight and rejoice in it above all things; and if we have not felt this effect, it is because we are strangers to the word.

In the words there is—

1. A *delight* asserted.
2. The object of it, *in the way of thy testimonies*.
3. The degree of it, *as much as in all riches*.

By way of explication: The 'testimonies' of God are his word, for it testifieth of his will. Now the prophet saith not only, 'I have rejoiced in thy testimonies,' but 'in *the way* of thy testimonies.' *Way* is one of the words by which the law is expressed. God's laws are ways that lead us to God; and so it may be taken here, the way which thy testimonies point out and call me unto; or else, his own practice, as a man's course is called his way; his delight was not in speculation or talk, but in obedience and practice: 'In the way of thy testimonies.' The degree, 'as much as in all riches.' As much, not to show the equality of these things, as if we should have the same affection for the world as for the word of God; but as much, because we have no higher comparison. This is that worldlings dote upon and delight in. Now, as much as they rejoice in worldly possessions, so much do I rejoice in the way of thy testimonies. For I suppose David doth not compare his own delight in the word with his own delight in wealth; but his own choice and delight with the delight and choice of others. If he had spoken of himself both in the one respect and in the other, the expression was very high. David, that was called to a crown, and in a capacity of enjoying much in the world, gold, silver, lands, goods, largeness of territory, and a compound of all that which all men jointly, and every man severally, doth possess, yet was more pleased in the holiness of God's ways, than in all the world.' 'For what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' Mat. xvi. 26.

*Doct.* A gracious heart finds more true joy in the way of God's word than in all worldly things whatsoever.



To explain this, consider—

1. What this delight is.  
2. How a gracious heart finds more delight in the word of God than in all worldly things.

3. The reasons why they do so.

1. What this delight is. I shall give you several distinctions.

[1.] There is a sweetness in the study of God's word, or when we give up ourselves to attain the knowledge of it. The very speculation and study produces a delightful taste, for three reasons:—

(1.) Truth is the good of the understanding; therefore, when the faculty is suited with a fit object, this correspondence causeth a rejoicing and delectation: Prov. xxiv. 14, 'My son, eat thou honey because it is good; and the honeycomb, because it is sweet to thy taste: so shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul when thou hast found it.' Every truth, if it be but a natural or philosophical verity, when we come to consider and see it with our own eyes, and have found it out by search, and do not repeat it by rote only, breedeth a delight. Pleasure is *applicatio convenientis convenienti*; so it is true in theological truths; we are the more affected with them the more they are represented with evidence to the soul.

(2.) Scriptural truths are more sublime than other truths, and do enoble reason with the knowledge of them: Deut. iv. 6, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and an understanding people.' Such doctrines as we meet with in the word of God concerning angels and the souls of men, the creation and government of all things, the redemption of men, must needs affect the heart, and breed a joy in the view and contemplation of them.

(3.) Because these truths are suitable to our necessities. To every man that hath a conscience, it cannot but be very pleasing to hear of a way how he may come to the pardon of sins, and sound peace of conscience, solid perfection, and eternal glory. Man is naturally under fear of death, Rom. i. 32, and would be glad of pardon; weak, and unable to find out or attain to moral perfection, he would be glad of an exact rule, and gropeth and feeleth about for an everlasting happiness, Acts xvii. 27. So far as anything is found to this purpose in the writings of men, they have a marvellous force and influence upon us. Any beam of this truth scattered in Plato or Socrates, of man's reconciliation with a just God, there is nothing in their writings; the then world was under perplexity; but yet of moral perfection, and an eternal state of blessedness, there were some glimmerings. Now, when these are represented to the understanding with such evidence and satisfaction as they are in the scriptures, where you have the only sufficient direction to true happiness, no wonder if they are greedily catched at. Now this delight, though good, I speak not of, because it may be in temporaries, who have a taste of the good word, to invite them to seek for more, Heb. vi. 4, and is a fruit of common illumination. The stony ground received the word with joy, Luke viii. 13; and though it may affect the heart, yet if not above all riches, it doth not prevail over carnal affections.

[2.] There is a sweetness found in the way of God's testimonies which ariseth from the conscience of practical obedience, not from contemplation

only ; and it is best to be found when we come to practise and perform what we know. It is said of wisdom, Prov. iii. 17, 'All her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' There is not only a sweetness in our privileges, but in our duties. No man knoweth the contentment of walking closely with God but he that hath tried. So Micah ii. 7, 'Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?' not only *speaking* good, but *doing* good. There is a certain performance of what the word saith, when it is said : it may be accounted done ; but to whom ? To them that know it, and are able to talk of it ? No ; but to them that walk. And will every slight endeavour and the presumption of conformity to the rule serve the turn ? No ; to them that *walk uprightly*, that sincerely frame themselves to obey God's will with the greatest exactness and care they can use. Oh, what good, what reviving of heart and cheerfulness do they find in this work ! Briefly, this delight in the way of God's testimonies (that you may not be mistaken) differeth from that contentment and serenity of mind which is the fruit of integrity or moral sincerity. There is some degree of comfort that accompanieth any good action, as heat doth fire ; the conscience, so far as he doth good, hath some kind of peace in it. The heathens by God's general bounty and goodness had a conscience excusing when they did good, as well as accusing when they did evil : Rom. ii. 15, 'Their thoughts in the meantime accusing, or else excusing one another,' *μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων*—'by turns,' and this excusing cannot be without some sweetness and contentment of mind. *Sacer intra nos spiritus sedet bonorum malorumque nostrorum observator et custos ; hic prout a nobis tractatus est, ita nos ipse tractat*, saith Seneca. This may be without faith ; whereas we speak of such a joy as is founded in faith, though found in the ways of obedience in Christ's service : Mat. xi. 29, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' In short, there is delight in the duty and the dispensation ; for it is both promised and required. Delight in God's ways is promised as a gift of God, and as the result of our obedience : Isa. lviii. 13, 14, 'If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, &c., then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord,' &c.; and Cant. ii. 3, 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.' There is sweetness God bestoweth, or sensible consolation, which must be distinguished from that delight which is a fruit of our gracious esteem. I can exclude neither, though that delight which is the fruit of our esteem of the word is principally here intended ; the one is more durable than the other. A gracious affection to the word and ways of God should ever remain with us ; but we are not always feasted with spiritual suavities. Now and then we have them, and when they have done their work they return to God. As in the vision made to Peter, the sheet that was showed him was received up again into heaven, Acts x. 16, when Peter was informed of God's will ; so this comfort returneth to the giver when it hath done its work, refreshed our hearts, and engaged us to wait upon God.

2. How a gracious heart rejoiceth more in the way of God's testimonies than in all riches.

[1.] There is a broad difference in the things themselves, and therefore there should be in our affections to them ; for our affections should be carried out according to the worth of things ; otherwise, if an object of less worth have more of our hearts than an object of more value, they are like members out of joint, they are not in their proper place. There is a great distance between the things themselves, as much as there is between the enjoyment of God and the creature, and therefore there must be a considerable difference in our affections to them. If the difference be so nice that thou canst hardly distinguish which thy heart is more affected with, the enjoyment of God in the way of his testimonies, or the enjoyment of wealth and worldly accommodations, or if the disproportion be on the world's side, that hath more of thy esteem and complacency, then God is not thy chiefest good ; thou lovest the creature more than God, which is inconsistent with grace : for this is the prime act of grace, to choose God for our chiefest good.

[2.] We must distinguish between the sensitive stirring of the affections and the solid complacency of the soul. It is possible a child of God may be more sensibly moved by temporal things, as they do more strike upon the senses ; but the supreme and prevailing delight of the soul is in spiritual things, in the way of God's testimonies. To exemplify this by the contrary affection, as in sorrow ; a temporal loss may to sense more stir the affections, as to bodily expression of them, than a spiritual ; as the drawing of a tooth or any present pain may make us cry out more than the languishings of a consumption ; whereas the other may go nearer to the heart, and causeth a more lasting trouble. So in joy ; a man may be pleased with earthly conveniences, and yet his solid esteem is more in spiritual things ; as a trifle may provoke laughter more than a solid benefit that accrueeth to us. Therefore the case is not to be decided by the intensiveness of the sensitive expression so much as by the appreciation of the soul. In this sense the point is to be understood ; he would lose all the world rather than dispense with his obedience to God. This is selling all for the pearl of price spoken of, Mat. xiii. 46. All other things are trampled upon and renounced for this one's sake, that we may enjoy God in Christ. And truly this affection to the word is not easily to be found ; for we often see that men for a little gain will break all the commandments of God, as things not to be stood upon when any temporal commodity is in chase, and in the pursuit of worldly riches care not how they neglect Christ and heavenly things.

