

unnatural designs. When once the devil hath a man upon the hip, when engaged in an evil design, it is hard to stop; pride then digging pits, and then casting off God's law; and then he never cares whether to please or displease, honour or dishonour God, is not troubled with such kind of thoughts.

4. Take heed how you engage against God's people, or dig pits for them that fear the Lord. God's interest usually goeth along with them: Isa. viii. 9, 10, 'Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken to pieces: take counsel together, and it shall come to nought.' As the captain's servant said, 'Take heed what ye do, for this man is a Roman.' So these men are children of God, he is their patron and protector; God is interested in their protection; they are little ones, but they have a great God, Mat. xviii. 10. Therefore take heed of having any interest opposite to the strict people of God, for this is but to ruin yourselves.

SERMON XCIII.

For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.—VER. 89.

THESE words are usually rendered as making but one proposition; but the accent *almah* sheweth there are two branches, the one asserting the eternity of God, the other the constancy and permanency of his word. Thus—(1.) 'For ever art thou, O Lord;' (2.) 'Thy word is settled in the heavens.' So the Syriac version readeth it; and Geierus, and after him others, prove and approve this reading. And so this verse and the following do the better correspond one with another, if we observe beginning and ending, as 'Thou art for ever, O Lord,' and 'Thy faithfulness unto all generations,' which are exactly parallel. And then the last clauses, 'Thy word is settled in the heavens,' 'Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.' And implieth, as God is eternal, so is his word, and hath an emblem and fit representation both in heaven and in earth: in heaven, in the constant motion of the heavenly bodies; in earth, in the consistency and permanency thereof; that as his word doth stand fast in heaven, so doth his faithfulness on earth, where the afflictions of the godly seem to contradict it.

First, Of the first clause, 'Thou art for ever, O Jehovah.'

1. That Jehovah is the one, only, eternal, and everlasting God. What eternity is passeth our skill exactly to define. As we understand it, it is the duration of a being that is without beginning or end. Duration is a continual tract of being; and eternal duration implieth an immutable and unterminable abode in being. So it is here.

[1.] It is an infinite, unterminable duration, without beginning or ending: Ps. xc. 2, 'From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.' God never was nothing, never shall be nothing. All the generations past were, but now are not. We heretofore were not, but now are. God is the beginning and end of all things, yet himself without beginning or end. He had an infinite, incomprehensible being before

any part of the world was framed, and will remain the same still when the world shall be no more. The soul, in viewing God, is enclosed between infiniteness before and infiniteness behind, and which way soever it looketh it seeth infiniteness round about it.

[2.] Immutable; as without beginning and end, so without any change: Ps. cii. 25-27, 'Of old thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands: they shall perish, but thou shalt endure, yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.' God from the mount of eternity beholdeth all the successions and changes of the creature; but he is not changed, his nature is one and the same from everlasting to everlasting. We change every day; we are not that to-day which we were yesterday; we have left some part of our life behind us, which is gone, and cannot be recovered; and our duration lesseneth every day; but God abideth for ever one and the same, though all things be in continual flux and motion about him.

2. Now, that God is eternal I shall prove by scripture and reason.

[1.] By scripture: Gen. xxi. 33, 'Abraham called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.' The gods of the nations were upstart gods, but lately found out and soon destroyed; but he is the eternal God, who ever was, and is, and ever will be: Job xxxvi. 26, 'Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out.' He speaketh of God's eternity in such terms as man is capable of; for God's being is not to be measured by days and years, but so we express it for our understanding, for his duration is far above our reach and capacity. So Isa. lvii. 15, God is said to 'inhabit eternity.' Thus the scripture propounds God's eternity as matter of our faith, reverence, and admiration.

[2.] By reason, because the perfection of the first cause requireth that his duration should be without beginning or ending, or, which is all one, eternal. He is *Jehovah*, that hath his being from himself, and all other things have their being after him and from him. Something must be eternal, or else there would be nothing made. It is certain that if there had been a time when nothing was, there never would be anything, for something cannot come out of nothing; therefore we must stop in some first cause and eternal being.

3. That eternity belongeth to God is to be seen in all his attributes; for if God be eternal, his wisdom, power, and goodness are eternal also.

[1.] His wisdom is eternal, for all things are present to the knowledge of God. Things come to our knowledge successively, some before, and some after. We see and know things according to their duration and existence. We compute by days and years, yesterday, to-morrow, last year, and next year. One generation passeth and another cometh, but in God's understanding there is no succession of before and after: 'Known to God are all his works from the beginning,' Acts xv. 18. God, that doth all things in time, knew them all before time, otherwise his knowledge was not infinite and eternal; they are all present to his understanding. Hence is that expression: 2 Peter iii. 8, 'One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' All those differences of duration, which to the

creatures are longer or shorter, are all alike to God; for all things are constantly present to God, and under his view and prospect. Indeed the Lord is pleased to condescend to our shallow capacities, and to give us leave to express his duration in our own terms, whilst he calleth himself 'Yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' Heb. xiii. 8; and Rev. i. 4, 'From him which is, which was, and which is to come.' Yet in proper speaking, God always is. I AM is his name; and all things to him are present, either past, present, or to come. Time hath no succession to him: he beholdeth at once what is not at once, but at several times; there is nothing past to him, to come to him, but all present. He knoweth the end of all things before he giveth them a beginning.

[2.] His power is eternal; therefore it is said, Rom. i. 20, that his eternal power and godhead is clearly understood from the creation of the world, and seen in the things that are made. How else could so many things be educed out of nothing, and still kept from returning into their original nothing, if there were not an infinite and eternal power then and still at work? So Isa. xxvi. 4, 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' We may depend upon him, for his arm is never dried up, nor doth his strength fail; there is no wrinkle upon the brow of eternity. God is where he was at first; he continueth for ever a God of infinite power, able to save those that trust in him.

[3.] His goodness and mercy are eternal: Ps. cxxxvi., it is often repeated, 'For the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever.' It is true *a parte ante*—his mercy did not begin of late, but was towards us before we or the world were; from all eternity we were thought upon, that he might do us good himself. It is said, 'With an everlasting love have I loved thee, and therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn thee,' Jer. xxxi. 3. Whomsoever God draweth to himself in time, he loved them before all time. And *a parte post* it holdeth good; his love and affection continueth the same, and shall do for ever; he is not weary of doing good, nor is his mercy spent. You have both, Ps. ciii. 17, 'The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.' The mercy was decreed and prepared before the beginning of the world, and we shall have the fruits and effects of it when the world shall be no more. It was from everlasting; for God, foreseeing the fall of Adam, provided us a remedy in Christ; and having all lapsed in his prospect and view, did out of his free love choose some, whilst others are passed by, to life and salvation by Christ. That God did from eternity decree and purpose this is manifest, because he doth in time effect it, otherwise he should not 'work all things according to the counsel of his will,' Eph. i. 11, or else his will would be mutable, willing that in time which he willed not from eternity; whereas in him there is no variableness or shadow of turning. And that his mercy is to everlasting appeareth because he doth in time convert and sanctify them, and so bring them to glory and blessedness; for the eternal God will make his people eternally happy with himself.

4. That God showeth himself as an eternal being, both as a governor and benefactor.

[1.] As a governor. His eternity is seen in his government, in

threatening eternal misery to the wicked, and appointing eternal happiness to the godly: Mat. xxv. 46, 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life everlasting.' The joys of the blessed are everlasting; there shall never be a change of nor interruption in their happiness; but after millions of years they are to continue in this life as if it were the first moment. Thy crown will be thy crown for ever; thy kingdom thy kingdom for ever; this glory will be thy glory for ever; thy God will be thy God, and thy Christ, for ever. We affect the continuance of this life, though it be a life of pain and misery: 'Skin for skin, and all a man hath, he will give for his life.' Oh, how much more valuable should this eternal life be, which is a life of uninterrupted joy and felicity! On the other side, the punishment is everlasting, the loss is eternal, the wicked are everlastingly deprived of the favour of God. The disciples wept when Paul said, 'Ye shall see my face no more.' Oh, how much more terrible will it be to be banished everlastingly out of God's presence! Mat. xxv. 41. Besides, the pain will be eternal, as well as the loss. This worm never dieth, this fire shall never be quenched, Mark ix. 44. Neither heaven nor hell hath any period or end, either of them are eternal. Now this way God ruleth and governeth the creature, as becoming his infinite and eternal majesty. The laws of kings and parliaments can reach no further than some temporal punishment; their highest pain is the killing of the body; their highest reward is some vanishing and fading honour, or perishing riches; but God's law concerneth our everlasting estate, our eternal well or ill-being; eternal life or eternal death is wrapped up in these commandments. These are rewards suitable to the eternal majesty of the lawgiver; and if thou do evil there is an eternal loss of heaven, and an eternal sense of the wrath of God. If you believe and obey the gospel there is eternal salvation provided for you; for Christ is 'the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him,' Heb. v. 9.

[2.] As a benefactor he showeth himself also an eternal being. There is a double beneficial goodness of God—common and special. His common goodness runneth in the channel of creation and common providence; his special goodness in the channel of redemption and renovation by Christ.

(1.) He is a benefactor to all men; he hath given them an immortal spirit that shall abide for evermore: Eccles. xii. 7, 'The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God that gave it.' There is an immortal soul that dwelleth in a mortal body. The body was made of corruptible principles, was dust in its composition. It is true, God can annihilate it; but the soul, as it is a spirit, hath no corruptible principles in it; it is a thing that cannot be killed or destroyed by any created power. Now this divine spark, which cannot be quenched, is a pledge and effect of God's eternity; for he that giveth immortality certainly is immortal himself: nothing can give what it hath not. And besides, because our souls are immersed and sunk into matter, and forget their divine original, therefore God by the blessings of his providence seeks to raise them up to look after this supreme and spiritual being, and giveth us all kind of comforts and mercies, whose creatures we are, 'that we may seek the Lord, if haply

we may feel after him, and find him,' Acts xvii. 27; that we may own him as the first cause or father of lights, by whom this spark was kindled in us; or seek him as the chief good, in whom alone this restless soul of ours can find contentment and satisfaction.

(2.) He is a benefactor in a way of grace and recovery by Christ. This also sets forth his eternity. The first rise and bottom cause of all this grace and favour that stirred and set all the causes on work which concurred to it, was God's everlasting love, John iii. 16. And Christ saith, Prov. viii. 31, 'I was set up from everlasting;' and this 'grace was given us in Christ before the world began,' 2 Tim. i. 9. Before the foundation of the world was laid this business was transacted with Christ for our benefit. And then the way how it was brought about, it was by an everlasting redemption, Heb. ix. 12, of an eternal force, value, and efficacy. And the grace wrought in us; it is called 'incorruptible seed,' 1 Peter i. 23. There is an eternal principle in our hearts, and that is the reason why a believer is so often said to have eternal life abiding in him, because of the beginning, seed, and principle of it that is sown in his heart; and the comfort and fruit of it that we have here is called 'everlasting consolation,' 2 Thes. ii. 16, 'He hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope, through grace.' It is not bottomed on any poor fading thing, but on matters of an eternal duration; the happiness itself is the eternal fruition of the ever-blessed God: 1 Thes. iv. 17, 'We shall be ever with the Lord.' So that we are made eternal also both in body and soul; whence you see how abundantly God discovereth his eternal being, in all his gifts and graces by Christ.

5. When the creatures are spoken of as eternal, it must be understood; it is a communicated, dependent, half eternity, and so no derogation to this perfection which is proper to God.

[1.] It is communicated to us, for originally God only hath immortality, 1 Tim. vi. 16. We have it by derivation, God hath it originally in himself and from himself. God dispenseth and measureth out the duration and continuance of all other things, their races and stages, when they shall begin and when they shall end. And that immortality which the angels and the souls of men have is ascribed to us by participation; we have it from God, because he was pleased to give it to us.

[2.] It is a dependent eternity, for every moment we depend upon God; if he take away his Spirit we are gone, man or angel. We assert the immortality of the soul because it hath not the principles of corruption in it as the body hath; but yet we cannot, must not cut off the dependence upon the first cause and fountain of being. In his hand is the breath of all living, and he is often called 'the God of your life,' and 'the God of the spirits of all flesh.'

[3.] It is but a half eternity: we sometimes were not, God is from everlasting to everlasting; but we are appointed to eternal life, and time was when we lay in the womb of nothing. We are but of yesterday, poor upstarts, that had but an existence and a new being given us of God; if he will lengthen it out, and continue it to all eternity, it is not such an eternity as he hath, but a half eternity; not an eternity without beginning, but only without ending.

6. This eternity of God is not seriously and sufficiently enough thought of and improved, till it lessen all other things in our opinion and estimation of them and affection to them. Two things should especially be lessened—the time we spend in the world, and the things that we enjoy in the world.

[1.] The time we spend in the world. Alas! what is this to God's eternity! Ps. xxxix. 5, 'Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, and mine age is nothing before thee.' Whether our days be spent in prosperity or adversity they are but short, a hand-breadth, a mere nothing, compared with God's eternity: Ps. cx. 4, 'A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.' A thousand years, compared to eternity, are but as a drop spilt and left in the ocean, or as time insensibly past over in sleep. Forty, fifty, or seventy years seemeth a great time with us; yet with God, who is infinite, ten thousand years is no considerable space, but a very short and small duration.

[2.] As time, so the things of the world: 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' They are short as to continuance and use. As to continuance, he calleth the honours and delight of Pharaoh's court, Heb. xi. 25, 'The pleasures of sin for a season.' Whatsoever is temporal a man may see the end of it. Be it evil: a man in the deep waters is not discouraged as long as he can see banks; but in eternity there are neither banks nor bottom. If good: Ps. cxix. 96, 'I have seen an end of all perfection.' The most shining glory will shortly be burnt out to a snuff; it wastes every day. Eternity maketh good things infinitely good, and evil things infinitely evil. If it be temporal, whatever paineth us is but a flea-bite to eternal torments. Whatever pleaseth or delights, it is but a may-game to eternal joys. So for use too, it is but for a season, Deut. xxiii. 24; the law gave an indulgence to eat of his neighbours' grapes for refreshment; 'But thou shalt not put any in thy vessel:' 1 Tim. vi. 7, 'For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.' The manna was useful and refreshing when used in the day, but if kept all night it perished and was useless; it was useful in the wilderness, but ceased when they came to Canaan.

The uses are many.

Use 1. First, Comfort to the godly, for their own particular. He is an eternal God that ordereth and guideth all things, that he may bring them to their eternal felicity, and will in time admit them into it: Ps. xlviii. 14, 'For this God is our God for ever and ever, and he will be our guide even unto death.' After death he will be their God still; death doth not put an end to this relation; for God is Abraham's God when he is dead, Mat. xxii. 32. God is the same still, both in himself and to those that believe in him: he will constantly guide them all the days of their life, and after death receive us to the everlasting enjoyment of himself, and revive our dust. Oh, what a blessedness is this, to have an interest in such an eternal God! Secondly, As to the community and society to which they do belong. God's eternity is the church's stability; and so it is urged in scripture: Mal. iii. 6, 'For I am the Lord; I change not: therefore ye sons of

Jacob are not consumed;’ Ps. cii. 27, 28, ‘Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end; the children of thy servants shall continue.’ So when the flourishing of the wicked is spoken of, when they spring as grass: Ps. xcii. 8, ‘But thou, O Lord, art most high for evermore.’ If they be high, God is higher, and they are but upstarts to him; their power is of a late rise and short continuance. So Ps. xciii. 2, ‘Thy throne is established of old; thou art from everlasting.’ God’s throne is as eternal as his being. So Lam. iii. 17, ‘Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever, and thy throne from generation to generation.’ Is the life of thy enemies long? God endureth for ever. Is their power great? It is but dependent. God had power before them, and will have power when they shall be no more.