3. The reasons why they rejoice more in the way of God's testimonies than in all riches.

[1.] Because of the suitableness of these things to the new nature. Everything hath a kind of joy when it enjoys that which is good for it. The ground doth pleasantly receive a shower of rain after drought ; the natural man eateth and drinketh, and his heart is filled with gladness ; so the spiritual man is affected with that which is agreeable to the divine nature. Everything is preferred according to the suitableness and proportion which it carrieth to our necessities and desires. The cock in the fable preferred a barleycorn before a jewel ; the barleycorn is more suitable to its natural appetite. So believers have not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, 1 Cor. ii. 12 ;

therefore the way of God's testimonies is more suitable and proportionable to that nature which they have. Their wealth and worldly things they indeed suit with the sensitive nature, but that is kept under, therefore the prevalent inclination is to the word more than to the world.

[2.] There is nothing in the enjoyment of worldly things, but they have it more amply in the exactest and sincerest way of enjoyment by the word, and walking in the way of its precepts. Satan's baits whereby he leads men to sin are pleasure and profit; when *bonum honestum*, the good of honesty and duty, is declined, there remains nothing but *bonum utile et jucundum*, the good of pleasure and profit. If we be moved with these things, it is good to look there where we may have them at the highest rate and in the most sincere manner. Now, it is the word of God believed and obeyed which yieldeth us the greatest profit and the greatest pleasure. You have both in one verse: Ps. xix. 10, 'More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than the honey and the honeycomb.' Because of the profit it is compared to gold, and because of the sweetness and pleasure we have by it, it is compared to honey.

The word of God will truly enrich a man and make us happy. The difference between God's people and others doth not lie in this, that the one seeketh after riches, the other not; they both seek to enrich themselves; only the one seeketh after false, and the other true riches, as they are called, Luke xvi. 11, and so differ from one another as we and the Indians do, who reckon their wealth by their wampenpeage, or shells of fishes, as we do ours by gold and silver; the one hath little worth but what their fancies put upon it; the other hath a value in nature. Or, to speak in a more home comparison, counters, glass beads, and painted toys please children more than jewels and things of greater price, yea, than land of inheritance, or whatever, when we come to man's estate, we value and is of use to us for the supply of present necessities. So worldly men, preferring their kind of wealth before holiness and the influences of grace, do but cry up haubles before jewels. To evidence this, and that we may beat the world with their own notions, and so the better defeat the temptation, let us consider what is the true riches.

1. What is indeed true riches.

2. Why these are the true riches.

1. What is indeed riches.

[1.] Gracious experiences or testimonies of the favour of God. He is a rich man indeed that hath many of these. So it is said, Rom. x. 12, God is 'rich to all that call upon him;' it is meant actively, not passively; it only noteth that God doth give out plentiful experiences of his grace.

[2.] Knowledge: 'Let the word of God dwell in you richly, in all wisdom,' Col. iii. 16. And the apostle mentions 'the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ,' Col. ii. 2. This is a treasure indeed, that cannot be valued; and he is a very poor soul that wants it.

[3.] Faith: James ii. 5, 'Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith?' He is a rich man that is emptied of himself that he may be filled with God.

[4.] Good works : 1 Tim. vi. 10, 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, &c., but rich in good works.' O miserable man! that hath nothing to reckon upon but his money and his bags, so much by the year, and makes it all his business to live plentifully in the world, laying up nothing for heaven, and is not rich in gracious experiences, knowledge, faith, and good works, which are a Christian's riches!

2. Why are these the true riches?

[1.] That is true riches which maketh the man more valuable, which gives an intrinsic worth to him, which wealth doth not that is without us. We would not judge of a horse by the richness of his saddle and the gaudiness of his trappings; and is man, a reasonable creature, to be esteemed by his moneys and lands, or by his graces and moral perfections?

[2.] That is riches which puts an esteem upon us in the eyes of God and the holy angels, who are best able to judge. One barbarous Indian may esteem another the more he hath of his shells and trifles; but you would count him never the richer that should bring home a whole ships lading of these things: Luke xii. 20, such a fool is he 'that heapeth up treasure to himself, and is not rich towards God;' that hath not of that sort of riches which God esteemeth. We are bound for a country where riches are of no value; grace only goeth current in the other world.

[3.] That is riches which steads us in our greatest extremities. When we come to die, the riches of this world prove false comforts, for they forsake a man when he hath most need of comfort. In the hour of death, when the poor shiftless naked soul is stripped of all, and we can carry away nothing in our hands, grace lieth near the heart to comfort us. It is said by a voice from heaven of those that die in the Lord, 'Their works follow them;' their wealth doth not. Our graces continue with us to all eternity.

[4.] That is the true riches which will supply all our necessities, and bear our expenses to heaven. Wealth doth not this, but grace: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added;' 1 Tim. iv. 8, 'Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' Heaven and earth are laid at the feet of godliness.

[5.] That is true riches which will give us a title to the best inheritance. The word of God is able to enrich a man more than all the riches of the world, because it is able to bring a man to an everlasting kingdom. All this is spoken because there is an evil desire that possesseth the whole world; they are vehemently carried after riches, and as they are increased, so are they delighted. But, saith David, my delight is to increase in knowledge and grace; if I get more life, more victory over lusts, more readiness for God's service, this comforts me to the heart. Now how do you measure your thriving? by worldly or spiritual increase?

Here is the true delight. Spiritual delight in spiritual objects far exceedeth all the joy that we can take in worldly things. The pleasures of the mind are far more pure and defecate than those of the

body; so that if a man would have pleasures, let him look after the chiefest of the kind. He spoke like a beast rather than like a man that said, 'Eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast goods laid up for many years,' Luke xii. 19. That is the most that worldly things can afford us, a little bodily cheer: Ps. xvii. 14, 'Thou hast filled their bellies with hid treasures;' there is the poor happiness of a rich worldling. He may have a bellyful, and fare at a better rate than others do: Hab. i. 16, 'Their portion is made fat, and their meat plenteous.' When men have troubled themselves and the world to make themselves great, it is but for a little belly-cheer, which may be wanted as well as enjoyed; a modest temperance and mean fare yieldeth more pleasure. But what is this to the delights of the mind? A sensualist is a fool, that runneth to such dreggy and carnal delights. Noble and sublime thoughts breed a greater pleasure. What pleasure do some take in finding out a philosophical verity!—the man rejoiceth, the senses are only tickled in the other. Of all pleasures of the mind, those of the spiritual life are the highest, for then our natural faculties are quickened and heightened by the Spirit. The reasonable nature hath a greater joy than the sensitive, and the spiritual divine nature hath more than the mere rational. There is not only a higher object, the love of God, but a higher cause, the Spirit of God, who elevateth the faculty to a higher manner of sense and perception. Therefore both the good and evil of the spiritual life is greater than the good and evil of the rational. The evil of the spiritual is greatest: 'A wounded spirit who can bear?' And the good of the spiritual life is greatest, 'joy unspeakable and glorious.' The higher the life, the greater the feeling; 'groans not uttered.' 'Peace passing all understanding,' though it maketh no loud noise, yet it diffuseth a solid contentment throughout the soul. All this is spoken because the way of God's testimonies is looked upon as a dark and gloomy course by carnal men; yet it is the life of the blessed God himself: Eph. iv. 18, 'Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.' And surely he wants no true joy and pleasure that lives such a life.

*Use 1.* Here is an invitation to men to acquaint themselves more with the way of God's testimonies, that they may find this rejoicing above all riches. It is hard to pleasant natures to abjure accustomed delights; and carnal men picture religion with a sour austere face: We shall never see cheerful day more if we are strict in religion. Oh! consider, your delight is not abrogated, but perfected; you shall find a rejoicing more intimate than in all pleasures. Cyprian saith he could hardly get over this prejudice, in his epistle to Donatus. Austin, thirty years old, parted with his carnal delights, and found another sweetness—*quam suave mihi subito factum est!* It is your disease maketh you carnal; when freed from the fervours of lust, these things will have no relish with you. If it seem labourious at first, it will be more joyful than all riches. The root is bitter, but the fruit sweet. At first it is bitter to nature, which loveth carnal liberty, to render itself captive to the word; but after a little pains, and when the heart is once subdued to God, it will be sweet and comfortable. Ask of the

spies that have been in this good land if it be not a land flowing with milk and honey. David tells you, 'In the way of thy testimonies.' This way would be more trodden if men would believe this; if you will not believe, make trial; if Christ's yoke seem burdensome, it is to a galled neck.

*Use 2. Trial.*

1. Have we a delight in obedience to God's precepts? Ps. cxii. 1, they that fear God, delight greatly in his commandments. It is not enough to serve God, but we must serve him delightfully; for he is a good master, and his work hath wages in the mouth of it. It is a sign you are acquainted with the word of God, when the obedience which it requireth is not a burden but a delight to you. Alas! with many it is otherwise. How tedious do their hours run in God's service! no time seemeth long but that which is spent in divine worship. Do you count the clock at a feast? and are you so provident of time when about your sports? Are you afraid that the lean kine will devour the fat, when you are about your worldly business? What causeth your rejoicing? the increase of wealth, or grace?

2. Is this the supreme delight of the soul? It is seen not so much by the sensible expression, as by the serious constitution of the soul, and the solid effects of it.

[1.] Doth it draw you off from worldly vanities to the study of the word? What are your conceptions of it? What do you count your riches? To grow in grace, or to thrive in the world? To grow rich towards God, or to heap up treasures to yourselves? Is it your greatest care to maintain a carnal happiness?

[2.] Doth it support you in troubles and worldly losses? and bear you out in temporal adversities? You cannot be merry unless you have riches and wealth and worldly accommodations; then, soul, eat, drink, and be merry!

[3.] Doth it sweeten duties? The way of God's commandments is your way home. A beast will go home cheerfully. You are going home to rest. Let the joy of the Lord be your strength. Certainly you will think no labour too great to get thither, whither the word directs you. As one life exceedeth another, so there is more sensibleness in it. A beast is more sensible of wrong and hurt and of pleasure than a plant; and as the life of a man exceedeth the life of a beast, so is he more capable of joy and grief; and as the life of grace exceedeth the life of a mere man, so its joys are greater, its griefs greater. There are no hardships to which we are exposed for religion, but the reward attending it will make us to overcome.

## SERMON XVI.

*I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.—*

VER. 15.

ALL along David had showed what he had done; now, what he will do. Ver. 10, 'I have sought;' ver. 11, 'I have hid;' ver. 13, 'I

have declared ;' ver. 14, ' I have rejoiced.' Now, in the two following verses, he doth engage himself to set his mark towards God for time to come : ' I will meditate in thy precepts,' &c. We should not rest upon anything already done and past, but continue the same diligence unto the end. Here is David's hearty resolution and purpose to go on for time to come. Many will say, Thus I have done when I was young, or had more leisure and rest ; in that I have meditated and conferred. You must continue still in a holy course. To begin to build and leave unfinished is an argument of folly. There is always the same reason for going on that there was for beginning, both for necessity, profit, and sweetness. We have no license to slack and give over till all be finished : Phil. ii. 12, ' Work out your own salvation ;' otherwise all you do is in vain, yet not in vain : Gal. iii. 4, in vain as to final reward, yet not in vain as to increase of punishment. You lose your cost, your watchings, striving, prayings ; but you will gain a more heavy punishment, so that it had been better you had never begun : 2 Peter ii. 20, 21, ' For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning ; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.' You bring an ill report upon God ; your sense of the worth of heavenly things must needs be greater for your making trial ; and therefore your punishment for neglect the greater. Into the vineyard they came at several hours, but all tarried till the close of the day. Some called sooner, some later, but all held out till the end : Heb. vi. 10, 11, you have ministered and must minister ; you have prayed and must pray ; you have heard the word with gladness, and must hear still. Many in youth are zealous, but when their first heats are spent, grow worldly, careless, and ready to sound a retreat from God. The fire of the altar was never to go out ; so should the life, and warmth, and vigour of our affections to the word of God be ever preserved. God is the same still, and so is the word ; and therefore we should ever be the same in our respects to it. The devil in policy lets men alone for a while, to manifest some respect to the ways of God, that they may after do religion a mischief. They are full of zeal, strict, holy, diligent in attendance upon ordinances. He never troubleth them, but is at truce with them all this while, till they get some name for the profession of godliness, and then he knoweth their fall will be the more scandalous and ignominious, not only to themselves, but to their profession. They are forward and hot men a while, till they have run themselves out of breath, and then by a notable defection shame themselves, and harden others.

Compare it with the 13th verse, ' I have declared ;' now ' I will meditate.' To be warm and affectionate in our expressions of respect to the word before others, and to slight it in our own hearts, argueth gross hypocrisy ; therefore David would not only confer, but meditate. Many talk with others, but not with their own soul : ' Commune with your hearts, and be still.' True zeal is uniform ; when there is no witness but God, it acts alike.

Reier it to the 14th verse, David had spoken of his delight in the



law; now, that he would meditate therein; in both not to boast, but to excite others by his example: that is to be understood all along when he speaketh of his diligence in and about the law of God. But mark, first the word was his delight, and then his meditation, Delight causeth meditation, and meditation increaseth delight: Ps. i. 2, 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' A man that delighteth in the law of God will exercise his mind therein. Our thoughts follow our affections. It is tedious and irksome to the flesh to meditate, but delight will carry us out. The smallest actions, when we have no delight in them, seem tedious and burdensome. It was no great matter for Haman to lead Mordecai's horse, yet a burdensome offensive service, because it was against his will. The difficulty that we find in holy duties lieth not in the duties themselves, but in the awkwardness of our affections. Many think they have no parts, and therefore they cannot meditate. He that findeth a heart to this work will find a head. Delight will set the mind a-work, for we are apt to muse and pause upon that which is pleasing to us. Why are not holy thoughts as natural and as kindly to us as carnal? The defect is in the heart: 'I have rejoiced in thy testimonies,' saith David, and therefore 'I will meditate in thy statutes.'

In the words there is a double expression of David's love to the law of God:—

1. *I will meditate in thy precepts.*

2. *I will have respect to thy ways.*

Concerning which observe—

1. In both the notion by which the word of God is expressed and diversified, *precepts, ways*. The word *precepts* implieth God's authority, by which the counsels of the word are ratified. *Ways* implieth a certain direction for our walk to heaven. There are God's ways to us declared in his promises. So it is said, Ps. xxv. 10, 'All the paths of God are mercy and truth.' Our ways to God, ver. 4 of that psalm: 'Show me thy ways, teach me thy paths.' These are his precepts.

2. Observe, the one is the fruit of the other: 'I will meditate;' and then, 'I will have respect.' Meditation is in order to practice; and if it be right, it will beget a respect to the ways of God. We do not meditate that we may rest in contemplation, but in order to obedience: Josh. i. 8, 'Thou shalt meditate in the book of the law day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.' So Phil. iv. 8, 9, 'Think of these things,' 'do these things'—λογίζεσθε. When you cast up your accounts, and consider what God hath required of you, it is that you may set upon the work. Meditation is not a flourishing of the wit, that we may please the fancy by playing with divine truths (sense is diseased that must be fed with quails), but a serious inculcation of them upon the heart, that we may urge it to practice. Nor yet an acquainting ourselves with the word that we may speak of it in company: conference is for others, meditation for ourselves when we are alone. Words are but the female issue of our thoughts, works the male. Nor merely to store ourselves with curious notions and subtile inquiries; study searcheth out a truth, but meditation improveth it for practical use: it is better to be sincere than subtile.