Use 2. Terror to the wicked: Heb. x. 31, ‘It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.’ They may outlive other enemies, but they cannot outlive God, who abideth for ever, to avenge his quarrel against them. And judge you if his controversy against them be not just, since they are such impious fools and brutes as that they prefer the creature before the creator, and choose temporal things rather than everlasting, and prefer earth before heaven, and the satisfaction of their bodily lusts before the saving of their souls. Can you blame God of any injustice in dooming them to everlasting misery? What part of the punishment would you have relaxed? the loss, or the pain? The loss is double—of God’s favour or their natural comforts. Would you have God admit those to the sight and everlasting fruition of himself who never cared for him? Or return again to their natural comforts, that they may eternally run riot with them, or abuse them to an occasion of the flesh? Or is it the pain? Would you have God take off that when the sin and impenitent obstinacy doth still continue, since they preferred a temporal good before that which is eternal, and would ‘sell their birthright for one morsel of meat’? Heb. xii. 16. How just is it for God to make them everlastingly to lie under the fruits and effects of their own evil choice!

Use 3. To press us to seek after the everlasting fruition of this blessed and ever-glorious God, because many live as if they had never heard of things eternal; most live as if they did not believe any such thing; the best do not improve those things as they ought: therefore I shall a little insist upon a quickening exhortation, to stir you up to seek an eternal happiness in God.

1. As we are reasonable creatures, we were made for eternity; for God hath given us an immortal spirit, and there is no proportion between an immortal soul and temporal things. It cannot be content with anything that shall have an end, for then we may survive our happiness. If we had souls that would perish, it would be more excusable to look after things that perish. What will you do when your souls shall be turned out of doors, when ye fail? Luke xvi. 9. To what region will the poor, shiftless, harbourless soul betake itself when you die? All your thoughts that concern the present world perish; and if you did perish too, it were no such great matter. But you shall live; and what will you have to comfort yourselves if you have not an interest in the eternal God? In whose hands will you be if you have slighted him while you were upon earth, and the eternal happiness he

offereth to us, and could not find enough in God and his eternal salvation to take off your hearts from the pleasures and vanities of the world? Can you expect that he will favour you and be kind to you?

2. Eternity is made known to us Christians, and clearly set before us in the doctrine of the gospel: 2 Tim. i. 10. 'He hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.' Nature hath but guesses at it, the law but shadows; but here it is clearly, certainly, and fully revealed. You know that you have an eternal God to please, and an infinite and eternal reward to expect. The whole drift of our religion is to call us off from time to eternity, from this world to a better. Christ came not to settle us here in a state of prosperity, nor to make this world our rest and portion, but to draw us up to God and heaven.

3. The same religion showeth that we are already involved in an eternal misery, and stand under a sentence binding us over to the curse and everlasting wrath of God: John iii. 18, 'He that believeth not is condemned already: and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness more than light, because their deeds are evil.' God hath offered life and immortality to them who have so miserably lost it, and involved their souls in eternal death. Therefore, if we know what it is to be liable to the wrath of an eternal God, and to be interested in the hopes of eternal glory, we should awaken and be more serious in a business of such concernment.

4. You will shortly be summoned to give an account, Luke xvi. 2. You have received so much from me, such riches, honours, parts, sufficiencies, such invitations to draw you home to me, what will you answer? Nay; there is not only a little time between you and judgment, but a little time between you and execution; nothing but the slender thread of a frail life, which is soon fretted asunder. And will you, can you sleep in sin so near eternity, and laugh and dance over the brink of hell? You cannot soon enough flee from wrath to come.

5. Consider what poor deluded wretches, who are in that everlasting estate, would give, if they might be trusted with a little time again, that they might provide for eternity. How happy would they think themselves if God would but try them once more! If careless creatures would but anticipate the thoughts of another world, how soon would they discern their mistake! How miserably will you bewail yourselves when you have lost eternity for poor temporal trifles! What comfort will it be to you that you have been merry here, lived in pomp and ease, when you must endure the wrath of God for evermore, and wish for any allay of your torments? Luke xvi. 24, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.' It is better to believe than try; provide against it, than try.

6. If you be Christians indeed, you have not the spirit of this world. Christianity, as it is acted by us, is but the exercise of faith, hope, and love. Now, the eternal fruition of God is the matter that all these graces are conversant about. Faith believeth that there is an eternal being, and that our happiness lieth in the fruition of him, Heb. xi. 6. Love is that which levelleth and directeth all our actions to this blessed end, that we may see God and enjoy him as our portion and felicity: Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none

upon earth I desire beside thee.' Our desires are after him, our delights in him; it is our work to please him; our happiness to enjoy him. The truth of his eternal being is the object of our faith; so the apprehension of him as our chief good and felicity is the object of our love, so as he is capable of being enjoyed; and our participated eternity is the object of our faith: this is the end of all our desires and labours, and the expectation of this fortieth us against all the difficulties of our pilgrimage, and so directeth us what to mind, be, and do: 2 Cor. v. 9, 'Therefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of the Lord.'

Directions what we shall do.

Direct. 1. Meditate often and seriously of eternity. There is a great deal of profit gotten by this meditation; nothing doth more promote the great ends of the gospel than this meditation.

1. For Christ. Nothing makes Christ precious but serious thoughts of eternity, he being the only means to deliver us from wrath to come, which is the great evil of the other state, and procure for us the eternal enjoyment of God, which is the good of that estate: Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'He is a sun and a shield, and no good thing will he withhold from them that live uprightly.' You can make a shift without Christ in this world, you are by ordinary means well provided against the evils of this life, and well fortified with the good things thereof; but in death, Christ will be to thee gain and advantage.

2. It would promote the great change. What will make a proud man humble, a vain man serious, a covetous worldling heavenly, a wicked man a good man? Let him think of eternity, where only the humble, the heavenly, are favoured and accepted, 2 Cor. iii. 11.

3. What would check temptations, either from the pleasures, riches, or honours of the world? These are not eternal riches, nor eternal pleasures, nor eternal honours; transitory things are not our business, nor our scope, Heb. xi. 25.

4. What would quicken diligence, and put life into our endeavours but the meditation of eternity? Everything should be laboured for that hath an everlastingness in it; the travail of your souls should be laid out upon those things: Isa. lv. 2, 'Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfies not?' So John vi. 27, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but that which endureth to life everlasting.' Surely serious diligence is necessary. Shall I trifle away that time which I am to improve for eternity?

Direct. 2. Let the enjoyment of an eternal God be your end and scope: 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not to things which are seen, but to things that are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' When you have set eternal things before you, then make your choice. On the one side there are eternal joys, on the other eternal torments. Now vain pleasures lead to the one, solid godliness to the other. By the neglect of God you run the hazard of a miserable eternity. By the choice of God for your Lord and portion, you get an interest in a blessed eternity: only let me warn you—

1. To choose end and means together: Mat. vii. 13, 14, 'Enter ye

in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it.' They must be coupled; both quicken each other, the intention of the end quickens to a diligent pursuit and an earnest use of means; and the use of means will sooner give you to understand what your condition will be than a bare reflection upon the end.

2. Do not confound principal and subordinate means, so as one should jostle out the other. The primary means of going to the Father is Christ: John xiv. 6, 'Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.' The secondary means is holiness: Heb. xii. 14, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'

Direct. 3. Be resolutely true to your end, which is the enjoyment of God, and that will quicken you the more, and direct you; for the end is both our measure and our motive. In short, do all things from eternal principles to eternal ends. The eternal principle is the grace of the Spirit; the eternal end is the pleasing, glorifying, and enjoying of God: Phil. i. 11, 'Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God.' Actions carried on from eternal principles, according to an eternal rule, for an eternal end, cannot miscarry.

SERMON XCIV.

Thy word is settled in heaven.—VER. 89.

THIS will bear two senses—(1.) Relating to God's decree, made in heaven; (2.) An emblem of its constancy, is in heaven.

1. It may be referred to God's decree, 'Thy word is settled in heaven,' in thy mind and will. The words of temporal kings are on earth, and therefore their laws and edicts are subject to many changes, and are often revoked and altered, either by themselves or by their successors; but the word of God is above all changes and alterations, as being decreed in heaven. It is preached on earth, believed on earth, fulfilled on earth; but decreed in heaven, fixed and settled there by God's unalterable purpose and will.

2. That in heaven there is an emblem of it. It is usual in scripture to set forth the stability and constancy of God's word by this similitude; as Ps. lxxxix. 2, 'Mercy shall be built up for ever, thy faithfulness hast thou established in the very heavens.' So when it is compared with the covenant of day and night: Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21, 'Thus saith the Lord, If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, that there should not be day and night in their seasons; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant.' So Jer. xxxi. 35-37. This sense I incline to, because in the next verse it is compared with the stability of the earth. Well, then, his word is settled in heaven, partly because the heavens stand fast by the

same word by which they were first made : Gen. i. 3, 6, ' And God said, Let there be light, and there was light ; Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and divide the waters from the waters ; and it was so.' So *Midrash Tillim*. And partly because the being and order of heaven showeth the settledness of God's word, as the heavens were created and settled in a course, which they constantly observe in their motions ; and this duration and equability in the motion is so exact, that men can foresee eclipses long before they happen ; therefore the Psalmist saith, Ps. cxiv. 19, ' The sun knoweth his going down ;' that is, ' keepeth so to the just points of his compass as if he were an intelligent agent, and knew the exact time when to set and rise. Now when we lift up our eyes to heaven, and see how punctually and exactly the order is observed which was once settled by God's will ; even from the beginning of the world to this day no remarkable change hath been observed ; the heavenly bodies keep their tenor and course, and by their constant motions distribute their light and influence to the world, and this from their first creation, and all because he hath said, It shall be so ; in the strength of his word they abide. This continuance of the heavens showeth the permanency of his word.

Doct. That God's word is of an eternal truth and immutable constancy.

By his word is principally meant the gospel covenant. It is said by the prophet Isaiah, chap xl. 8, ' The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever.' And the apostle Peter, quoting and improving the same place, saith, ' The word of God is the gospel preached unto you,' 1 Peter i. 24, 25. And more especially the promise of eternal life ; for that is opposite to the fading glory of the present life, and is the eternal effect of the word of God abiding in our hearts. When all other things fade and decay, this blessed estate, offered in and conveyed by the gospel, will not fail us.

1. I shall give you the reasons.
2. The emblem and representation.
3. The profit and usefulness of this meditation.

First, The reasons. In every promise, that it be certain and firm, three things are required :—

1. That it may be made seriously and heartily, with a purpose to perform it.
2. That he that hath promised continue in his purpose without change of mind.
3. That it be in the power of him that promiseth to perform what he hath so promised. Now of all these things there can be no doubt.

[1.] Certainly God meaneth as he speaketh, when he promiseth to give eternal life to those that believe and obey the gospel. There is no question but he is so minded, when he hath written a book to assure the world of it ; for what need God to court the creature with an imaginary happiness, or to tell them of a glorious estate which he never meant to bestow upon them ? Yea, why should *Amen*, the faithful witness, come from heaven further to assure us of it by his doctrine, die the death to purchase it for us, and afterward rise again,

and enter into that happiness which he spake of, 'That our faith and hope may be in God?' 1 Peter i. 21. Why should he, as soon as he was ascended, give gifts unto men, send forth messengers into the world to preach this doctrine, and give notice of this blessed estate to be had on these terms, and attest it by divers signs and wonders, partly to alarm the drowsy world to regard it, and assure the incredulous world of the truth of this salvation? Heb. ii. 3, 4. Not to believe that God is serious in all this, is to make him a liar indeed, yea, to establish a lie and falsehood with great solemnity.

[2.] That God doth continue his purpose is beyond doubt, if we consider his eternal and unchangeable nature: Mal. iii. 6, 'For I am the Lord; I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed;' and James i. 17, 'With him is neither variableness nor show of turning.' And what should alter his purpose? Doth he meet with anything that he foresaw not, and knew not before? God doth never repent, and call back his grant, that he hath by this act of grace insured eternal happiness to the saints on such terms: 1 Sam. xv. 29, 'For the strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent;' Ps. cx. 4, 'I have sworn, and will not repent: thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck.' Christ is instated in full power of entertaining and blessing his faithful servants, which shall never be retracted. To take off all doubt, he hath given us double assurance—his word and his oath: Heb. vi. 17, 18, 'God being willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge,' &c. God hath ever been tender of his word; above all that is famed or believed of God, this is most conspicuous: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' Now this needed not, for an oath is interposed in a doubtful matter; but it showeth God's extraordinary care for our satisfaction; his good-will is seen in the promise, his solicitude in the oath. In short, God would never be so fast bound, but that he doth continue his purpose.

[3.] That he is able to perform it: Mat. xix. 26, 'With God all things are possible;' Rom. iv. 21, 'Being fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform;' Phil. iii. 21, 'According to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself.' He is able to find out a way whereby sinners may be reconciled, sanctified, subdued by his Spirit; whereby his interests may be preserved in them against the assaults of the devil, the world, and the flesh; finally, able to raise our bodies after eaten out by worms and turned into dust. Matters of faith being chiefly or mainly future and to come, and difficult to be performed, therefore an express belief of God's power is necessary. To convert such an obstinate, and to sanctify such a sinful creature, and to raise the dead, are no slight things.

Secondly, The emblem of this immutable constancy is settled in the heavens; it is not measured by the floating estate of things here upon earth, but by the perfection of the heavens, which are free from all changes and chances.

1. They are fit emblems of the stability of the word, for they con-

tinue to be what his word once made them to be. There is no jostling among the stars, but all obey God's word and law: Ps. cxlviii. 4-6, 'Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and waters that be above the heavens: let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded, and they were created: he hath also established them for ever and ever; he hath made a decree which shall not pass.' So that when a believer looketh up to heaven, there he seeth the book of the creatures opened, wherein he beholdeth God's constancy and certainty written in indelible characters. God's powerful voice did first separate the waters from the waters, and those celestial bodies move in that order wherein God hath set them. Now is not this a help to us, when we open the book of scriptures, and compare the one with the other, how the stated course of nature, and the stated course of grace, agree with his power? For as long as you trust God's word you can never fail, for both heaven and earth are sustained by it: Heb. i. 3, 'He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.' All is easy to God, for he preserveth the heavens in that estate wherein they are governed, and can preserve his people in the most difficult cases.