3. Observe, this practical obedience is expressed by having respect unto the ways of God. To respect God's ways is to take heed that we do not turn out of them, to regard them and ourselves: 'Observe to do them,' Josh. i. 8; and it is called elsewhere, pondering our path: Prov. iv. 26, 'Ponder the path of thy feet,' that we may not mistake our way, nor wander out of it. Respect to God's word was opened ver. 6 and 9. The main point is this—

That one great duty of the saints is meditating on the word of God, and such matters as are contained therein.

Let us inquire what meditation is, because the practice and knowledge of the duty is almost become a stranger to us. Before I can define, I must distinguish it. Meditation is—

1. Occasional.

2. Set and solemn.

1. Occasional meditation is an act by which the soul spiritualiseth every object about which it is conversant. A gracious heart is like an alembic; it can distil useful thoughts out of all things that it meeteth with. Look, as it seeth all things in God, so it seeth God in all things. Thus Christ at Jacob's well discourseth of the well of life, John iv.; at the miracle of the loaves, discourseth of manna, John vi. and vii.; at the feast of tabernacles, of living waters; at the Pharisee's supper, discourseth of eating bread in the kingdom of God, Luke xiv. 15. There is a holy chemistry and art that a Christian hath to turn water into wine, brass into gold, to make earthly occasions and objects minister spiritual and heavenly thoughts. God trained up the old church by types and ceremonies, that the things they ordinarily conversed with might put them in mind of God and Christ, their duties, and dangers, and sins. And our Lord in the New Testament taught by parables and similitudes taken from ordinary functions and offices amongst men, that in every trade and calling we might be employed in our worldly business with a heavenly mind; that whether in the shop, or at the loom, or in the field, we might still think of Christ, and grace, and heaven. There is a parable of the merchantman, a parable of the sower, a parable of the man calling his servants to account, &c., that upon all these occasions we might wind up our minds, and extract some spiritual use from our common affairs. Thus the creatures lift up our minds to the creator. David had his night meditation: Ps. viii. 3, 'When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands, the moon, and the stars which thou hast ordained,' &c.;—the sun is not mentioned. When he was gone abroad in the night, his heart was set on work presently: and Ps. xix. 5, there is a morning meditation, for he seemeth to describe the sun coming out of his chambers in the east, and displaying his beams like a cloth of gold upon the world. A holy heart cannot want an object to lead him to the meditation of God's power, and goodness, and glory, and wise providence, who hath made and doth order all things according to the counsel of his will. There is a great deal of practical divinity in the very bosom of nature, if we had the skill to find it out. Job biddeth us, 'Ask the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.' They speak by our thoughts.

2. There is set and solemn meditation. Now this is of several sorts, or rather, they are several parts of the same exercise.

[1.] There is a reflective meditation, which is nothing but a solemn parley between a man and his own heart: Ps. iv. 4, 'Commune with your own heart and be still;' when we have withdrawn ourselves from company, that the mind may return upon itself, to consider what we are, what we have been, what straits and temptations we have passed through, how we overcame them, how we passed from death to life. This is a necessary part of meditation, but very difficult. What can be more against self-love and carnal ease than for a man to be his own accuser and judge? All our shifts are to avoid our own company, and to run away from ourselves. The basilisk dieth by seeing himself in a mirror, and a guilty man cannot endure to see his own natural face in the glass of the word. The worldly man choketh his soul with business, lest, for want of work, the mind, like a mill, should fall upon itself. The voluptuous person melteth away his days in pleasure, and charmeth his soul into a deep sleep with the potion of outward delights, lest it should awake and talk with him. Well, then, it is necessary that you should take some time to discourse with yourselves, to ask of your souls what you have been, what you are, what you have done, what shall become of you to all eternity: Jer. viii. 6, 'No man asketh of himself, what have I done?' You would think it strange of two men that conversed every day for forty or fifty years, and yet all this while they did not know one another. Now, this is the case between us and our own souls; we live a long time in the world, and yet are strangers to ourselves.

[2.] There is a meditation which is more direct, when we exercise our minds in the word of God and the matters contained therein. This is twofold:—

(1.) Dogmatical, or the searching out of a truth in order to knowledge: 'Proving what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God,' Rom. xii. 2. This is study, and differeth from meditation in the object, and supposeth the matter we search after to be unknown, either in whole or in part; whereas practical meditation is the inculcation or whetting of a known truth upon the soul: and it differs in the end; the end of study is information, and the end of meditation is practice, or a work upon the affections. Study is like a winter sun, that shineth, but warmeth not; but meditation is like blowing up the fire, where we do not mind the blaze but the heat. The end of study is to hoard up truth; but of meditation, to lay it forth in conference or holy conversation. In study, we are rather like vintners, that take in wine to store themselves for sale; in meditation, like those that buy wine for their own use and comfort. A vintner's cellar may be better stored than a nobleman's; the student may have more of notion and knowledge, but the practical Christian hath more of taste and refreshment.

(2.) Practical and applicative. This we now speak of: and it is that duty and exercise of religion whereby the mind is applied to the serious and solemn consideration and improvement of the truths which we understand and believe, for practical uses and purposes. Not like a man that soweth and never reapeth; or a woman that often conceives, but never brings forth living children.

(1st.) It is a *duty*; for it is commanded, Josh. i. 8, 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.' As the promise is general, 'I will not leave thee nor forsake thee,' Heb. xiii. 5, so is the command. To meditate in the law is a part of the description of a godly man: Ps. i. 2, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in that law doth he meditate day and night.' It is commended to us by the practice and example of the saints in scripture. Isaac, Gen. xxiv. 63, 'went out to meditate in the field in the eventide,' to pray, as in the margin; the word in the original is indifferent to both senses; it properly signifieth muttering, or an imperfect or suppressed sound. The Septuagint sometimes renders it by *αἰδεῖν*, to sing; but others by *ἀδολεσχήσαι*, which signifies to exercise himself. The word is used here *ἐν ταῖς ἐντολαῖς σου ἀδολεσχήσω*. Symmachus, *λαλῆσαι*, to speak; Aquila, *ὁμιλῆσαι*, to discourse with God and his own soul. The original word, *חָשַׁב*, signifieth to mutter, or such a speaking as is between thoughts and words. He made his duty his refreshment and solace at night. So David often in this psalm. Reason enforceth it. God, that is a spirit, deserveth the most pure and spiritual worship by the mind, as well as that which is performed by the body. Thoughts are the eldest and noblest offspring of the soul, and it is fit they should be consecrated to converse with God.

(2d.) It is a *necessary duty*; not a thing of arbitrary concernment, a moral help that may be observed and omitted at our pleasure; but of absolute use, without which all graces wither. Faith is lean unless it be fed with meditation on the promises: Ps. cxix. 92, 'I had fainted in my affliction, unless thy word had been my delight.' Hope is not lively unless we contemplate the thing hoped for, and, with Abraham, walk through the land of promise, Gen. xv., and think often and seriously on 'the glory of the riches of the inheritance of the saints,' Eph. i. 18, and get upon the mount of meditation, upon the top of Pisgah, to get a view of the land. So for love; the more we study 'the height, and breadth, and depth of God's love in Christ,' Eph. iii. 18, 19, the more is the heart melted and drawn out to God, and more quickened to obedience: Ps. xxvi. 3, 'Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes.' And as it helpeth our graces in their exercise, so all other duties; as hearing of the word. To hear and not to meditate is unfruitful. The heart is hard and the memory slippery, the thoughts loose and vain; and therefore, unless we cover the good seed, the fowls of the air will catch it away. It is like a thing put into a bag with holes—lost while it is received: James i. 23, 24, 'Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls; for if a man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of person he was.' Bare hearing begets but transient thoughts, and leaveth but a weak impression in the soul; like a flash of lightning, as soon gone as come, or the glance of a sunbeam upon a wave. A man never discerneth the scope, the beauty, the order of the truths delivered, till he cometh to meditate on them, and to go over them again and again in his