2. God's constancy and truth doth appear in the heavens also; there is a witness there of his eternal truth; for when he had once said, 'Let there be heavens,' &c., they presently were, and ever since have kept one constant tenor and course. Yea, heaven shall sooner fail than God's word fail; he will not retract what he hath once said; and therefore his word is more firm and stable than the frame of heaven and earth: Mat. v. 18, 'Till heaven and earth pass, not one jot or tittle shall pass from the law till all be fulfilled;' Mat. xxiv. 35, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' So that God's word is more stable than heaven and earth.

Thirdly, The profit of this meditation.

1. That we may set the sureness of this word against the diffidence and distrustfulness of our own hearts: Luke xxiv. 25, 'Slow of heart to believe.' Though God hath so firmly bound himself to the creature by his own word, yet the promise to us seemeth doubtful and uncertain, especially when men are clouded with troubles and temptations; for we look only to present sense, and would not be put on any trial. Now it is comfortable to remember that the order and course of nature is not so settled as the grace of the covenant is: let it have its course, resolved and patient obedience will at length end in eternal happiness; and therefore we should build surely upon a firm foundation, that we may not 'stagger through unbelief, but give glory to God,' Rom. iv. 20.

2. To comfort us when our hopes are delayed. In due time the promise cannot want the effect, Heb. vi. 12. There will be day and night, summer and winter, in their season; therefore as in the night we wait for day, and in the winter for summer, so must we wait for our eternal consolation.

3. To support us against the various changes in the state of worldly things. Many things fall out in this world that breed trouble in us, therefore if we should only look to the present state of things, our hearts would float up and down; but we must look to the immutable constancy of God's word, that is a sure rock for the anchor of hope to

take hold on. There is a sure rule to walk by, sure promises to build upon, if we would be everlastingly happy. There are 'the sure mercies of David,' Isa. lv. 3. The changes of this world perplex our faith; therefore we should not look to the instability of things below, wherein there are continual vicissitudes, but to the sure covenant.

4. Not only when our hopes are delayed and obscured by the changes and chances of this world, but contradicted by contrary appearances; God seemeth to cast us off, to have no pleasure in us. Now to bear up our faith in the hardest condition, that we may say, Job xiii. 15, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' and believe in hope against hope, we should remember the settledness and constancy of his word. The promises stand firm in heaven, when they seem to fail on earth. God may cover himself with frowns, and his dispensations may seem contrary to his intention; as Joseph spake roughly to his brethren, when he meant to discover himself to them, or as Christ dealt with the woman of Canaan, Mat. xv. But when there seemeth to be such a contradiction between the word and works of God, when his voice is sweet like Jacob's, and his hand rough like Esau's, we must remember that the smart rod is consistent with covenant love, Ps. lxxxix. 32. And we must not interpret the promise of God by his providential dealing with us, but rather his dealing by his promises; his promise being as the light part of the cloud, and his dealing as the dark part of it. God is fulfilling promises by hard dispensations, and sharp afflictions belong to his faithfulness, Ps. cxix. 75. Many times that is best for us, not what we think best, but what God thinks best. The buffetings of Satan and oppositions of the world may be most wholesome to us, though not most pleasing to the flesh.

5. To wean us from the fading vanities of the world, Isa. xl. 8, and 1 Peter i. 24. There is nothing firm and lasting in this world till we lift up our eyes to heaven, and seek an happiness in the promises, 1 John ii. 17. Our happiness lieth not in the present life, but in the everlasting enjoyment of God: in the covenant all is settled and sure, but in the world all is unstable and uncertain. God's covenant provideth for us eternal joy and bliss.

Use 1. To show what contrary and different conclusions the carnal and spiritual will draw from the same principles. The scoffers said, 2 Peter iii. 4, 'Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' Because the whole frame of nature had kept one constant tenour and course, they plead for the eternity of the world and the falsehood of the promises. Now David reasoneth quite the contrary way. They see the mercy of God, that the things of nature keep ordinarily one constant course, and are not terrified with the frequent change thereof; yea, they are thereby confirmed in the belief of the Lord's constancy and faithfulness. But men in love with their lusts make a woful use of this consideration, hardening themselves in their conceit, that there shall never be a change, and so sin more securely. See the like in other things: 1 Cor. vii. 29; 1 Cor. xv. 32; Jude 24; Rom. vi. 2; 2 Sam. vii. 2; with Hag. i. 2; 1 Sam. iii. 18; 2 Kings vi. 33.

Use 2. Whenever you look to heaven, remember that within you

have a God who hath fixed his residence and shown his glory there, and made it the seat both of his mercy and justice. You have also there a Saviour, who, after he had died for our sins, sat down at the right hand of majesty, to see his promises accomplished, and by his word to subdue the whole world. There are 'angels that fulfil his commandment, hearkening to the voice of his word,' Ps. ciii. 21. There are glorified saints, who see God face to face, and dwell with him for evermore, and came thither by the same covenant which is propounded to us as the charter of our peace and hope. Without, we see the sun and moon and all the heavenly bodies move in that fixed course and order wherein God hath set them; and will God show his constancy in the course of nature, and be fickle and changeable in the covenant of grace, wherein he hath disposed the order and method of his mercies?

Use 3. To cure our unbelief, by considering how God's grace is settled in the covenant, so as to leave no cause or occasion of doubting or suspecting the truth and certainty of those blessings which he hath promised us; and shall we live in jealousy, as if we were not upon such sure terms with God? If we transact with another about certain benefits, the transaction may prove to no purpose, if the matter about which we contract with them hath no being, or the terms be impossible, or the conveyance be not firm and strong, so as to hold good in law. Now, none of these can be imagined in our entering into covenant with God. For—

1. Eternal life is not a chimera, or a thing that hath no being. You might run uncertainly, 1 Cor. ix. 24, if it were a dream or a well-devised fable. No; it is the greatest reality in the world, Heb. iv. 9, we cannot be mistaken; we see it before us in the promises so confirmed.

2. It is not upon impossible terms, but such as are performable by the grace of God: Eph. ii. 8, 'By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.' And the apostle telleth us, Rom. iv. 16, 'It is of grace, that it may be sure to all the seed.' It is grace maketh it sure. God giveth what he requireth. There are conditions that concern making covenant and keeping covenant. First, conditions for making covenant: Jer. xxiv. 7, 'I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord;' Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 'A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I bestow upon you.' After this, for keeping covenant: This is a covenant that keepeth us as well as we keep it: Jer. xxxii. 40, 41, 'I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me;' so Ezek. xxxvi. 27, there is a promise of influence, 'I will put my spirit into you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.' This to prevent the danger of discovenanting.

3. Or that the conveyance be not strong and firm, so as to make a plea in law; for it is as strongly confirmed as anything can be by God's word and oath, as before it is upon record in heaven among the ancient decrees of God. It is written in the word for our comfort; yea, upon our hearts. It is sealed by the blood of Christ, Heb. ix. 16, 17; sealed by the Spirit, Eph. i. 13. And therefore the conveyance will bear a plea, both now in prayer, and hereafter before the tribunal of

God. We may show him his promises, plead the satisfaction of Christ, as he pleadeth it in heaven, Heb. ix. 24. But where is there room for any doubt? If any, it must be of your qualification; for on God's part all is ordered and sure; and there two things:—First, That all the qualifications of the gospel must be evangelically interpreted, not legally; not in absolute perfection, but prevalent degree, Mark ix. 29, and Can. v. 2. Secondly, Your only way to obtain comfort is to make the qualification more explicit: 1 John ii. 5, 'Whosoever keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby we know that we are in him;' and 1 John iii. 19, 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth.'

4. Let nothing that is uncertain keep you from this blessed and sure covenant. All things without it are uncertain. Riches are uncertain, 1 Tim. vi. 17. The like may be said of honours, they are slippery places; of friends, health, life itself. Now, do not forsake your own mercies for lying vanities. Some vain thing or other taketh us off from God and seeking his favour, which will certainly prove a lie to you; therefore employ your time, care, and thoughts about these things.

5. If the covenant be settled, never expect to alter it, or model it, and bring it down to your fancies and humours. It is God only that can prescribe conditions and laws of commerce between us and him; man is not allowed to prescribe the conditions, or treat about the making of them, but is only bound to submit to what God was pleased to prescribe, and to fulfil the conditions without disputing. They are not left free and indifferent for us to debate them, and modify, and mitigate, and bring them down to our own liking and humour. We are to take hold, not to appoint, Isa. lvi. 4, and Rom. x. 3; so that it bindeth our duty as well as assureth our comfort. Our vote cometh too late to retract and alter God's eternal decrees. What would you have to be done for your freedom from hell and the wrath of God? Oh, that God would alter those severe constitutions which he hath made, and not insist so strictly on the self-denying duties required in the gospel covenant for the salvation of sinners! You may as well ask that God should repeal the ordinances of nature, turn night into day, and day into night for your sakes. But if the gospel covenant were repealed, that you may be more secure, what then? In what a case are you then? What will you hold by then? You have no hope if the gospel stand in force; but what hope would you have if the gospel were abolished? Must the whole world be ruined to establish your security and indulgence to sin? Oh! surely this gospel thus stated hath more stability than the foundations of heaven and earth. Therefore, expect nothing to be altered for thy sake. The gospel constitution was settled long before thou wert born, and it is an unalterable decree, which cannot be reversed. All this is spoken to confute them that look upon the gospel as true and to be believed, till they meet with something which crosses them, and then they hope it is not so. In short, God is true when he promises, true when he threatens, true when he commandeth. Or thus, if the gospel covenant be false, thou has no ground of hope; if true, it doometh licentious sinners to eternal destruction.

SERMON XCV.

Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.—VER. 90.

THESE words contain a truth which is—(1.) Asserted; (2.) Represented by a fit and lively emblem, *thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.* He had before said, ‘Thy word is settled in the heavens;’ now he speaketh of it as manifested in the earth. There the constancy of God’s promises was set forth by the duration and equal motion of the heavenly bodies, now by the firmness and immovableness of the earth. God’s powerful word and providence reacheth to the whole world, this lower part here upon earth, as well as the upper part in heaven.

Doct. That in all ages God ever showed himself a true God, and faithful in all his promises. It is here confirmed by experience, and represented by an emblem.

1. God’s faithfulness relateth to some promise wherein he hath engaged himself to his people: Heb. xi. 11, ‘She judged him faithful who had promised.’ It is his mercy to make promises, but it is his faithfulness and truth to fulfil them. His truth is pawned with the creature till he discharge it, Micah vii. 20.

2. His truth dependeth upon his unchangeable nature, but it is confirmed to us by experience. His unchangeable nature, Heb. vi. 18. If a promise can be made out to be of God, we have no more reason to doubt of it than of the nature and being of God. Yet, *quoad nos*, it is confirmed by experience: Ps. xviii. 30, ‘The word of the Lord is a tried word.’ We are led by sensible things, and what hath been done doth assure us of what shall be done, or may be expected from God.

3. That therefore God hath been ever tender of his truth, that the event may answer the promise, and we might know that God that hath been faithful, and kept touch with the world hitherto, will not fail at last. The heathens ascribed a double perfection to their gods—*ἀληθεύειν καὶ ἐνεργεῖν*. So the true God is known by his mercy and his fidelity; he never failed to perform his part of the covenant with any: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, ‘I will praise thy name, for thy loving-kindness and thy truth; for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.’ As he hath made us admirable and great promises of giving his Son, and with him all things, so he will certainly perform all to the utmost importance of them. The matter of his word is mercy and loving-kindness, and in the performance thereof there is great truth and fidelity; as he hath made great and excellent promises, so he performeth them most punctually. So that in fulfilling his word, God will be known above all that is named, or famed, or believed, or apprehended, and spoken of them. Here is his great glory and excellency.

4. That the experience of all generations doth confirm God’s faithfulness in his promises; for it is said in the text, ‘His faithfulness is unto all generations.’ In the Hebrew it is, ‘From generation to generation.’

The point may be amplified by two considerations:—

First, That some promises have been received by one generation, and fulfilled in another.

Secondly, That the same common promises have been fulfilled to the faithful in all ages.

First, That some promises have been received by one generation, and fulfilled in another, when the matter so required; as, for instance, Israel's going out of Egypt: Gen. xv. 13, 14, 'And he said unto Abraham, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years: and also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge; and afterwards they shall come out with great substance.' Compare now Exod. xii. 41, 'and it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.' Thirty years were added, because of their fathers dwelling in Canaan; but God kept touch to a day. So for the promise of the Messiah and calling the Gentiles; that God fulfilled in due time, and sent a Saviour into the world: Gal. iv. 4, 'In the fulness of time God sent his son.' When the sceptre was gone from Judah, Gen. xlix. 10, when the crown was possessed by Herod, a tributary and foreigner, during the Roman monarchy, which at length Christ should utterly destroy. Dan. ii. 35, Nebuchadnezzar had a vision of an image of four different metals, the head of gold, arms and breasts silver, belly and thighs brass, and the feet part iron and clay. While he beheld the image, and surveyed it from head to foot, he saw a stone hewn out of the mountain without hands, which stone smote the image, not upon the head, breast, or belly, but upon the feet of iron and clay, upon which it vanished away, and the stone became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This vision Daniel expounded of four Gentile kingdoms, which should succeed one another with great extent of dominion. The first of the Babylonians, which then was; the second of the Medes and Persians; the third of the Grecians; the fourth of the Romans, which subdued all the others, and because possessed of the riches and glory of the former; during this last kingdom was the stone hewn out of the mountain, and smote the iron feet. This stone was the kingdom of the God of heaven, which Christ set up. But not to trouble you with mysteries and nice debates, the apostle telleth us, Rom. xv. 8-10, 'That Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again, it is said, Rejoice, ye Gentiles.' The event in all these cases afterwards did speak for itself; so in all that is yet to come, we should depend upon the veracity of God; as the calling of the Jews, the destruction of antichrist, a more ample effusion of gifts on the church, together with a dilation of its borders; as the patriarchs 'all died in faith:' Heb. xi. 13, 'Having not received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them.'

Secondly, That the same common promises have been fulfilled to

the faithful in all ages; there is but one and the same way to eternal life in necessary things, and the dispensations of God to every age are still the same; and so in every generation the promises of God are still fulfilled as if they were directed to that time only. God's faithfulness hath been tried many ways and at many times, but every age furnisheth examples of the truth of his promises. From the beginning of the world to the end, God is ever fulfilling the scripture in his providential government, which is double—external or internal.

[1.] External, in the deliverance of his people, the answers of prayer, and manifold blessings vouchsafed to believers and their seed. See Ps. xxii. 4, 5, 'Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them: they cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.' The godly in former times trusted God, and trusted constantly in their troubles, and in their trusting they cried, and did never seek God in vain; which should support us in waiting upon God, and to depend on his mercy and fidelity; for they that place their full affiance in God, and seek his help by constant and importunate addresses, shall never be put to shame.