thoughts: Ps. lxii. 11, 'God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this,' &c., *i.e.*, when we repeat it upon our thoughts, inculcate it, and meditate upon it, this maketh a deeper impression, and that which is spoken rebounds again and again; it is twice heard. David saith, Ps. cxix. 99, 'I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation.' The preacher can but lay down general theorems and deduce practical inferences; but that which fasteneth them upon the heart is our own thoughts; and so we come to be wiser, to see more clearly and practically as to our own case than he that preacheth; we see a further use than he was aware of. So for prayer; what we take in by the word we digest by meditation, and let out by prayer. These three duties help one another. What is the reason men have such a barren, dry, and sapless spirit in their prayers? It is for want of exercising themselves in holy thoughts: Ps. xlv. 1, 'My heart inditeth a good matter;' and then 'My tongue is as the pen of a ready writer.' It alludeth to the *mincah*, the meat-offering; the oil and flour were to be kneaded together, and fried in a pan, and so offered to the Lord. When we come with raw dough-baked offerings, before we have concocted and prepared our thoughts by mature deliberation, we are barren or tumultuary in our prayers to God. Prayer is called by the name of meditation, because it is the product and issue of it; as Ps. v. 1, 'Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation.' So Ps. xix. 14, 'Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight;' implying that prayer is but the vent and expression of what we have deliberated and meditated upon. So David findeth his desires more earnest after grace, the more he mused and meditated: Ps. cxliii. 5, 6, 'I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the works of thy hands; I stretch forth my hands unto thee; my soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land.' Well, then, it is the life and strength of other ordinances, without which how slight and perfunctory are we! I might instance in conference; the stream of good discourse is fed by serious thoughts. The Lord's Supper, a duty which is mainly despatched by our thoughts; there we come to put reason to the highest use, to be the instrument of faith and love; of faith in believing applications; of love, in resolutions of duty and thankfulness. In that one ordinance there is a union of mysteries, which we take abroad in holy and serious thoughts. To have an unfruitful understanding, then, is a great damp and deadness to the heart. Now, we shall never enlarge ourselves in pertinent and savoury thoughts, unless we use to meditate; for spiritual dispositions do not come upon us of a sudden, and by rapt motions, but by progressive and orderly degrees and preparations.

(3d.) It is a *profitable duty* as to temporals. Isaac went out to meditate, and of a sudden he espieth the camels coming upon which Rebecca was brought to him, Gen. xxiv. 63, 64. Was this a mere accident, think you, or a providence worthy of remark and observation? Isaac goes to meet with God, and there he gets the first view of his bosom-friend and spouse. This was a mercy cast into the bargain. 'Godliness hath the promises of this life, and that which is to come.' There is nothing lost by duty and acts of piety. Seneca

said the Jews were a foolish people, because they lost the full seventh part of their lives—*Septimam ætatis partem perdunt vacando*; intending their sabbath-time. This is the sense of nature, to think all lost that is bestowed upon God. Flesh and blood crieth out, What need this waste? they cannot spare time from their callings, they have families to maintain. Oh! let me tell you, by serving God you drive on two cares at once. Worldly interests are cast into the way of religion, and though not designed and intended by us, these things are added to us. For comforts and manifestations of God, we have them many times in our recess and the privacy of our retirements, in a more plentiful manner than elsewhere. ‘The spouse inviteth the bridegroom, Cant. vii. 11, ‘Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field.’ Upon which Bernard, *O sancta anima, fuge publicum, fuge. An nescis te verecundum habere sponsum, qui nequaquam tibi velit indulgere præsentiam suam coram aliis?* We have most experiences of God when we are alone with him, and sequestered from all distractions of company and business, solacing ourselves with God. Exod. iii. 1, Moses drove the sheep to the back side of the wilderness, and came to the mount of God: he goeth aside from the other shepherds, that he might converse with the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, and there he seeth the vision of the fiery bush. Usually God cometh to us in our deep meditation; when the soul is most elevated, and fittest to entertain the comforts of his presence, then we have sensible experience of God.

The standing spiritual benefits of meditation are many. It imprints and fastens a truth upon the mind and memory. Deliberate thoughts stick with us, as a lesson we have conned is not easily forgotten. Civet long kept in a box, the scent remaineth when the civet is taken out. Sermons meditated on are remembered by us long after they are delivered: it sets the heart a-work. The greatest matters will not work upon him that doth not think of them. Tell them of sin, and God, and Christ, and heaven and hell, and they stir them not, because they do not take these truths into their deep thoughts; or if they be stirred a little, it is but a fit, while the truth is held in the view of conscience. We had need inculcate things if we would have them to affect us. The steel must beat again and again upon the flint, if we would have the sparks fly out; so must the understanding bear hard upon the will, to get out any affection and respect to the ways of God. It showeth the beauty of truths. When we look upon them *in transitu*, we do not see half that is in them; but upon a deliberate view it more appeareth; as there is a secret grace in some, that is not discerned but by much converse and narrow inspection. It helpeth to prevent vain thoughts. The mind of man is restless, and cannot lie idle; therefore it is good to employ it with good thoughts, and set it a-work on holy things; for then there will be no time and heart for vanity, the mind being prepossessed and seasoned already; but when the heart is left to run loose, vanity increaseth upon us. O Christians! meditation is all; it is the mother and nurse of knowledge and godliness, the great instrument in all the offices of grace. We resemble the purity and simplicity of God most in the holiness of our thoughts. Without meditation we do but talk one after another like

parrots, and take up things by mere hearsay, and repeat them by rote, without affection and life, or discerning the worth and excellency of what we speak. It is meditation that maketh truths always ready and present with us: Prov. vi. 21, 22, 'Bind them continually upon thy heart; when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou wakest, it shall talk with thee.' But I forbear.

1. *Whereby the mind is applied to serious and solemn consideration.* I add this, to distinguish it from occasional meditation, and those good thoughts that accidentally rush into our minds, and to note the care and attention of soul that we should use in such an exercise. It is musing makes the fire burn: glances or transient thoughts, or running over a truth in haste, is not meditation, but a serious attention of mind. It is not to take a snatch and away, but to make a meal of truth, and to work it into our hearts. Alas! a slight thought, that is like a flash of lightning, gone as soon as come, doth nothing. Constant thoughts are operative; and a truth, the longer it is held in the view of conscience, the more powerful it is: Deut. xxxii. 46, 'Set your hearts to all the words which I testify among you this day.' A sudden thought may be none of ours; it may be unwelcome, and find no entertainment with us, but set your hearts to it: Luke ix. 44, 'Let these things sink down into your hearts;' let them go to the quick: Prov. xviii. 1, 'Through desire a man having separated himself, intermeddleth in all wisdom.' Then is a man fit for these pure and holy thoughts, for intermeddling in all wise and divine matters, when he hath divorced himself from other cares, and is able to keep his understanding under a prudent confinement.

2. *Of the truths which we understand and believe.* In meditation we suppose the object understood; for it is the work of study to search it out, of meditation to enforce and apply it; and we suppose it believed and granted to be a truth. The work now is to improve our assent, that it may have an answerable force and efficacy upon the soul.

3. It follows in the description, *for practical uses and purposes.* Meditation is not to store the head with notions, but to better the heart. We meditate of God that we may love him and fear him; of sin, that we may abhor it; of hell, that we may avoid it; of heaven, that we may pursue it. Still the end is practical, to quicken us to greater diligence and care in the heavenly life.

*Use 1.* To reprove those that are seldom in this work. Worldly cares and sloth and ease divert us; if we had a heart, we would have time and leisure. The clean beasts did chew the cud. We should go over, and over, and over again the truths of God in our thoughts. But alas!—

1. Either men muse on trifles; all the day their minds are full of chaff and vanity. Oh! hast thou thoughts for other things, and hast thou no thoughts for God's precepts? Hast thou not a God and a Christ to think of? And is not salvation by him, and everlasting glory, worthy of your choicest thoughts? You have thoughts enough and to spare for other things—for base things, for very toys—and why not for God and the word of God? Why not for Christ and that

everlasting redemption he hath accomplished for us? If a man would throw his meat and drink down the kennel, rather than give to him that asketh him, the world would cry shame upon him. Will you cast away your thoughts upon idle vanities rather than God shall have them? Oh, shame! Your thoughts must be working. What! shall they run waste, and yet God have no turn?

2. Or else men muse on that which is evil. There are many sins engross the thoughts.

[1.] Uncleaness sets up a stage in the heart, whereon a polluted fancy personates and acts over the pleasures of that sin. Our thoughts are often panders to our lust: 2 Peter ii. 14, 'Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin.' The unclean rolling of fancy on the beauty of women is forbid: Mat. v. 28, 'He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.'

[2.] Revenge; the thoughts of it, how sweet are they to a carnal heart! Men dwell upon their discontents and injuries till, like liquors that sour in the vessel when long kept, they sharpen revenge. We are apt to concoct anger into malice: 'Frowardness is in his heart; he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord,' Prov. vi. 14.

[3.] Envy stirreth up repining thoughts; it is a sin that feedeth on the mind: 1 Sam. xviii. 9, 'And Saul envied David from that day forward.' David's ten thousands ever ran in Saul's mind. Envy muses on the good of others to hate them.

[4.] Pride, in lofty conceits and whispers of vanity: Luke i. 51, 'He hath scattered the proud in the imaginations of their hearts.' Proud men are full of musings. 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?' Dan. iv. 30. Proud men please themselves with the suppositions of applause, and the echoes of praise in their minds.

[5.] Covetousness consists chiefly in a vain musing: Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 'Their heart goeth after their covetousness;' 2 Peter ii. 14, 'Hearts exercised with covetous practices.'

Use 2 is of exhortation, to press us to meditate on God's precepts. Many think it is an exercise that doth not suit with their temper; it is a good exercise, but for those that can use it. It is true there is a great deal of difference among Christians. Some are more serious and consistent, and have a greater command over their thoughts; others are of a more slight and weak spirit, and less apt for duties of retirement and recollection; but our unfitness is usually moral rather than natural, not so much by temper as by ill use. Now, sinful indispositions do not disannul our engagements to God, as a servant's drunkenness doth not excuse him from work. Inky water cannot wash the hands clean. That it is a culpable unfitness appeareth partly because disuse and neglect is the cause of it; those that use it have a greater command over the thoughts. Men count it a great yoke; custom would make it easy. Every duty is a help to itself; and the more we meditate the more we may. They that use it much find more of sweetness than difficulty in it. If a man did use to



govern his thoughts, they would come more to hand. Partly, want of love. We pause and stay upon such objects as we delight in. Love naileth the soul to the object or thing beloved: Ps. cxix. 97, 'Oh, how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day.' Carnal men find no burden in their thoughts; their heart is in them. Well, then, though you have not such choice and savoury thoughts as others have, yet set upon the work; you can think of anything you love.

Oh! but, as some press it, it requireth art and skill, and logical disposition of places of argumentation.

*Ans.* We cannot tie you to a method. Serious thoughts, no question, are required, and dealing with the heart about it in the best way of reasoning that we can use. Take these directions:—

1. Look how others muse how to commit a sin; and shall not we muse how to redress it? Wicked men sit a-brood: Isa. lix. 5, 'They hatch the cockatrice egg, and weave the spider's web; they devise mischief upon the bed;' Micah ii. 1, 'Woe to them that devise mischief on their beds.' So do you muse how to carry on the work of the day with success: Prov. xvi. 30, 'The wicked man shutteth his eyes to devise froward things;' it signifies his pensive solitary muttering with himself.

2. As you would persuade others to good. Surely you do not count admonition so hard a work. What words you would use to them, use the same thoughts to yourself: heart answereth to heart.

3. You understand a truth; you have arguments evident and strong why you should believe it; repeat them over to the soul with application: Job v. 27, 'See it, and know it for thy good.' This application is partly by way of trial, partly by way of charge. By way of trial: How is it with thee, O my soul?—Rom. viii. 31, 'What shall we say to these things?' By way of charge and command: Ps. lxxiii. 28, 'It is good for me to draw nigh to God; I have put my trust in the Lord, that I might declare all thy works.'

## SERMON XVII.

*I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.—*  
VER. 16.

DAVID had spoken much of his respect to the word, both as to his former practice and future resolutions. A godly man, the more good he doth, the more he desireth, delighteth, and resolveth to do. Spiritual affections grow upon us by practice and much exercise. The graces of the Spirit and the duties of religion do every one fortify and strengthen one another; lose one, and lose all; keep one, and keep all. Meditation breedeth delight, and delight helpeth memory and practice. He had said, 'I will meditate on thy precepts;' and now, 'I will delight myself in thy statutes;' and that produceth a further benefit, 'I will not forget thy word.'

The spiritual life is refreshed with change as well as the natural;

but it is with change of exercise, not of affection. There is hearing, praying, conferring, meditating, and all with delight; for when one fontinel is drawn dry, we may, as the lamb doth, suck another that will yield new supply and sweetness. David had spoken of his various exercises about the word, in the use of all which he would maintain a spiritual delight.

In this verse observe again a double respect to the word of God:—

1. *I will delight myself in thy statutes.*

2. *I will not forget thy word.*

These are fitly suited. Delight preventeth forgetfulness; the mind will run upon that which the heart is delighted in; and the heart is where the treasure is, Mat. vi. 21. Worldly men, that are intent upon carnal interests, forget the word; it is not their delight. If anything displease us, we are glad if we can forget it; it is some release from an inconvenience to take off our thoughts from it; but it doubleth the contentment of a thing that we are delighted in to remember it and call it to mind. In the outward school, if a scholar by his own averseness from learning, or by the severity and imprudence of his master, by his morosity or unreasonable exactions, hath no delight in his book, all that he learneth is lost and forgotten; it goeth in at one ear, and out at the other: but this is the true art of memory, to cause them to delight in what they learn. Such instructions as we take in with a sweetness, they stick with us, and run in our minds night and day. So saith David here, ‘I will delight in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.’

*Doct.* 1. One great respect which the saints owe to the word of God is to delight therein.

David resolveth so to do: ‘I will delight,’ or solace or recreate myself in thy statutes; this should be his refreshment after business. David had many things to delight in;—the splendour and magnificence of his kingdom; as Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iv. 30, ‘Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?’ His great victories, which Aristotle saith are delightful to all. *Τὸ νικᾶν ἡδὺν, οὐ μόνον τοῖς φιλονείκοις ἀλλὰ πᾶσι φαντασία γὰρ ὑπεροχῆς γίγνεται.* It is an appearance of excellency (Arist. Rhet. i. cap. 11). Or in his instruments of music; as those, Amos vi. 5, ‘that chaunt to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David.’ No; this was not the mirth that he chose for his portion. Wicked men throng their hearts with such delights as these, lest an evil conscience flee upon them; ‘but I will delight myself in thy statutes.’ He might take comfort in a subordinate way in these things; but the solace of his life, and the true sauce of all his labours, was in the word of God. As David, so Jeremiah, chap. xv. 16, ‘Thy words were found, and I did eat them; they were unto me as the joy and rejoicing of my heart.’ That was the food and the repast of his soul, and he felt more warmth and cherishing in it than any can in their bodily food. So Paul: Rom. vii. 22, ‘I delight in the law of God in the inward man.’ Not to know it only, but to feel the power of it prevailing over his lusts; that was his delight as to the better part of his soul. So it is made a general character of the blessed man: Ps. i. 2,

that 'he delighteth in the law of God, and in that law doth he exercise himself day and night.' God's people will delight in his law; it is one of the greatest enjoyments they have on this side heaven, in the time of their absence from God. It is the instrument of all the good that they receive—comfort, strength, quickening.

But now, how do they delight in God's statutes?

1. In reading the word. The eunuch, returning from public worship, was reading a portion of scripture, Acts viii. 28. It is good to see with our eyes, and to drink of the fountain ourselves; if it seem dark without the explication of men, God, that sent Philip to the eunuch, will send you an interpreter.

2. In hearing of the word. The command is, James i. 19, 'Wherefore be swift to hear.' The saints have had experiment of the power of it, and therefore delight in it. 'I was glad when they said, Come, let us go up unto the house of the Lord,' Ps. cxxii. 1. You should be glad of these occasions of hearing, not as, with the minstrel, to please the ear, but to warm the heart. Seeing is in heaven, hearing in the churches upon earth; then vision, now hearing.

3. In conferring of it often. What a man delighteth in he will be talking of; so should you at home and abroad: Deut. vi. 7, 'Thou shalt be talking of them when thou sittest in thy house, and as thou walkest by the way,' seasoning thy journey. He that would have God to be in his journey, as travelling and walking abroad, should be speaking of divine things.