[2.] Internal, in conversion to God, the comforts of his Spirit, establishment of the soul in the hopes of the gospel, as to the pardon of sins and eternal life. Certainly God, that hath blessed the word throughout many successions of ages, to the converting and comforting of many souls, showeth that we may depend upon the covenant for pardon and eternal life. How many have found comfort by the promises! Now, as the apostle speaketh of Abraham, 'It was not written for himself alone, but us also,' Rom. iv. 23, 24; so these comforts were not dispensed for their sake alone, but for our benefit, that we might be comforted of God; having the same God, the same Redeemer, the same covenant and promises, and the same Spirit to apply all unto us. If they looked to God and were comforted, why should not we? His faithfulness is to all generations; he is alike to believers, as they be alike to him: Rom. iii. 22, 'There is no difference.'

5. That the experience of God's faithfulness in former ages is of use to those that follow and succeed, to assure them of God's faithfulness; for God's wonderful and gracious works were never intended merely for the benefit of that age in which they were done, but for the benefit also of those that should hear of them by any creditable means whatsoever. It is a scorn and vile contempt put upon those wonderful works, which God made to be had in remembrance, if they should be buried in oblivion, or not observed and improved by those who live in after ages; yea, it is contrary to the scriptures: Ps. cxlv. 4, 'One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts;' Joel i. 3, 'Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation;' Josh. iv. 6-8, 'That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, What mean you by these stones? then shall you answer them, that the waters of Jordan were cut off from before the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God.' So Ps. lxxviii. 3-7, 'That which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us, we will not hide them from their children, show-

ing to the generations to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.' From all which I observe:—

[1.] That we should tell generations to come what we have found of God in our time, and more especially parents should tell their children; they are bound to transmit this knowledge to their children, and they to improve it, either by word or deed. By word, by remembering the passages of providences, and publishing his mercies to posterity: Ps. lxxxix. 1, 'I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth I will make known thy faithfulness to all generations.' Or by deed, putting them in possession of a pure religion, confirmed to us by so many providences and instances of God's goodness and truth.

[2.] That this report of God's gracious works, and owning his covenant, is a special means of edification. Why else should God enjoin it, but that the ages following should receive benefit thereby? Surely it is an advantage to them to hear how God hath owned us in ordinances and providences.

[3.] And more particularly I observe, that this tradition is a great means and help to faith; for it is said, ver. 7, 'That they may set their hope in God.'

6. That to be satisfied in point of God's faithfulness is of great importance to believers. Partly because their fidelity to God is much encouraged by his fidelity to us. They that do not trust God cannot be long true to him: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed lest there be found in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God;' and James i. 8, 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways,' *δίψυχος ἀστήρ*, one that doth not stick fast to God, and is ever unresolved, being divided between hopes and fears concerning his acceptance with God. A wavering Christian is divided between God and some unlawful course for his safety, divided between God's ways and his own, and cannot quietly depend upon his promises, but is tossed to and fro, doth not entirely trust himself in God's hands, but doth wholly lean upon his own carnal confidence. And partly because God is invisible, and dealeth with us by proxy, by messengers, who bring the word to us. We see not God in person: Heb. xiii. 7, 'Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversations;' their manner of living, their perseverance till death in this faith and hope. And partly because the promises are future, and the main of them is to be accomplished in another world. Now, nothing will support us but the faithfulness of God: Prov. xi. 18, 'The wicked worketh a deceitful work, but to him that soweth righteousness there shall be a sure reward.' Men think to be happy by their sin, but find themselves deceived at last: but none can be deceived that trust in the living and true God. Partly because many of the promises contradict sense; as when the soul is filled with anguish because of the

guilt of sin: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' And the power of sin: 1 Thes. v. 24, 'Faithful is he who calleth you, who also will do it.' Supported in great distress: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'He will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able.' That we may be able to stand in the judgment: 1 Cor. i. 9, 'God is faithful, by whom ye are called into the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ.' Here is a Christian's great security and support, God's faithfulness, testified by Christians now and in all ages, confessing they have found by their experience the word of God to be true; for they have transmitted religion to us by their constant consent, and left it to us under a seal of God's faithfulness; and therefore we should persevere in our duty to God.

Secondly, As represented by an emblem. We should consider it, for it is a help to frequent meditation, as being always before our eyes; and they are without excuse who see not God in this thing; every time we set foot on the ground we may remember the stability of God's promises. And it is also a confirmation of faith, thus:—

1. The stability of the earth is the effect of God's word, this is the true pillar upon which the earth standeth; for 'he upholdeth all things by the word of his power:' Ps. xxxiii. 9, 'For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.' Now his word of power helpeth us to depend upon his word of promise. God, that doth what he pleaseth, never faileth in what he promiseth. We see plainly that whatever standeth by God's will and word, cannot be brought to nought. Whence is it? how came this world to have a being? It is the work and product of that God whose word and promise we have in scripture. Certainly the power of this God cannot fail, it is as easy for him to do as to say.

2. Nothing appeareth whereon the globe of the earth and water should lean and rest: Job xxvi. 7, 'He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing.' Now, that this vast and ponderous body should lean upon the fluid air as upon a firm foundation is matter of wonder. The question is put in the book of Job, chap. xxxviii. 6, 'Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who hath laid the corner-stone thereof?' Yet firm it is, though it hang as a ball in the air. The globe of the earth is encompassed with the regions of the air and the celestial spheres, and hath no visible support to sustain so heavy a body hanging in the midst of so vast an expansion; yet God hath settled and established it so firm as if it rested on the most solid basis and foundation; fitted so strange a place for it that, being a heavy body, one should think it would fall every moment; yet which, whensoever we would imagine it, it must, contrary to the nature of such a body, fall upwards, and so can have no possible ruin but by falling into heaven. Now since his word beareth up such a weight, all the church's weight, and our own burden leaneth on the promise of God; he can, by the power of his word, do the greatest things without visible means: Luke vii. 7, 'But say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.' Therefore his people may trust his providence; he is able to support them in any distresses, when no way of help and relief appeareth.

3. The firmness and stability offereth itself to our thoughts. The earth abideth in the same seat and condition wherein God left it, as long as the present course and order of nature is to continue: Ps. civ. 5, 'He hath laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be moved for ever.' God's truth is as immovable as the earth: Ps. cxvii. 2, 'The truth of the Lord endureth for ever.' Surely, if the foundation of the earth abideth sure, the foundation of our salvation laid by Jesus Christ is much more sure: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one tittle of the word and law of God, till all be fulfilled,' Mat. v. 18. If the law given by Moses be so sure, much more the promises of salvation by Christ: 2 Cor. i. 20, 'For all the promises of God in him are yea and amen.'

4. The stability in the midst of changes: Eccles. i. 4, 'One generation passeth away and another cometh, but the earth abideth for ever.' When man passeth away, the earth stayeth behind him, as a habitation for other comers, and abideth where it was, when the inhabitants go to and fro, and can enjoy it no more. All things in the world are subject to many revolutions, but God's truth is one and the same. The vicissitudes in the world do not derogate from his fidelity in the promises; he changeth all things, and is not changed. Though there be a new face of things in the world, yet we have a sure rule to walk by, and sure promises to build upon. And therefore, in all conditions, we should be the same to God, and there is no doubt but he will be the same to us.

5. In upholding the frame of the world, all those attributes are seen which are a firm stay to a believer's heart, such as wisdom, power, and goodness. Wisdom: Prov. iii. 19, 'The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth, by understanding hath he established the heavens.' Look on it, it is the work of a wise agent. So for power: This great fabric is supported by his almighty power. His goodness is seen in that he hath made the earth to be firm and dry land, that it may be a fit habitation for men; this is a standing miracle of goodness. Luther saith we are always *in medio rubri maris*—kept, as the Israelites were, in the midst of the Red Sea. The Psalmist telleth us, Ps. xxiv. 2, 'He hath founded the earth upon the seas, and established the world upon the floods.' That part of the world whereon we dwell would suddenly be overwhelmed and covered with waters were it not for the goodness of God, for this the order of nature showeth in the beginning of the creation, Gen. i. 7, that next under the air were the waters covering the whole surface of the earth. But God made such cavities in the earth as should receive the waters into them, and such banks as should bound and bridle the vast ocean, that it might not break forth, Gen. i. 9; and so now by his providence the water is beneath the earth, and the earth standeth firm upon that fluid body as upon the most solid foundation; which, as it is a work of wise disposal and contrivance, so an effect of the goodness of God for the preservation of mankind. And though once, for the sins of the world, these waters were appointed to break out and overwhelm the earth, yet God hath firmly promised that they shall never be so again; wherein his truth is also verified, and applied to the covenant of grace: Isa. liv. 9, 'For this is as the waters of Noah to me; for as I have sworn

that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth: so have I sworn that I would not be wrath with thee, nor rebuke thee.' The covenant of grace is as sure as the covenant made after the deluge; so that we cannot look upon this earth but as an emblem of those attributes which confirm our faith in waiting upon God till his promises be fulfilled to us.

Use. Let us be then more firmly persuaded of God's faithfulness, that we may depend upon it both for his preserving the church and ourselves in the way of our duty, till we enjoy our final reward.

1. For the preservation of Christ's kingdom, God's faithfulness chiefly appeareth in the government of his church or spiritual kingdom, and this is a kingdom that cannot be moved when all things else are shaken: Heb. xii. 28, 'Having received a kingdom that cannot be shaken.' Christ cannot be a head without members, a king without subjects. And we are told, Mat. xvi. 18, 'That the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.' Many disorders happen, but let us depend upon the faithful God. The world was well guided before we came into it, and other generations have had experience of God's faithfulness, though we complain that we see not our signs, nor any tokens for good.

2. For the preservation of our bodies to the heavenly kingdom. We have many discouragements within and without, but while we persevere in our duty, God will not fail us; his word is as sure as the earth: 2 Thes. iii. 3, 'The Lord is faithful, who shall establish and keep you from evil.' God hath promised not only to give us our final reward, but to secure and defend his people by the way, that they be not overcome by the evils they meet with in their passage.

SERMON XCVI.

They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.—VER. 91.

THE prophet is proving the immutability of God's promises from the conservation and continuance of the whole course of nature. He had spoken of it by parts, now conjunctly; apart, first of the heavens, ver. 89; of the earth, ver. 90; now both together, *they continue*, &c.

In the words, we have two things:—

1. An observation concerning the continuance of the courses of nature; *they*, that is, the heaven and the earth. Heaven doth continue in its motion, and earth in its station, according to the ordinance of God, that is, by virtue of that order wherein he placed things at first: Ps. cxlviii. 6, 'He hath established them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.' As he ordained at first by his powerful decree, so heaven and earth is still continued. God's laws are fixed for the government of all creatures, and in the manner and to the end for which God appointeth them they stand and continue.

2. The reason, *for all are thy servants*. The reason saith more than the assertion, and therefore doth over and above prove it; not

only the heavens and the earth, but all things which are contained therein, from the angel to the worm, they all serve God; they attend upon him as their supreme Lord and master every moment.

Doct. That it is a great help to faith to consider God as the omnipotent creator, preserver, and absolute governor of the world, disposing of all things as he pleaseth.

This is the meditation which the Psalmist produceth and exposeth to our view in this verse.

His creation is implied in that, *thine ordinances*; when God first settled the course of nature by a wise and powerful decree.

His preservation, in those words, *they continue this day*. The course of nature is so settled that it doth not fail to go on according to God's decree; everything standeth or falleth according to God's command, and the order first settled by God still obtaineth; his decree is not yet out of date.

His being the absolute governor of the world, in these words, *for all are thy servants*, which implieth his sovereign dominion and empire over all the creatures as his servants, who are at the beck of his will. To evidence this to you more fully, consider there are in God two things—power and authority, might and right.

First, By power we mean a liberty and sufficiency in God to do whatever he will: 'With God all things are possible,' Mat. xix. 26. Or take the negative, which bindeth it the stronger: Luke i. 37, 'With God nothing shall be impossible.'

Secondly, Authority or dominion, or a right over all things to dispose of them at his own pleasure. In this right there are three branches:—

1. A right of making or framing anything as he willeth, in any manner as it pleaseth him, as the potter hath power over his own clay to form what vessel he pleaseth of it. This right God exercised in his creation: Rev. iv. 11, 'Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' This was his absolute freedom and sovereignty, to create all things according to his own pleasure.

2. A right of having or possessing all things so made and framed by him, for God is owner and possessor of whatever he made, since he made it out of nothing. Heaven is his, earth is his; so angels, man, beasts, gold, silver; all things he challengeth as his right: Ps. cxv. 16, 'The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's.' It is the Lord's to dispose of, not only the lower, but the highest heavens, which he hath provided for his own palace and court of residence. So 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness therefore,' Ps. xxiv. 1. This whole lower world is his by right of creation and providential preservation, and so are all the sorts of creatures with which he hath replenished it: it was by him produced at first, and every moment continued and preserved. And so the angels are his; they are called his ministers or servants: Ps. civ. 4, 'He maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire.' Though he is able to do all things by himself, or administer the whole world as he at first created by a word, by saying, and it was done; yet he pleaseth to make use of the ministry of angels, who some of them in subtle bodies of air, others of fire, come down to execute his commands upon earth. Men are his creatures and his possession; we are

not lords of anything we have, neither life, nor limb, nor anything; our bodies and our souls are his, 1 Cor. vi. 20. Christ had power to lay down his life and take it up again, but no mere man hath; he is accountable to a higher Lord, who hath an absolute, uncontrollable right to dispose of us according to his own pleasure: 'He killeth and maketh alive, bringeth low and lifteth up; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's,' 1 Sam. ii. 6-8; meaning that God is the Lord of the dwellers upon earth, from the one pole to the other: Dan. iv. 35, 'None can stay his hand, and say unto him, What doest thou?' None can call him to an account, for his will is absolute. So for the beasts: Ps. l. 10, 'Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.' He hath a plenary dominion over all the cattle on earth, wild and tame, and the fowls of the air, and a certain knowledge where every one of them resideth, that he can readily command any or all of them whensoever he pleaseth; all is the Lord's by primitive right. So for gold and silver, and those precious things which are most valued by men: Hag. ii. 8, 'The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts.' The absolute dominion of the riches or the splendour of the world belongeth to the Lord of hosts, to dispose of them as he pleaseth; and therefore is to be owned, acknowledged, and submitted unto by every man in his lot and portion. All that we want he hath at his command, and would not withhold it, if it were not for our good.

3. He hath a right of using and disposing, and governing all things thus in his possession, according to his own pleasure. Certainly the use and benefit and utility of anything belongeth to him whose it is. Now God, who is the disposer of all things, made them for himself; he governeth them ultimately and terminatively for himself, immediately for man: Prov. xvi. 4, 'God hath made all things for himself.' But he considereth man's good subordinately in all sublunary things; for 'the earth he hath given to the children of men,' Ps. cxv. 16, chiefly to his people, Rom. viii. 28. But this government of God is twofold—either natural or moral.

[1.] I begin with the last. His moral government is by laws; so he governeth angels and men, who are rational and free agents, but in the relation of subjects to God, and therefore are under his command; which if they decline, they are rebels, yet cease not to be under God, as the devils and wicked men, who have disturbed the order of the creation, and withdrawn themselves from God's government, yet they cease not to be under his power. Of the devils, we read they sinned, 2 Peter ii. 4, and therefore 'were thrown down into chains of darkness;' meaning thereby, their unappeasable horrors, and the 'restraints of God's invisible providence'. Of men, that they withdrew their allegiance, and would not be subject to his laws: Ps. xii. 4, 'Our tongues are our own: who is lord over us?' Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God.' But yet they are under the restraints of his providence, and he governeth all their actions to his glory: Ps. lxxvi. 10, 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee;' and serveth himself and the designs of his providence of their sins.

[2.] His natural government is that order into which by his positive decree God hath necessitated and disposed all creatures for the benefit

of the world. Rational creatures he ruleth by moral means, as subjects, requiring duty from them, under the sanction of penalties and rewards, where the law is the rule of our duty, the sanction of his process; but other creatures he ruleth by natural motions and inclinations or tendency, according to the decree and order which he hath settled in their creation. Surely such a kind of empire he hath over all his creatures, for if he had made creatures which he cannot rule, he could not carry on his providence, for there would be something beneath him which might resist his will, and that will not suit with the perfection of God. Now this natural government is twofold—ordinary or extraordinary.

(1.) Ordinary is that which is according to the course of second causes, or that order of nature which God hath established in the world, which is nothing else but his preserving the creatures, and working by them according to their natural motions. So it is said in the text, 'They continue this day according to thine ordinance;' and is confirmed by the apostle, Heb. i. 3, 'He upholdeth all things by the word of his power;' that is, in that course wherein he hath set them. The being and motion of every creature is ordered by the will of God; they move as he hath set them, and can move no further nor longer than he supplieth them with power.

(2.) Extraordinary is when God doth things above or beside nature; as when he made the sun stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley Ajalon, Josh. x. 12, 13; or made the sun to go back ten degrees in Ahaz's dial, Isa. xxxviii. 8; his interdicting the Red Sea that it should not flow, Exod. xiv. 22; causing iron, which is a heavy body, that it should swim upon the top of the water at the prayer of Elisha, 2 Kings vi. 5; the fiery furnace not to burn, Dan. iii. 22; shutting the mouths of hungry lions, Dan. vi. 22; making ravens, which are by nature birds of prey, to be caterers for Elijah, 1 Kings xvii. 6; the cleaving of the earth and swallowing up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Num. xvi. 32, 33. Often in the New Testament we find the creatures acting contrary to their common nature, as the star that directed the wise men to Christ, Mat. ii. 2; the opening of the heavens at Christ's baptism, Mat. iii. 16; the eclipse of the sun at his death, Mat. xxvii. 45; the fishes that came to net, Luke v. 5; and furnishing money, Mat. xvii. 26; the sea to be as firm ground to Peter, Mat. xiv. 24-29: Christ stilling the tempest of a sudden, Mat. viii. 26; the earthquake at Christ's death, Mat. xxvii. 51; the tree suddenly withered, Mat. xxi. 14. When the will of God is so that the creatures shall depart from their own private nature for a common good, we see how readily they obey him.

Now I shall prove to you that no creature can decline or avoid this dominion. The text saith, 'They are all his servants;' that is, all at the beck and will of God.

1. The celestial bodies are his servants: Isa. xlvi. 13, 'Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together;' where they are compared to servants that stand attending on great persons, ready at a word or beck to obey their Lord and master, and go instantly about whatever he doth enjoin them.

2. The angels, the inhabitants of heaven, are said to be his ministers and hosts; and therefore he is called 'the Lord of hosts;' and it is said, 'They fulfil his pleasure, hearkening to the voice of his word,' Ps. ciii. 21.

3. The winds and seas, and storms: Ps. cxxxv. 6, 'Whatsoever the Lord pleased that did he in heaven, and in earth, and in the seas, and all deep places;' again, Ps. cxlviii. 8, 'Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfilling his word.' So Job xxxvii. 12, 'The clouds are turned about by his counsels.' The changes in the air by storms and tempests are not by chance, but are all directed by God for some intent of his; and in what work he doth employ them they fail not to execute his will, and by these things many times God hath executed great matters in the world: Judges v. 20, 'The stars in their course fought against Sisera.' By their influence, Josephus saith, caused a great storm of hail and rain, that they could not hold up their targets.

4. Sickness and disease: Mat. viii. 9, 'Speak but the word, and my servant shall be healed.' Christ wondered at his faith. So that all things contained in heaven and earth are at God's beck, and do whatsoever he hath ordained.

Use 1. To teach us to increase our faith by this meditation. There are two things by which we glorify God—by subjection and dependence; or, the two bonds by which we adhere to him are faith and obedience: faith, by which we trust ourselves in his hands; obedience, by which we submit to his will; to his commanding will by holiness, to his disposing will by patience. Now the one increaseth the other. Faith doth mightily befriend obedience; if we can depend upon God, we will subject ourselves, and be faithful to him. The first cause of man's warping was that he would be at his own finding. God taunted him with it: Gen. iii. 22, 'And the Lord said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.' While man contented his mind in the wisdom, goodness, and all-sufficiency of God, he kept innocent; but when he grew distrustful of God, and desired, as the prodigal, to have the stock and portion in his own hands, he presently fell from God, and would preserve himself by his own shifts and skill. The reason why we are not faithful to God is want of faith and trust in his fatherly care, and will be at our own finding Heb. iii. 12. Trust him, and you will adhere to him; distrust him, and you will depart from him. Man would have his safety and comfort in his own hand rather than God's; and this is a deadly blow to our obedience.

2. There is one consideration feedeth and encourageth both our dependence upon God and our subjection to him, and that is a sound and thorough persuasion. of God's all-sufficiency: Gen xvii. 1, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' We will trust God in the way of our duty, and not fly to our own carnal shifts. Now that which doth assure us of God's power and all-sufficiency to effect his promises and do us good is that which is here represented.

[1.] His power is implied, which made the world out of nothing. Other artificers must have matter to work upon, or else their art will fail. The mason must have timber and stones prepared to his hand, or he cannot build a house. The goldsmith must have gold and silver, or he cannot make so much as a cup or a ring. But God made

the world out of things that did not appear, Heb. xi. 4, yet it standeth fast. Now this power is engaged to us in the promises.

[2.] Here is a power which placeth and maintaineth all things in their order, both in heaven and earth, and causeth every part of nature to do its office; and therefore, why should not we live in a total dependence upon God for life and being every moment? What God hath once settled, it doth and shall continue in the order that he hath appointed; the same power that created them upholdeth them; the same wisdom directeth and ordereth them still. Therefore, when he hath settled grace in the established order of a covenant with his people, the word of God is a foundation that cannot fail; for God needeth no other means to effect anything but his own word and will. The word of God is as powerful in the work of grace as in the works of nature, to renew, convince, subdue, and comfort the heart: Heb. iv. 12, 'For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;' 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' Depend upon that word, Ps. cxxx. 5, 'I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.' It is as unchangeable as powerful: Isa. xlv. 23, 'The word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return;' Ps. lxxxix. 34, 'I will not alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.'

[3.] Here is a power to which they are subject, 'For they are his servants;' and be they never so averse and opposite to God, they cannot hinder his work, for he performeth what he will, and who can let? Certainly what God hath engaged himself to do he will not fail to bring it to pass, to give grace at present and glory hereafter, Ps. lxxxiv. 11. Look neither upon the weakness of the means, nor the greatness of the work, but the truth and power of him that promised.

3. Here is something offered to each apart, both to feed trust and dependence, and to engage to subjection and obedience.

First, For trust and dependence.

[1.] We see here that God is a great God, who taketh the care and charge upon him of the sustentation and government of all things to their proper ends and uses. How soon would the world fall into confusion and nothing without his power and care! Now this should recommend him to our esteem and love. Oh, what a blessed thing is it to have an interest in this powerful and almighty God! All his strength and power is engaged for the meanest and weakest of his children: 1 Peter i. 5, 'We are kept by the power of God to salvation;' and therefore we are bidden to be 'strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' Surely they are blessed that have such a mighty God on their side, and engaged with them against their enemies: 1 John iv. 4, 'Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.' He can enable them to do their work, satisfy their desires, maintain them in the midst of opposition: John x. 29, 'My father, which gave them me, is greater than all.' Such is the efficacy of his

providence, that he can subject all things to himself, make them servants, to do what he would have them. Oh, how safe is a Christian in the love and covenant and arms of an almighty God, whom he hath made his refuge! Our trials are many, and grace received is small in the best; but our God is great; he that made all things, and sustaineth all things, and governeth all things, and possesseth all things, is our God; surely 'his grace is sufficient for us,' 2 Cor. xii. 9, and his everlasting arms can bear us up: Deut. xxxiii. 27, 'The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.' He can recover us from our falls, and lift us over all our difficulties. If we could but rest upon his word and lean upon his power, why should we be discouraged? Oh, let us rejoice, then, not only in the goodness but greatness of that God whom we have chosen for our portion!

[2.] We see here that God is an unchangeable God in goodness: 'They continue this day according to thine ordinance.' The stability of his works showeth how stable the workman is. Heaven and earth continue by virtue of his word, that man may have the use and benefit of it from generation to generation, that the continual vicissitudes of day and night may be continued, that man may have light to his labour, and darkness drawn about him as a covering for his rest, and also that there might be a constant succession of summer and winter, to prepare and ripen the fruits of the earth. Now, if God forsake not the world, will he forsake his people? For the benefit of mankind he preserveth the courses of nature, and keepeth all things in their proper place, for their proper end and use; and will he not keep one way with his children? Shall there be a failure in the covenant, when there is not a failure in common providence? as if he would satisfy the expectation of heathens, that look for a constant succession of day and night and summer and winter, and would not satisfy the expectation of his children, when they look for a blessed morning after a dark night of trouble and conflict, and the light of his countenance after the storms of temptation.

Secondly, For subjection, which I made to be double.

[1.] Submission to his disposing will. God's appointment giveth laws to all; there is not the least thing done among us without his prescience, providence, and wise disposal, to which all things in the world are subjected. The Lord's will and pleasure is the only rule of his extending his omnipotency, and is the sovereign and absolute cause of all his working, for all is done in heaven or in earth according to his ordinance, and no creature can resist his will; therefore let us submit to this will of God. If God take anything from us, let us bless the name of the Lord; he doth but make use of his own: 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good,' 1 Sam. iii. 18; it is none of ours, but God's, and let him do with his own as it pleaseth him. God is the disposer of man as well as other creatures, and must choose their condition, and determine of all events wherein they are concerned. We usually dislike God's disposal of us, though it be so wise and gracious. But consider his sovereignty; you cannot deliver yourselves from the will of God, and get the reins into your own hands. And alas! we are unfit to be disposers either of the world or ourselves, as an idiot is to be the pilot of a ship: therefore let God govern all according to his own pleasure. Say, 'Lord, not my will, but thine be done.' We are safer by far in God's hands than our own.

[2.] Obedience to his commanding will. All creatures do serve God as his word hath ordained; so should we do. We have law and ordinances too. Shall man only be eccentric and exorbitant and transgress his bounds? Winds and sea serve him, only man, made after his image, disobeyeth him: they serve God for our benefit; the heavens continue their motion to convey light, heat, and influence to us, and the air to give us breath and motion, and the earth to be a sure fixed dwelling-place. When all things are created and continued for our use, shall not we serve our bountiful creator? We are sensible of the disturbance of the course of nature when these confederances are dissolved, when the floods increase, or rains fall in abundance. Oh, bemoan rather thy own irregular actions, which are a greater deformation of the beauty of the universe!

In short, no creatures are *sui juris*; they are subject to God, by whose word and commandment they must rule their actions. Surely none of us are too great or too good to submit to God. Angels enjoy immunities, yet are not exempted from service. The creatures have acted contrary to their common nature for God's honour; let us obey God, though contrary to our own wills and inclinations.

SERMON XCVII.

Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.—VER. 92.

IN the verses before the text, David meditateth upon the constancy of the course of nature, whereby is represented God's constant fidelity in performing all his promises to his people. Now he produceth his own experience, and showeth that all this had been matter of most pleasant meditation to support him under his afflictions; when all other comforts failed, he found sufficient consolation in the word of God, *unless thy law had been, &c.*

In which words observe—

1. David's condition; he was afflicted.
2. His bitter sense of that condition; he was ready to perish in his affliction.
3. His remedy; the word of God.
4. The way of application; it was his delights.

1. For his condition. Though he was a man after God's own heart, yet he had his troubles: Ps. cxxxii. 1, 'Remember David, Lord, and all his afflictions.'

2. For his sense and apprehension, 'I should then have perished.' *Then*; that is, long since. If you suppose him now under trouble, probably he should have sunk under the weight of it; or if out of trouble, he remembereth from experience what did comfort him when he was ready to perish. But how perished? It may be understood—

[1.] Either as given over to the will of his enemies, if he had not confided in God; for all human help and comfort was cut off, and then did divine help appear.

[2.] Died for sorrow ; for 'worldly sorrow worketh death,' 2 Cor. vii. 10. We are apt to despond and despair in great and sore troubles. Affliction worketh heaviness, 1 Peter i. 6, and heaviness drieth the bones and wasteth our strength. What kept him ?

3. His remedy was the word of God ; for he saith, 'Unless thy law had been my delights.' Some take the word *law* strictly, for the precepts of the law, which keepeth us from sin, which doth involve us in danger. But rather it is taken for the whole word of God, and chiefly for the promises of support and deliverance. I had despaired if I had not consulted with thy word. He doth not here speak of direction, but of support ; elsewhere he found nothing but sorrow, but in the word of God joy and comfort.

4. The way of application, *my delights*. The word is plural, and increaseth the sense, in what way soever it may be interpreted. Now it may be interpreted passively or actively.

[1.] Passively, that the word of God refreshed him, and afforded him matter of delight, and so renewed his strength. David had many sorrows, but here he found delights, as many comforts as troubles. The word of God yieldeth comfort for every state of life ; if there be many sorrows, there are many delights ; but with advantage, heavenly comforts for earthly afflictions, eternal comforts for temporal sorrows.

[2.] Actively. He delighted in the word of God, yea, counted it his delights. It increaseth the sense.

(1.) It was his chief delight. Other things might be thankfully accepted and acknowledged, but this was the solace and delight of his soul.

(2.) His continual delight and comfort, to which he retreated upon all occasions.

(3.) His whole, or only delight ; when deprived of all other things, this was instead of all delights to him : all which show his high esteem of the word.

Doct. That the afflicted man's true consolation is in the word of God.

I will pursue the point in the method that I have laid forth in the parts of the text.

First, A man after God's own heart, such as David was, may be afflicted. Why ?

1. Because God hath chosen another way of expressing his love to his people than by outward things ; for he will govern the spiritual part of the world by faith, and not by sense : therefore 'None shall know love and hatred by things that are before him,' Eccles. ix. 1 ; that is, by mere outward events, or things obvious to outward sense ; the significations of his love are more hidden. Prov. iii. 31, 32, Solomon supposeth that the oppressor may be in a flourishing condition, yet all this while the Lord hates him ; his secret is with the righteous. We know his fatherly love to us, not by things without us, but things within us, Rom. viii. 16 ; 1 John iii. 2, 4, 'Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us ;' Gal. iv. 6, 'He hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.' Outward things would soon be overvalued, and we should take them as our whole felicity and portion, if, besides their suitableness to our present needs

and appetites, they should come to us as special evidences of God's love.