4. In meditating and exercising his mind upon it: Ps. i. 2, 'He delighteth in the law of God, and in that law doth he meditate day and night.' Delight causeth a pause or consistency of mind: as the glutton rolleth the sweet morsel under his tongue, and is loath to let it go, so a godly man's thoughts will run along with his delight. Clean beasts chew the cud; God's children will be ruminating, going over the word again and again.

5. In practice. This delight is not a bare speculation—so hypocrites have their tastes and their flashes—but in believing, practising, obeying: Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies.' Delight breedeth obedience, and is increased and doubled by it. It is not the delight which an ordinary beholder taketh in a rare piece of painting, merely to admire the art; but the delight which an artist taketh in imitating it, and copying it out. Here in the text it is 'in thy statutes.' A gracious heart is alike affected with the rule as the promise; not only with discoveries of grace, but discoveries of duty.

Now thus it must be ordinarily.

1. The duties of every day must be carried on with delight. This must be our divertisement, and the refreshment of our other labours, that when tired out with the incumbrances of the world, we may look upon reading, meditating, hearing, as our recreation, and the salt and solace of our lives, that other things may go down the better. The labours of the mind do relieve those of the body, and those of the body those of the mind. Ainsworth saith, the word in the text signifieth, 'I will solace and recreate myself;' and Ps. i. 2, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in that law doth he exercise himself day and night,' as was before cited.

2. Especially upon the Lord's day: Isa. lviii. 13, 'Thou shalt call the sabbath a delight;' *call* it so, that is, *account* it so. When our whole time is to be parted into meditation, and prayer, and hearing, and conference, then it is our advantage to lie in the bosom of God all the day long. A bell is kept up with less difficulty when it is once raised; and when the heart is once got up, it is the better kept up in a holy delight in God.

The reasons of it are two—

1. The word of God deserveth it.
2. This delight will be of great use to them.

First, The word of God deserveth it.

1. In regard to the author, they delight in it for the author's sake, because it is the signification of his mind; as a letter from a beloved friend is very welcome to us. Aristotle, mentioning the causes of delight, saith (Rhet. i. cap. 11), 'Οι ἐρῶντες, καὶ διαλεγόμενοι, καὶ γράφοντες, καὶ ποιῶντες αἰεὶ τὸ περὶ τοῦ ἐρωμένου χαίρουσιν—lovers are mightily pleased when they hear anything of the party beloved, or receive anything from them, a letter or a token. The word is God's epistle and love-letter to ourselves; it is the more welcome for his sake. The contrary God complaineth of: Hosea viii. 12, 'I have written to them the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.' God is the author, whosoever be the penman; it is a writing from him to us. Now, to be strangers to it, or little conversant about it, argueth some contempt of God; as to slight the letter of a friend sheweth little esteem of the writer. But now the saints put it into their bosoms, view it with delight, it is God's epistle.

2. In regard of its own excellency, in three respects; it is—

[1.] Their direction.

[2.] Their support.

[3.] Their charter.

[1.] It is their direction; it is 'a light that shines in a dark place,' 2 Peter i. 19. The world is a dark place, beset with dangers, and ever and anon we are apt to stumble into the pit of destruction, without taking heed to this light. The word discovereth to them evils, that they may see them, repent of them, forsake them; and sheweth us our ready way to heaven, that we may walk therein. It discovereth the greatest dangers, and pointeth out the surest way to safety and peace. They are called true laws and good statutes, Neh. ix. 13, to show the full proportion that they bear to the soul. *Verum* and *bonum*,—truth and goodness, are proper for our most eminent faculties, the understanding and will. It doth a man's heart good to study these statutes. A child of God, that seeth others stumble and fall, how may he stand and bless God for the direction of the word, that God hath given him counsel in his reins, that he hath a clue to lead him out of those labyrinths in which others have lost their way, and know not how to escape!

[2.] It is their support. The word is *κοῖνον ἰατρεῖον*, as Basil expresseth it. It is God's shop, from whence they fetch all their cordials in a time of fainting, and so are freed from those fears and discontents and despairing thoughts under which others languish: Ps. cxix. 50, 'This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath

quickened me.' When a believer is damped with trouble, and even dead at heart, a promise will revive him again: ver. 92, 'Unless thy law had been my delight, I had perished in my affliction.' And many such like experiences the saints have had. The worth of the word is best known in an evil time. One promise in the word of God doth bear up the heart more than all the arguings and discourses of men, though never so excellent. In time of temptation, in the hour of death, oh, what a reviving is one word of God's mouth!

[3.] It is their charter, that which they have to show for their everlasting hopes. There we have promises of eternal joy and blessedness under the greatest assurance, and this makes way for strong consolation, Heb. vi. 18. A man that hath a clear evidence to show for a fair inheritance, it is not irksome to hear it read, or to look over it now and then, as a covetous man is pleased to look into his bills and bonds which he has under hand and seal.

Secondly, This delight will be of great use to them.

1. To draw us off from carnal vanities. We have another delight, and the strength of the soul runneth out in another way; there will not be such room for worldly affections. As fear is cured with fear, the fear of men with the fear of God, so is delight by delight; delight in God's statutes is the cure of delight in worldly things. Love cannot lie idle, it must be occupied one way or another; either carried out to the contentments of the flesh, or else to holy things. Now, if you can find a more noble delight, there is a check upon that which is carnal: Ps. cxix. 37, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.' The enlargement of the heart straitens the flesh.

2. It will take off the tediousness of religious exercises. What we delight in is not irksome. In hunting, fowling, and fishing, though there be as much labour as in our ordinary employments, yet we count the toil nothing because of the delight in them. We are very apt to be weary of well-doing, and to tire in a holy course; but now, when it is our delight, it goeth on the more easily. In one sense we must make religion our business, in another, our recreation; our work to prevent slackness, our recreation to prevent tediousness; it is not a task, but a pleasure.

*Use 1.* This informeth us of the ill choice that many men make of their delights and recreations; they must have cards and dice and foolish mirth to pass away the time, or else idle stories and vain romances. A Christian is everywhere like himself; he showeth himself a Christian in his recreations as well as his business. *Custæ deliciarum sunt scripture tuæ*, saith Austin—Lord, my chaste delights are thy Holy Scriptures. If we were as we should be, it would be our recreation to understand our duty, to contemplate the way of reconciliation to God by Christ, and to take a view of our everlasting hopes. Were we seriously persuaded of the benefits which men have by the word, that there is a sure direction to resolve our doubts and our scruples, and the offers of a pardon and a glorious estate by Christ, what need a Christian any other recreation? Will not the sense of God's love and the hopes of heaven make us merry enough? Indeed, because of the weariness of the flesh, we need temporal refreshments;

but here should be our great delight, 'I will solace or recreate myself in thy statutes.'

*Use 2.* Caution to us to fix our delight aright.

1. It is a considerable affection. All the affections depend upon pleasure or pain, delight or grief—the one is proper to the body, the other to the soul—which grow from the contentment or distaste which we receive from the divers objects which we meet with. If we love, it is for that we find a sweetness in the object beloved; if we hate, we apprehend a trouble in what we hate; if we hope, we promise ourselves a happiness or satisfaction in the possession of the thing hoped for: if we despair, it is because the thing cannot be obtained from which our contentment would arise. Desire is of some good which we judge pleasing. By fear and flight we shun things which we apprehend would breed us vexation. So that, in effect, delight sets all the other affections a-work.

2. It is a choice affection, more proper to ruination than use, and therefore not for the means so much as end, and so reserved for God, who is the last end. There are *fruenta* and *utenda*, God and heavenly things to be enjoyed, but earthly things to be used: for means, those that are in the nearest vicinity to the end, as the law of God and grace: earthly things are to be used with a kind of indifferency, and therefore should have little of our joy; but our solid complacency must be in God, next in the things of God, his law and grace, which are means in the nearest vicinity with our end: Ps. xxxvii. 4, 'Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart;' Phil. iv. 4, 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.'