2. Afflictions are necessary to the best. Certain it is God will conduct his people to glory, not only by his internal, but external providence. Now to humble us, to wean us from the world, there is need of afflictions: 1 Peter i. 6, 'Ye are in heaviness for a season, if need be.' We are wanting, vain, neglectful of God, unmindful of heavenly things; if God did not put us under the discipline of the cross, our minds and hearts would be more alienated from God and heavenly things: Ps. cxix. 67, 'Before I was afflicted I went astray.' Now, since the best need it, God will not be wanting in any part or point of necessary government to them.

3. That they may know the worth and benefit of God's word, and the comfort of it may be seen and felt by experience, how able it is to support us, and to uphold a sinking heart under any trouble whatsoever, Rom. xv. 4. In full prosperity, when we seem to live upon the creature, we know not the benefit of God's promise, nor how to live by faith; as the use of bladders in swimming is not known while we are upon firm land. The word of God provideth comforts for the obedient, not only at the end of the journey, but for their support at present, while they are in the way. These comforts would be useless if never put upon the trial; therefore none of God's children must look to be exempted: 1 Peter v. 9, 'All these afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.' Our condition is no harder than the rest of the saints of God that have passed through the world.

Secondly, David was ready to sink under his burden; and so are other the people of God ready to perish, when they look to the bare afflictions. This may come:—

1. From the grievousness of the affliction, which staggereth and amazeth them: Ps. lx. 3, 'Thou hast showed thy people hard things; thou hast made us to drink of the wine of astonishment.' Their thoughts are confounded, as a man that has taken a poisonous potion. They know not to what hand to turn, are wholly dispirited, and put out of all comfort.

2. It comes from the weakness of the saints. There is some weakness and imbecility in the best, more than they are aware of; as when David was ready to faint under the cross before troubles came. We are like unto Peter, we think we can walk upon the sea; but some boisterous wind or other assaults our confidence, and then we cry out, 'Help, Master, we perish,' Mat. xiv. 30. We reckon only upon the sea, but do not think of the wind, and so our weakness is made evident by proof. Whence cometh this weakness?

[1.] Partly because we look more to the creature than to God, and to our dangers than to the power that is to carry us through them: Isa. li. 12, 13, 'I, even I, am he that comforteth thee: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?' We that have the immortal and almighty

God to be our protector and saviour, why should we be afraid of a frail, mortal man?

[2.] If they look to God, yet God doth not seem to look to them. If a thin curtain be drawn between God and us, we are presently dismayed, as if he were wholly gone; and because of our hardships, question the love of God: Ps. lxxvii. 9, 'Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?' Isa. xlix. 14, 'Zion hath said, The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me;' though our condition be every way consistent with the fatherly love of God: Heb. xii. 5, 'Have you forgotten the exhortation which speaketh to you as children?' We are children, though under discipline; and God is a father, though he frowneth as well as smileth.

[3.] Impatience of delay; if we question not his love, yet cannot tarry his leisure. Certainly it is very good to wait God's leisure; though he seemeth asleep, he will awake for our help. Faith makes us like people that dig the pit, and wait for the rain to come down and fill it; to lay the cloth, though we know not whence the provision will be sent. But the people of God have not always the strength of faith, and therefore faint, and are ready to perish: 'I said in my haste, I am cut off,' Ps. xxxi. 22.

[4.] Religion itself entendereth the heart; a father's anger is no slight thing to a gracious soul. When we are afflicted, and God is angry, the trouble is the more grievous, and it is hard to steer right between the two rocks of slighting and fainting. Well, then, pity poor creatures under their burden, and help them, but censure them not.

Thirdly, His remedy, God's word; there is the paradise of delights, and the only *requies* to allay the bitter sense of all our troubles. Why?

1. As to the main blessings, there is represented to us the true fountain of all comfort, who is God, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, 2 Cor. i. 13; who distributeth comfort when and where and to whom he pleaseth.

2. There is discovered to us the meritorious and procuring cause, who is Jesus Christ: 'Who hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,' 2 Thes. ii. 16.

3. The Spirit, who is the applier of all comfort, therefore called the Comforter; and he giveth us peace and joy in believing, Rom. xv. 3.

4. The true instrument, means, or condition whereby we receive comfort, and that is faith, John xiv. 1.

5. The true matter of comfort, and that is pardon and life.

[1.] Pardon and reconciliation with God, Rom. v. 10. No solid cause of rejoicing till then, when reconciled to God; then true peace, and peace that passeth all understanding, which will guard both heart and mind, Phil. iv. 7; then all miseries are unstinged. Solid peace of conscience is your best support and comfort under afflictions, the intrinsic evil of afflictions is then taken away: Lam. iii. 39, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?' While sin remaineth unpardoned, the thorn still remaineth in the sore.

[2.] The promise of eternal life, Rom. v. 2. There is the crown set against the cross, heavenly comforts against earthly afflictions; the

afflictions of God's children comparatively are light and short : 2 Cor. iv. 17, ' This light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Nothing should be grievous to them that know a world to come, where all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and we shall enjoy fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore.

6. It showeth us who are the parties capable—the renewed or sanctified : Ps. xxxii. 11, ' Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.' To all Christ's sincere, faithful, and obedient servants, these promises are matter of abundant joy.

As to particular comforts concerning afflictions, it is endless to instance in all, but take a few instances.

1. The word of God teaches us not only how to bear them, but how to improve them. As it teaches us how to bear them, it breedeth quietness and submission ; but as it teaches us how to improve them, it breedeth peace and joy. To bear : Micah. vii. 9, ' I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me : he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.' To improve them : Heb. xii. 11, righteousness brings peace along with it. The fruit is better than the deliverance, as we get spiritual advantage by them, as they promote repentance, purge out sin, bring us home to God. They rid us of the matter of our trouble, and bring us to the centre of our rest.

2. The word teaches to depend upon God for the moderating of them, and deliverance from them, 1 Cor. x. 13. Before he giveth a passage out of our pressures, he vouchsafeth present support to us, and will not permit his servants to be tempted beyond what they are able to bear.

3. His people have most experience of God under the cross ; they have a more peculiar allowance from God for sufferings than for ordinary services. Paul was strongest when weak, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. The greater pressures, the more sensible the divine assistance. And when ordinary means fail, and they are pressed above their own strength, the more visible the proof of God's help. When they are most apt to have jealousies of God's love, they have had the highest manifestations of it ; never more liberty than in the house of bondage ; most of God's smiles when all things seem to frown upon them. In short, have had more understanding, not only of God's word, but his love.

4. God's governing all things for the benefit of his people : Rom. viii. 28, ' And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God : ' sure, then, afflictions. Now they submitting, and being exercised under sharp dispensations, may find it verified to them ; many things seem for our hurt intendedly, many thought so by ourselves, but God knoweth how to bring good out of them, Cant. iv. 16.

Fourthly, David saith, ' My delights.' They that seek their solace and delight in the word shall find it there. It is an excellent frame of heart to be satisfied with the comforts which the word offereth ; every one cannot be thus affected. To raise this delight :—

1. Faith is necessary; for the comforts of the word are received and improved by faith. Unless we expect the sure accomplishment of God's promises, how can we be supported by them? Ps. xxvii. 13, 'I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living;' that is, without a full assent to the promises which God had made him of his restoration, for he had particular assurance of the kingdom, as we have of the kingdom of heaven. So for the consent, as well as assent, to take the happiness contained in the promises as our whole felicity: Ps. cxix. 111, 'Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; they are the rejoicing of my heart.' There is heritage and portion rich enough in God's promises, and this breedeth joy in all afflictions.

2. Meditation is necessary; for thereby the sweetness of the word is perceived and tasted, and the promises laid before us. It is the fruit of delight: Ps. i. 2, 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' And it is the cause of it: Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.' They who delight in a thing will often view it and consider it, and thereby their delight is increased. The most lively truths work not on us for want of serious consideration.

3. There must be mortification and self-denial, or prizing spiritual favours before temporal benefits. The cross will not be grievous to a mortified spirit, when they compare their gain with their loss, 2 Cor. iv. 16. To others we speak in vain, whose hearts are set upon worldly advantages; but they who value all things in order to the chief good, and have weaned their hearts from the false happiness, they have their end if they be brought nearer to God, though by a bitter and sharp means.

Use 1. Reproof to four sorts.

1. To those that know no comfort but what ariseth from the enjoyments of sense. Alas! these comforts are dreggy and base, and leave a taint upon the soul, Jude 19. Again, they leave us destitute when we most need comfort, Job xxvii. 8. When other comforts forsake us, and have spent their allowance, the comforts of the word abide with us. Again, these comforts increase our grief, though for a time they seem to mitigate and allay it. They are like strong waters, that warm the stomach for the present, but destroy the true temper and natural heat of it, and leave it the colder afterwards; they cheer us a little, but the end of that mirth is heaviness. Oh! how much better are the comforts of God's word, which giveth us matter of joy in the saddest condition; and do not only save us from desperation in troubles, but make us rejoice in tribulation, and can bring pleasure to us in our bitterest afflictions! There are breasts of consolation for every distressed creature to suck at and be saved.

2. It reproves them that think philosophy as good, or a better institution than Christianity. Certainly we should own the wisdom of God, by what hand soever it is conveyed to us; as Elijah refused not his meat though brought by ravens. But when this is done by men of a profane wit, in a contempt of God, we must convince them of their dangerous error and mistake, and show how complete we are in Christ, that we be not spoiled by the rudiments of vain wisdom or philosophy.

Col. ii. 8. Surely God's comforts have greatest authority over the conscience to silence all our murmurings, Ps. xciv. 19. Man speaks to us by the evidence of reason, but in scripture God himself speaks to us, and impawneth his truth with us to do us good. They knew not the true cause of trouble, sin; nor the true remedy, Jesus Christ. And surely those great mysteries of Christ as procurer of comfort, the Spirit as the applier, heaven as the matter, the word as the warrant, faith as the means to receive, all these are a more accommodate means to settle the conscience than those little glimmerings of light which refined nature discovered. They speak of submitting out of necessity, little of reducing the heart to God; and their very doctrines for comfort were rather a libel against providence than a sure ground of peace and tranquillity of mind; and they taught men to eradicate the affections rather than to govern and quiet them; and therefore keep up your reverence to the scriptures. A Seneca may speak things more neatly, and to the gust of carnal fancy, but not with greater power and efficacy; this is reserved for the word.

3. It reproves them that undervalue the consolations laid down in the word, as if they were but slender, empty, and unsatisfactory, and would have some singular and extraordinary way of getting comfort: Job xv. 11, 'Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee?' God's ordinary way is the sure way, the other layeth us open to a snare; therefore they who undervalue the ordinary comforts of the word, obtained in a way of faith and repentance, and close walking with God (as Naaman undervalued the waters of Jordan), and would have signs and wonders to comfort them, they may long sit in darkness, because if God comfort them not in their way, they will not be comforted at all. Now, though God hath sometimes, in condescension to his people, granted them their desires—as to Thomas—yet it is with an upbraiding of their weakness and unbelief, John xx. 28. We should acquiesce in the common allowance of God's people, lest we seem to reflect on the wisdom and goodness of God, and lay open ourselves to some false consolation and dream of comfort, while we affect new means without the compass of the word; especially when we find not our expectations there speedily answered, like hasty patients, readier to tamper with every new medicine they hear of, than submit to a regular course of physic. Gregory tells us of a lady of the emperor's court that never ceased importuning him to seek from God a revelation from heaven that she should be saved. He answers, *Rem difficilem et inutilem postulas*—it was a thing difficult and unprofitable; difficult for him to obtain, unprofitable for her to ask, having a surer way by the scriptures, 2 Peter i. 19, than oracles. The adhering of the soul to the promises is the unquestionable way to obtain a sound peace. Luther, as he confesseth, was often tempted to ask a sign of the pardon of his sins, or some special revelation. He tells also how strongly he withstood these temptations—*Pactum feci cum Domino meo ne mihi mittat visiones, vel somnia, vel etiam angelos: contentus enim sum hoc dono, quod habeo scripturam sanctam; quæ abunde docet et suppeditat omnia, quæ necessaria sunt tam ad hanc vitam, quam ad futuram,*—I indented with the Lord my God, that he would never send me

dreams and visions; I am well contented with the gift of the scriptures.

4. It shows how much they are to blame that are under a scripture institution and do so little honour it by their patience or comfort under troubles. Wherefore were the great mysteries of godliness made known to us, and the promises of the world to come, and all the directions concerning the subjection of the soul to God, and those blessed privileges we enjoy by Christ, if they all be not able to satisfy and stay your heart, and compose it to a quiet submission to God, when it is his pleasure to take away his comforts from you? Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Will not the whole word of God yield you a cordial or a cure? It is a disparagement to the provision Christ hath made for our comfort.

[1.] Surely this comes either from ignorance or forgetfulness; you do not meditate in the word, or study the grounds of comfort, and remember them: Heb. xii. 5, 'Have you forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children?' Hagar had a well of comfort nigh at hand, yet ready to die for thirst.

[2.] You indulge a distemper, and the obstinacy and peevishness of grief: Jer. xxxi. 15, 'A voice was heard in Rama, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, and refused to be comforted.' Certainly you do not expostulate with yourselves, and cite your passions before the tribunal of reason, Ps. xlii. 5; or else look altogether to the grievance, not to the comfort; aggravate the grievances, extenuate the comforts; you pitch too much upon temporal happiness, would have God maintain you at your own rate: Heb. xiii. 5, 6, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' A man must be purged from inordinate affection when he would trust in God. Do not pitch too doatingly upon temporal happiness.

Use 2. Let us get these comforts settled upon our hearts. Was this peculiar to David alone? No; every godly man, as Theodoret observeth, may say in his trouble, Unless thy word had been my delights, I had perished in mine affliction. So Daniel when forbidden to pray; so the three children in the furnace; all the martyrs; yea, all the afflicted servants of God. Therefore let us—

1. Prize the scripture, and be more diligent in hearing, reading, meditating on the blessed truths contained therein. The earth is the fruitful mother of all herbs and plants; yet it must be tilled, ploughed, harrowed, and dressed, else it bringeth forth little fruit. The scripture containeth all the grounds of comfort and happiness, but we have little benefit unless daily versed in reading, hearing, meditation. Surely if we prize it as we should we would do so: Ps. cxix. 97, 'Oh, how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day.' There is the only remedy of sin and misery, the offer of true blessedness, the sure rule to walk by.

2. If you would have these comforts, you must get such a spirit of application under afflictions: Job v. 27, 'Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.' All efficacy is conveyed by the touch; the nearer the touch, the greater the power and

efficacy; bring it down to your hearts: Rom. viii. 31, 'What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?'

3. The law of God must be your delight in prosperity, if you would have it your support in adversity: Ps. cxix. 105, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.' That which is our antidote against our lusts is our best cordial against our passions: 2 Peter i. 4, 'Whereby are given to 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.' When afflictions come upon you, consider what is your greatest burden and what is your greatest comfort, for then you are best at leisure to consider both; your greatest burden, that you may avoid it, your greatest comfort, that you may apply yourselves to it.

SERMON XCVIII.

I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.—VER. 93.

IN these words observe two things:—

1. David's thankful resolution, *I will never forget thy precepts.*

2. The reason of it, *for with them thou hast quickened me.*

First, In his thankful resolution, take notice:—

1. Of the object, *thy precepts.*

2. The duty promised, and negatively expressed, *I will never forget.*

1. For the object, 'Thy precepts;' thereby may be meant the word in general; he had found benefit by it, and the word of God should ever be dear and precious to him, especially the gospel part of it. Surely that is the great means of quickening; that may be comprised in the term, *thy precepts*, if not principally intended; or else most especially some particular truth which God had blessed to the use and comfort of his soul: I shall never forget that truth, those precepts of thine.

2. The duty promised, 'I will never forget.' Forgetting or remembering is sometimes taken in scripture for a notional remembrance or notional forgetting, when we retain the notions of such a truth, or the notions of it vanish out of our minds. And sometimes it is taken practically, when we are suitably affected, as the thing or truth remembered deserves. Both may be intended; I remember, retain, feel the fruit of thy word. That which hath done us good, the very notions of it will stick in our minds. Or else it may be for the practical remembrance; so it signifies, I will prize, I will cleave fast to it as long as I live. To remember is to esteem, and to forget is to neglect; as Heb. xiii. 16, 'To do good, and to communicate, forget not;' that is, neglect not. I may remember to communicate, yet not perform; but forget not, that is, neglect not. In this sense we usually say, You forget me, that is, you neglect to do that which I desired of you. So David saith, 'I will never forget thy precepts.' The remembrance of his promises

is effectual and perpetual. It is effectual; for I will remember it, prize it, and lay it up in my heart with thankfulness. And it is perpetual; 'I will never;' the Hebrew is, 'not to all eternity;' 'I will not forget thy precepts for ever,' as we render it fitly.

Secondly, The reason, 'For with them thou hast quickened me.' The reason is taken from his experience of the benefit of this word; and there we have the benefit received, *quickening*; the author, *thou hast quickened*; the means, *with them*. God by this means had quickened his soul.

1. The benefit, quickened. There is a double quickening, when from dead we are made living, or when from cold and sad and heavy we are made lively. One sort of quickening the word speaks of is when from dead we are made living, Eph. ii. 1. Another when from cold, sad, heavy, we are made lively, and so not only have life, but enjoy it more abundantly, according to Christ's gracious promise, John x. 10, that they may be living, lively, kept still in vigour. Now this second quickening may be taken either more largely for the vitality of grace, or strictly for actual comfort. Largely taken; so God quickens by increasing the life of grace, either internally by promising the life of grace, or morally and externally by promising the life of glory. More strictly; his quickening may be taken for comfort and support in his affliction; so it is likely to be taken here: he had said before, ver. 92, immediately before the text, 'Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction;' and now, 'I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.' It was great comfort and support to him, and therefore he should prize the word as long as he lived. This is the benefit received, *thou hast quickened me*.

2. Here is the author, *thou*. God put him, by the inspiration of grace, upon the meditation of his word, and then he blessed that meditation; his assistance and grace doth all. We receive all degrees of life from the fountain of life. The word was the means, but *thou hast quickened me*.

3. The means, *by them*; that is, by his precepts; the word was spirit and life to him. By the Spirit God makes his word lively in operation, and conduceth very much to quickening, comforting, and supporting of the saints.

Doct. Those that have received comfort, life, and quickening by the word of God, find themselves obliged to remember it for ever.

I shall illustrate this proposition by these considerations:—

1. That God's children are sometimes under deadness.

2. That in such deadness the word of God is the only means to quicken them.

3. Though the word be quick and lively and powerful, yet it is God that must bless it, that must make it a support to the soul.

4. That whenever we have received these comforts, quickenings, and supports from him, they should ever be recorded and treasured up in the registers of a thankful memory, for the great uses of Christianity.

First, God's children are under deadness sometimes, which happeneth to them for many causes.

1. By reason of some sin committed, and not repented of, or not

fully repented of. God smites them with deadness and hardness of heart, and the spiritual life for awhile is greatly obstructed and impaired, that it cannot discover itself, and they have not those lively influences of grace as formerly. Thus it was with David when he had strayed so greatly from God, and begs God not to cast him off: Ps. li. 11, 'Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.' As a wound in the body lets out the life, blood, and spirits, so these grievous sins are as a wound in the soul. Sin against the conscience of a renewed man defaceth the work of the Holy Spirit, so that for a while he seems to be shut out from God's favour, and his gracious abilities are lessened and impaired; he is like a wounded man, till he be cured and made whole again. The Spirit being grieved and resisted, withdraws, and the strength of the soul is wasted; and therefore be very tender, stand in awe not only of greater, but smaller sins.

2. By reason of some good omitted, especially neglect of the means whereby we may be kept alive, fresh and lively in God's service. Lazy fits of indisposition and omissions of duty do more frequently steal in upon believers than positive outbreakings and commissions of sin, and they are more ready to please themselves in them, and lie still under them, and so by this means contract much deadness of heart. As a lute that is not played upon, but hangs by the wall, and not used, it soon grows out of keller for want of use; so if we do not diligently and constantly exercise ourselves in godliness, our hearts grow dead and vain. It is the complaint of the church, Isa. lxiv. 7, 'There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' If we do not stir up ourselves to keep on a constant commerce with God and respect to God, alas! deadness creeps upon the heart unawares; and we are commanded, *ἀναζωοποιεῖν*, 2 Tim. i. 6, 'To stir up the gift of God which is in us.' Surely a slothful servant will soon become an evil servant: Mat. xxv. 26, 'Thou evil and slothful servant.' Therefore our sinful sluggishness is one cause of our deadness; for he that doth not trade with his talents will necessarily become poor: and if we do not continue this holy attendance upon God, the heart suffers loss: 1 Thes. v. 19, 20, 'Despise not prophecy; quench not the Spirit.' The coupling of these two things together shows, that if we despise prophecy, we quench the Spirit; as fire goes out not only by pouring on water, but by not stirring and blowing it up. To expect help from God when we are sluggish is to tempt Christ, and put him still upon a miraculous way to heal and cure our distempers. Who will bring bread and meat to a sluggard's bed, who will not arise to labour for it, or will not rise at least to fetch it? Therefore, if we will not attend upon God in the means of grace, he will not bring us that help, comfort, and supply that otherwise we might have. God worketh, but so that we work also: Phil. ii. 12, 13, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh,' &c. God's working is not a ground of laziness, but for more strict observance. Since all depends upon God, therefore take heed you do not offend God, and provoke him to suspend his grace. We must not lie upon a bed of ease, and cry, Christ must do all; for this is to abuse the power of grace to laziness. It is notable that God bids his people do that which he promiseth to give them, Ps. xxxi. 24; Ps. xxvii. 14, 'Be of

good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart.' As if he had said, Strengthen thine heart, and he will strengthen thy heart. The courage of faith is both commanded and promised. Why? God by this would show how we should shake ourselves out of our laziness and idleness; that though God gives us grace and power, yet he will have us to work; as a father that lifts up his child's arm to a burden, and bids him lift it up. Usually we complain of deadness with a reflection upon God; he quickens the dead, and therefore I am dead. Ay! but what hast thou done to quicken thy self? for grace was never intended that we might be idle. You must complain of yourselves as the moral faulty cause; God is the efficient cause. You do not meditate, pray, draw life out of the precious promises. When the spouse sleeps and keeps her bed, then Christ withdraws, Cant. v. 6.

3. Another cause is unthankfulness for benefits received, especially spiritual benefits; for God loves to have his grace acknowledged. He stops his hand, and suspends the influences of his grace, when the creature doth not acknowledge his bounty: Col. ii. 7, 'Be established and rooted in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving.' The way to grow in faith, and get by faith, is to be thankful for what we have received; that is an effectual means both to keep it and to get more. Therefore if we be always querulous, and do not give thanks for the goodness of God to us for what he hath already vouchsafed to us in Christ, no wonder that deadness and discouragement creep upon our hearts.

4. Pride in gifts; for we are told, James iv. 6, 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.' The garland we put on our own heads soon withers, and those gifts which we are puffed up with are presently blasted, and have deadness upon them; for he will teach us to ascribe all to himself.

5. Some great and heavy troubles. We read, ver. 107 of this psalm, 'I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word.' Oh! when we are afflicted sore, there is a deadness upon the heart, the spiritual life clogged. With what alacrity did they go about good things before! But then there is a damp; worldly sorrow deadens the spirit, as godly sorrow quickens it, and is a means to keep us alive to God.

6. Another cause is carnal liberty, or intermeddling with worldly vanities. So much we may learn from that prayer, Ps. cxix. 37, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.' Oh! when the children of God let loose their minds to vanity, and take immoderate liberty in the delights of the flesh, there is a deadness comes upon them, for therefore he goes to the cause: 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' Immoderate liberty in earthly things, or in gratifying the flesh, brings on a deadness upon the heart. The Spirit withdraws when the soul is taken off from other comforts, and is more addicted to vain pleasures: Jude 19, 'Sensual, not having the Spirit.' As we are enlarged to the flesh, we are straitened to the spirit. As sensuality increaseth, so the life and vitality of grace decays.

Secondly, In such cases, the word of God is the only means to quicken us. Why the word? For two reasons:—

1. Because the word contains the most quickening considerations, and the affections are wrought upon by serious and ponderous thoughts; for there God interposeth in the way of the highest authority, straitly charging and commanding us, under pain of his displeasure: and there he reasons with us again in the most potent and strong way of argumentation, from the excellency of his commands, their suitableness to us as we are reasonable creatures; from his great love to us in Christ, whom he hath given to die for us; from the danger if we refuse him, which is no less than everlasting torment; from the benefit and happiness in complying with his motions, which is no less than eternal and complete blessedness both for our bodies and souls; and all this is bound upon us by a strict day of impartial accounts. Oh, what a company of quickening considerations are there, to set us a work with life, vigor, and seriousness, when we are to answer for our neglects, or else to receive the reward of our diligence! Now what will quicken us if this will not? If the high and glorious authority of the supreme lawgiver awe us not, if the reasonableness of God's commands invite us not, if the wonderful love of God in Christ constrain us not, if the joys of heaven do not allure us, and the horrors of everlasting darkness do not preserve upon us a lively sense of our duty, what will work upon us if this do not, and gain us to a constant diligent care and serious preparation for our own happiness and salvation? Out of what rock was the heart of man hewn, that all this shall be brought to him in the most persuasive way, as it is in the word of God, and will not work upon him? Again, if the deadness should arise from our negligence in our duty, the word of God how powerfully doth it quicken us! But if the deadness should arise from sorrow and discomfort, is not the word as powerful to raise and quicken the soul to a delight in God as to enforce our duty? What puts a damp upon us? Is it fury of men? We have a living God to trust to, who will remain when they are gone, who will pardon our sins, help us in all our straits, who will lay upon us no more than we are able to bear, who will never leave us utterly destitute, but will sanctify all, and make all work together for the best, for our everlasting salvation, and finally bring us into his glorious presence, that we may live for ever with him. Here is comfort enough, whatever our heaviness be; such a powerful God to stand by us in all our troubles, and make all work for good, that at length we may be brought home to God. If this word did but dwell richly in our souls, it would keep us fresh and lively, and we need not fear man or devil, Col. iii. 16. Again, 1 John ii. 14, 'The word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.' We need fear nothing, for whoever trouble us, they are something under God. Whatever is our misery, and whatever befalls us, it is something less than hell, which we have escaped by Christ, and will all be made up in heaven. The first sight of God and the first glimpse of everlasting glory will recompense all the sorrows of the present life, and as soon as we step into heaven, all shall be forgotten. In short, God's particular providence, fatherly love and care, the example of Christ, the promise of the comforting Spirit, the hopes of glory, should revive us in all our languishings. So that if deadness comes from backwardness and slowness in our duty,

in the word there are most quickening considerations; or if from troubles, we have enough in God, Christ, the covenant, the promise of eternal life to support us. This is the first reason; the word of God is the only means to comfort us, because it contains proper quickening considerations, that may keep life and vigour in us, if either carnal distemper invade the heart, or worldly sorrow and fear, which is apt to perplex us.

2. The quickening Spirit delights to work by this means. The ordinary chariot, that carrieth the influences of grace, is the word of grace. The Spirit that speaks in the word speaks his own lively comforts to us. Alas! they are but cold comforts we can find elsewhere. The Spirit of God rides most triumphantly in his own chariot. The word and the Spirit are often associated, to show they go together. The word goes with the Spirit: Isa. lix. 21, 'My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart,' &c. Isa. xxx. 20, when God promiseth, 'Their eyes shall see their teachers,' it is promised also, 'They should hear a voice behind them, saying, This is the way;' God would afford the word and Spirit in times of their affliction. The Spirit works still in concomitancy with the word, that it may the better be known to be a revelation from God. If God will set up a word and revelation of his mind distinct from the light of nature, it is fit it should be owned; and that is done by a concomitancy of his grace, and powerful operations of his Spirit, that goes along with his word: John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.' We find the word to be truth, because it is associated and accompanied with the operations of the Spirit: 1 Peter i. 22, 'Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.' The Spirit still goes along with the truth of the gospel, and with God's word. His word is the sword of the Spirit. God will not bless any other doctrine so much as the word to quicken, revive, and comfort the soul; and therefore here we should busy ourselves, for it contains the surest grounds of comfort, and the Spirit is associated with it, and goes along with it, to bless it to our souls.

Thirdly, Though the word be the means, yet the benefit comes from God, 'for with them thou hast quickened me.' Life comes from the fountain of life. The gospel is a sovereign plaster, but it is God's hand that must apply it and make it stick, make it to be peace, comfort, and quickening to our souls. It is said, 1 Tim. vi. 13, 'That he that quickeneth all things is God.' The quickening of life natural or life spiritual is to be ascribed to God alone. Let me evidence this by three considerations:—

1. The life of grace is begun and carried on in a constant way of dependence upon God; he will not trust us with a stock of grace in our own hands, but our life is in Christ's hands: 1 John v. 12, 'He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life.' He hath it in his own hands, and he gives and conveys it to us. And Gal. ii. 20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' Christ made the purchase, and therefore it pleased the Father that the purchased treasure should be put into his hands, and not immediately into ours. We have so foully miscarried already, that God will trust his honour in our hands no more, as at first he did. We have nothing

but what we have daily from Christ and in Christ : he must influence us, and without him we can do nothing : John xv. 5, *χωρὶς ἐμοῦ*. Apart from him we can do nothing, therefore we cannot quicken ourselves ; for God hath reserved this life of grace, and kept it in his own hands, that we may have our daily supplies from Christ.