3. Delight, if not right set, of all the affections, is apt to degenerate. We have a liberty to delight in earthly things; the affection is allowed, the excess is forbidden. Thou mayest delight in the wife of thy youth, in thy children, estate, in the provisions heaped upon thee by the indulgence of God's providence. Pleasure is the sauce of life, to better digest our sorrows. It is allowed us, but it must be well guarded. We are most apt to surfeit of pleasant things, and to miscarry by sweet affections. Sorrow is afflictive and painful, and will in time wear away of itself. Pleasure is ingrained in our natures, born and bred with us; and therefore, though we may delight in the moderate use of the refreshments of the present life, in estate, honour, reputation, yet we should take heed of excess, that our hearts be not overjoyed, and too much taken up about these things. Carnal joy is the drunkenness of the mind; it besotteth us, maketh us unmindful of God, weakens our esteem of his favour and blessing; it chaineth us to present things. Pleasure is the great witch and sorceress that enchants with the love of the world, maketh us unmindful of the country whence we came, and whither we are going; therefore we should be jealous of our delight, and how we bestow it.

*Use 3.* To exhort us to this delight in God's statutes, or this spiritual rejoicing.

1. Here is no danger of exceeding; the greatest excesses here are most praiseworthy. In other things we must exercise it with jealousy, feed with fear, rejoice as if we rejoiced not. A man may easily go beyond his bounds when he rejoiceth in the creature; but here enlarge

thy heart as much as is possible, and take thy fill of pleasure: Cant. v. 1, 'Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.' This is *ebrietas quæ nos castos facit*—chaste flagons: Eph. v. 18, 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be ye filled with the Spirit.'

2. We shall never be ashamed of these joys: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience,' &c. All carnal joys have a turpitude affixed to them, and therefore affect to lie hid under a veil of secrecy. The world would cry shame of him that would say of his bags or his dishes, Here is my joy. As much as men affect these things, yet they desire to conceal them from the knowledge of others.

3. We shall never be weary of these joys. The delights of the senses become nauseous and troublesome; our natural dispositions become weary and importunate; a man must have shift and change, pleasures refreshed with other pleasures. But these delights add perfection to nature; therefore, when fully enjoyed, they delight most. A good conscience is a continual feast, a dish we are never weary of. The blessed spirits in heaven are never weary of beholding the face of God. God is new and fresh every moment to them. The contemplation of such excellent objects doth not overcharge and weaken the spirits, but doth raise and fortify them. It is true, the corporeal powers being weak, may be tired in such an employment, as much reading is a weariness to the flesh; but the object doth not grow distasteful, as in carnal things.

How shall we get it?

1. Get a suitableness to the word. Every man's delights are as his principles: Rom. viii. 5, 'They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit.' A man is much discovered by his savour and relish of things. All creatures must have suitable food. There must be a suitableness between the faculty and the object; spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

2. Be in a condition to delight in the word. A guilty soul readeth its own doom there; it revealeth themselves to themselves, accuseth and condemneth them. As Ahab said of Micaiah, 'He prophesieth evil against me,' and therefore could not endure to hear him: John iii. 20, 'Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reprovèd.'

3. Purge the heart from carnal distempers, lust, envy, covetousness, love of pleasures; these are diseases that need other diet than the word. Such persons must have other solaces; they cater for the flesh, to please the senses. An earthly heart will not delight in spiritual things.

*Doct.* It standeth God's children upon to see that they do not forget the word.

1. What is it to forget the word? A man may remember or forget two ways—notionally and affectively.

[1.] Notionally, when the notions of things formerly known are either altogether or in part worn out: James i. 25, 'He is like one that looks at his natural face in a glass, but goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of person he was.'

[2.] Affectively, when, though he still retain the notions, yet he is not answerably affected, nor doth act according thereunto. Thus the butler did not remember Joseph; that is, did not pity him. Thus God is said not to remember the sins of them that repent, when he doth not punish them, and to forget the afflictions of his people, when he doth not deliver them; and we are said to forget God, Ps. cvi. 21, when we do not obey him, and to forget his word when we do not 'remember his commandments to do them,' Ps. ciii. 18. In this place both are intended, the notional and practical remembrance.

2. The reasons why we should not forget his word.

[1.] Meditation will fail else. A barren, lean soul is unfit to enlarge itself in holy thoughts, shall never grow rich in the spiritual understanding: Col. iii. 16, 'Let the word of God dwell in you richly, in all knowledge,' &c. Men of small substance grow rich by continual saving, and holding together what they have gotten; but if they spend it as fast as they get it, they cannot be rich: Luke ii. 19, 'Mary kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart.'

[2.] Delectation will grow cold, unless the memory be rubbed up ever and anon. When they fainted under affliction, the cause is intimated: Heb. xii. 5, 'Have ye forgotten the exhortation that speaketh unto you as unto children?' Distrust in straits is from the same source: Mark viii. 17, 'They remembered not the miracle of the loaves, for their hearts were hardened. Ye see and hear, and do not remember. David was under great discomfort till he 'remembered the years of the right hand of the Most High,' Ps. lxxvii. 10; Lam. iii. 21, 'This I recall to mind, therefore I have hope.'

[3.] Practice and conscience of obedience will grow more remiss. Nothing keepeth the heart in a holy tenderness so much as a presence of the truth; and when we can bring our knowledge to act, and have it for our use upon all occasions, it urgeth us to practice: James i. 25, being 'not a forgetful hearer, but a doer.' Most of our sins are sins of forgetfulness and incogitancy. Peter would never have been so bold and daring, and done what he did, if he had remembered Christ's prediction. The text saith, Luke xxii. 61, 'When he remembered, he wept bitterly.' A bad memory is the occasion of much mischief to the soul, when we do not call truths to mind in their season, and when fit occasion and opportunity is offered. Memory is a handmaid to understanding and conscience, and keeps truths, and brings them forth when called for.

*Use* is to press us to caution. Let us not forget the word. Helps to memory are:—

1. Attention. Men remember what they heed and regard: Prov. iv. 21, 'Attend to my sayings; keep them in the midst of thy heart.' Where there is attention, there will be retention. Oh! lay up truths with much earnestness and care. Sensitive memory is seated in the hinder part of the head, as one would say in a chamber backward, from the noise of the street. Now, oh! lay up truth safe, and lay it out whenever you have need. But rational memory lieth near the understanding and conscience, in the midst of thine heart. Reverence in the admission of the word helps us in the keeping of it: Heb. ii. 1, 'Let us take heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time they slip from



us.' If we did receive it with more heed, we would retain it with more constancy; lay them up, keep them choicely.

2. Affection, that is a great friend to memory. What we esteem most we best remember. *Omnia quæ curant senes meminere*—an old man will not forget where he laid his bag of gold. Delight and love will renew and revive the object upon our thoughts. Here in the text we have this truth asserted, 'I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.' Affection to truths cometh from the application. In a public edict a man will be sure to carry away what is proper to his case.

3. Meditation. We must be often viewing and meditating of what we have laid up in the memory. It availeth not to the health of the body to eat much, but to digest what is eaten. Tumultuary reading and hearing, without meditation, is like greedy swallowing much meat. When little is thought on, it doth not turn to profit. This concocteth and digesteth what we have heard. The more a thing is revolved in the mind, the deeper impression it maketh.

4. Beware of inuring the mind to vain thoughts; for this distracts it, and hindereth the impression of things upon it. The face is not seen in running waters; nor can things be written in the memory, unless the mind be close and fixed. Lead is capable of engraving, because it is firm and solid; but quicksilver, because it is fluid, will not admit it. An inconsistent, wandering mind reapeth little fruit from what is read or heard.

5. Order is a help to memory. Heads of doctrine are as cells wherein to bestow all things that are heard from the word. He that is well instructed in the principles of religion will most easily and firmly remember divine truths. *Methodus est catena memorie*, to link truths one to another, that we may consider them in their proportion.

6. Get a lively sense of what you hear or read, and you will remember it by a good token: Ps. cxix. 93, 'I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me.' They that are quickened by a sermon will never forget such a sermon.

7. Holy conference. The speaking often of good things keeps them in the heart; and the keeping of them there causeth us to speak to those that are about.

8. Get the memory sanctified, as well as other faculties, and pray for the Spirit; for that faculty is corrupted as well as others.

## SERMON XVIII.

*Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.*—VER. 17.

In the former part we heard of the virtue and excellency of the word, and therefore how much the saints desire to understand it, meditate of it, speak of it, and transfer it into their practice. Now, whosoever will resolve upon such a course, will necessarily be put upon prayer; for