2. The vitality or liveliness of grace is not dispensed by a certain law, but according to the sovereign will and good pleasure of God. God gives life to his people, but the activity of it is only from his good pleasure : Phil. ii. 13, ' For it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of (or according to) his good pleasure.' He gives out comfort, and he gives degrees of quickening as he pleaseth, to some more, to some less, and not always in the same degree to the same persons ; therefore we must look up unto God if we would have this life and quickening ; it is very necessary to our well-being, but it is a favour, ' he worketh in us according to his good pleasure.'

3. The means cannot work without the principal agent. As the word could not convert us at first but by the power of God, or as his grace works by it, quickening a dead soul, purifying a defiled heart, humbling a proud mind ; so when the conscience grows sleepy, you need quickening excitations to duty. The same grace which caused a spiritual life doth give us spiritual strength, and maintain that life, by inclining the mind and will, by stirring up the affections by longing desires after Christ and glory ; so the soul is still kept alive in the same way as it was begotten by God at first : 1 Cor. iii. 7, ' Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but it is God that giveth the increase.' All is of God, who only hath the supreme power over men's hearts, to enlighten the mind, incline the will, and enlarge the affections. Though we use the means (and we sin if we do not), yet it is God that quickeneth us ; he hath the supreme power over the heart of man.

Fourthly, These powerful experiences in this kind will be and should be recorded and remembered by us ; for, saith David, ' I will never forget thy precepts.'

1. They will be remembered if we have met with any powerful experiences of the Lord's quickening and awakening the heart. (1.) We will remember what most concerns us. (2.) We will remember all those things which make notable impressions upon our souls.

[1.] Things that concern us will be remembered by us. Every one's memory is as his affections are. Let a child read the scripture, that chapter wherein mention is made of Joseph's parti-coloured coat, that will stick in his mind more than better things, because it suits with his childish fancy, and his desires that his parents should make such a garment for himself. And it is usually observed that youth is most taken with the histories of the Bible, because of their desire to know things past. And if once they come to manly age, they are more taken with the doctrines of the Bible, because when they grow men they begin to form their opinions of religion. And elder persons are taken with psalms, and holy devotional strains in scripture, because then, as they grow in age, it is time to address themselves to God. Persons in doubts and fears by reason of sin will be most affected with tenders of grace, as suiting best with their condition ; persons in affliction, with the consolations appointed for the afflicted ; persons in

conflict with any sin, with those passages which afford most direct help against them. Still that which more especially concerns us should and will be most observed and remembered by us, for there it speaks to our very hearts. Now, saith the soul, in such a point, in such extremity, the word of God did my heart good; I shall remember it as long as I live; when a reasonable word is spoken to their case; their judgment was not passed over by the Lord: I was dead, and it revived me; disconsolate, and it comforted me; ready to-stray, and it reduced me; under such a temptation, and it relieved me. I should transcribe the whole scripture, especially the psalms, if I should tell you how often David takes notice what the word of God did to him in such and such a condition; for still things that nearly concern us, they will affect us, and be remembered by us.

[2.] Those things will be remembered that make any notable impression, that leave a lively sense upon the heart; they impress a notice of themselves, and will not be forgotten: Luke xxiv. 32, 'Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?' If opening of the scriptures causeth any burning of heart, or any strange workings of soul, when the heat is gone and past yet the burning cannot be forgotten; they remembered Christ still, and can speak of the actings of the Spirit, not only when they are on, but when they are over and past. Christ was vanished out of sight and gone, yet they cannot forget the warmth of heart they felt while he opened the scriptures to them: Cant. v. 4, 'He put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him;' and ver. 6, 'My soul failed when he spake.' Oh! if we be soundly humbled or soundly comforted, or be effectually moved and stirred to the remembrance of God, then heavenly things that occasion this will not be forgotten.

2. These things should be remembered to confirm our faith, to increase our love.

[1.] To confirm our faith. Faith is taken either for a general assent to the word, or for a dependence upon God for some blessing that we want or stand in need of.

(1.) If we take it for a general assent to the word, why, these notable quickenings and experiences of the convincing or comforting or converting power of the word, they are a secondary confirmation of the truth of the word to us. I tell you why I put in that word, a *secondary* confirmation; they are not a primary, for we must believe the word before we can feel its efficacy and find it to be effectual to us; and therefore the primary grounds of faith are the impressions of God upon the word, the secondary are the impressions of God upon the heart. Now I have felt the virtue and power of the truth upon my soul, and all the world shall not draw me from it. I must have a primary confirmation of the truth of the word before I can believe, and before it can work in me. The apostle saith, 1 Thes. ii. 13, 'Ye received the word, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe.' First I receive it as the word of God by some marks, and notes, and characters, some impress of God upon his word; somewhat God hath left of himself in the word, and that awes my heart to reverence it, there I receive it upon my heart; but when it works in me

mightily, I have a secondary confirmation. When I have eyes to see the impress of God upon the word, then I feel the power of it; and when I have felt the power of it, it is confirmed in my soul, 1 Cor. i. 6. When we feel the blessed effects, the quickenings and comforts of the word, it is a mighty help to faith. So 1 John v. 10, 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.' What is that witness in himself? Why, the witness of the Spirit, applying the blood of Christ to the conscience, sanctifying and quickening the heart; then he hath the witness in himself, and is more confirmed that Jesus is the Christ, and the word of God is true, and cannot easily be divorced from it; he hath felt the effects of it in his own heart: Col. i. 5, 6, 'For the hope that is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, and knew the graving of God in truth.' We guess at things before, and have but a wavering faith, such as may let in some work upon the soul; then we know it in truth, then it is more fully made good to us, by the convincing, comforting, and sanctifying Spirit, that evidenceth it to our souls, and this can be no other but the truth of God; this makes our faith more strong and rooted, and we may be confirmed in the hope and belief of the gospel, and may not easily be removed therefrom.

(2.) Take faith in the other notion, for a dependence upon God, for something that we stand in need of. Every manifestation of his grace should be kept as an experience by us for afterwards, when that frame may be away, when God may hide his face, and all dead in the soul; as David in his infirmity 'remembered the years of the right hand of the most high,' and former experiences of God, Ps. lxxvii. 10. As he, in an outward case, for outward deliverances, remembered the former help and succours he had from God, so we may remember former grace and former quickening. There are many ups and downs in the spiritual life, for even the new creature is changeable, both in point of duty and in point of comfort. Now it is a mighty confirmation when we remember what God hath done:—

(1st.) In point of duty. Sometimes you shall find you are dull and heartless under the ordinances of God; in reading and hearing you find little life, lazy, and almost indifferent, whether you call upon God in secret, or hear the word, or join in the communion of saints; no relish in any duty, do it almost for custom's sake, or at best but to please your consciences: you must do it, and you drive on heavily, not for any great need you feel of them, or good you find by them, or hope you expect from them. Now it is of great use to remember how I have waited upon God formerly, and he hath quickened, refreshed, and comforted me; and therefore it is good to try again, to keep up our dependence upon his ordinances, when this dulness seizeth upon the soul, and this listlessness; when conscience is sleepy, and the heart hangs off from God, remember I have been quickened.

(2d.) If it be in point of comfort, fears and sorrows, why! is there no balm in Gilead? no physician there? Hath not God relieved in like straits before, and given in fresh consolations, when you have bemoaned yourselves and opened your case before him? There are none acquainted with the spiritual life but have many experiences both of deadness and comfort. Now one is a great help against the

other, that our hands may not wax faint and feeble. God, that hath comforted, may comfort again, and why should I neglect his appointed means? No; I will continue there, and lie at the pool where the waters have been stirred.

[2.] They are of use, again, to stir up our affections to God and his word.

(1.) To increase our love to God. Oh! we should keep the impression of his kind manifestation still upon the heart, that the mercy may be continually acknowledged. Surely it is a favour that God will manifest himself to us, and own us in our attendance upon his word and other duties. The Lord Jesus promiseth it as a great blessing: John xiv. 21, 'He that loveth me, and keepeth my commandment, shall be loved of my father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.' Now, then, when any such sensible favour is vouchsafed to us, we should not forget it, but lay it up as a continual ground of thankfulness and love to God: Cant. i. 4, 'We will be glad, and rejoice in thee; we will remember thy love more than wine.' When God hath treated us most magnificently in his ordinances, either at his table or word, and hath refreshed and revived our souls, oh! we will remember this, and lay it up for the honour of God, and knit our hearts in a greater love to God.

(2.) It is of great use to increase our love to the word, for the excellency and worth of the word is found experimentally by believers, so that their love and estimation of it is more fixed and settled upon their hearts, so that they purpose to make use of it always for their comfort and direction; it is a great encouragement when formerly they have found comfort and life thereby. The apostle, to settle the Galatians that began to waver, that were apt to be overcome by their Judaizing brethren, to settle them in love to the gospel, he puts them to the question, Gal. iii. 2, 'This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' The Spirit of regeneration, with all his comforts and graces, is not conveyed to you by the doctrine of the law, but the doctrine of the gospel. As if he had said, Stick to that doctrine where you have been quickened, comforted, revived, and your hearts settled, for God hath owned that doctrine. He appeals to their own conscience, and to their own known experience, that they should not quit the doctrine of faith, but prize and keep close to it; for surely that which hath been a means of begetting grace in our souls should be highly prized by us. If God hath wrought grace, and any comfort and peace, stick there, and own God there, and be not easily moved from thence. Another apostle reasons, James i. 18, 19, 'God hath begotten us by the word of truth, wherefore be swift to hear;' that is, Oh! do not neglect hearing; take heed of forsaking or neglecting the word, for then you go against your own known experience. You know here you had your life, quickening, comfort, strength, and will you be turned off from this?—for many times a seducer may turn off a believer from the word which hath given him his first knowledge of Christ.

There are three causes which carry saints to the word and other ordinances—viz., necessity, natural appetite and inward inclination, and experience. Necessity; they cannot live without the word. Natural

appetite and inward inclination; they have hearts suited to this work; the Spirit, which wrought in the heart, hath put a nature in them suitable to the work. And experience; they have found benefit by it. These are the three grand causes of respect to the word, and they are all implied or expressed in that, 1 Peter ii. 2, 'As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word,' there is natural appetite for the word; we have them come as new-born babes. And there is necessity; you cannot live, nor keep, nor increase what you have, unless you keep to the word. And there is experience; if so be you have tasted, you have had powerful impressions and quickenings by this word. We should engage our hearts upon experience, the comfort, life and light that we have had by the word of God.

Our own spiritual estate will sooner be discerned by these experiences, the comfort and quickening received from the word, in the way of duty; for 'experience worketh hope,' Rom. v. 4. If your experiences be observed and regarded, this works a hopeful dependence upon God for everlasting glory; your evidences will be more ready, and sooner come to hand. The motions of our souls are various, and, through corruption, very confused and dark; and this is that which makes it so difficult upon actual search to discern how it stands between us and God; it is for want of observation. But now, if there be constant observation of what passeth between us and God, how he hath quickened, comforted, and owned us in our attendance upon him, and what he hath done to bring on our souls in the way of life, these will make up an evidence, and will abundantly conduce to the quickening and comforting of our hearts.

Use 1. For information. It shows us—

1. The reason why so many neglect and contemn God's word; because they never got benefit by it, they find no life in it, therefore no delight in it. Those that are quickened acknowledge the mercy and improve it; they esteem the word, and have a greater conscience of their duty. It is not enough to find truth in truth, not to be able to contradict it, but you must find life; then we will prize and esteem it, when it hath been lively in its operations to our souls.

2. It shows the reason why so many forget the word, because they are not quickened. You would remember it by a good token if there were a powerful impression left upon your souls; and the reason is, because you do not meditate upon it, that you may receive this lively influence of the Spirit: for a sermon would not be forgotten, if it had left any lively impression upon your souls.

3. If we want quickening we must go to God for it; and God works powerfully by the influence of his grace, and so he quickens us by his Spirit; and he works morally by the word, both by the promises and threatenings thereof: and so, if you would be quickened, you must use the means, attend upon reading and preaching, and meditating upon the word. As he works powerfully with respect to himself, so morally by reasonings.

Use 2. By way of reflection upon ourselves.

Have we had any of these experiences? David found life in God's word, therefore resolves never to forego it or forget it. Therefore, what experience have you had of the word of God? Surely at least at first

conversion there was the work of faith and repentance, at first you will have this experience. How were you brought home to God? What! have you had no quickening from the word of God?

Case. But here is a case of conscience: Doth every one know their conversion, or way of their own conversion? Christians are usually sensible of this first work. There is so much bitter sorrow, and afterwards so much rejoicing of hope which doth accompany, that surely this should not be strange. But though you have not been so way to mark God's dealings with you, and the particular quickenings of your souls, yet at least when the Lord raised you out of your security, and brought you home to himself, you should have remembered it: 1 Thes. i. 9, 'They themselves show of us what manner of entering we had unto you.' The entrance usually is known, though afterward the work be carried on with less observation. Growth is not so sensible as the first change. God's first work is most powerful, meets with greater opposition, and so leaves a greater feeling upon us; and therefore it were strange if we were brought home to Christ, and no way privy and conscious to the way of it, as if all were done in our sleep. I say, to think so were to give security a soft pillow to rest on. And therefore, what quickenings had you then? Can you say, Well, I shall never forget this happy season and occasion, when God first awakened me to look after himself? Many of God's children cannot trace the particular footsteps of their conversion, and mark out all the stages of Christ's journey and approach to their souls, for all are not alike thus troubled. But yet, that men may not please themselves with the supposition of imaginary grace wrought in them without their privy and knowledge, let me speak to this grand case, this manner of entrance of Christ into our souls, how we are quickened from the dead and made living.

1. None are converted but are first convinced of their danger and evil estate; God's first work is upon their understandings: Jer. xxxi. 19, 'After I was instructed I smote upon the thigh,' &c. There is some light breaks in upon the soul which sets them seriously a considering, What am I? whither am I going? what will become of me? And Rom. vii. 9, 'When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' The commandment, the law of God, breaks in with all its terrors and curse upon the soul by strong conviction, and the man is given for gone, lost and dead. You know the way to the bowels is by the mouth and the stomach, and so by other passages. There is no way to the affections but by the ear, then to the understanding, and then passeth to the apprehension, the judgment, and conscience, and heart; from the apprehension to the grammatical knowledge, then they come to the judgment, then to the conscience; and when conscience is set a work, usually there is some feeling.

2. Conviction, where it is strong and serious, where it is not *levis et mollis*, it cannot be without some compunction. The eye affects the heart. Can a man be sensible of a lost condition, and of the necessity of a change, without being troubled at it, without making a serious weighty business of it? Are heaven and hell such slight matters that a man can think of the one or the other without any commotion of heart?—(pray do but bethink yourselves; I shall solve the par-

ticular cases, but I must establish the general one)—especially if he be convinced of his being obnoxious to one, and doth not know whether he shall have the other, yea or nay? Certainly whoever is instructed or convinced will smite upon his thigh and bemoan himself as Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. There is none ever came to Christ, the spiritual physician, but they were in some degree heart-sick; none ever came for ease but they felt a load upon their back. If there be conviction and compunction, this will be felt.

3. But then the degrees are various, some are more, some less, some earnestly solicitous, or deeply in horror. Some are brought to God by the horrors of despair, and are convinced with a higher and more smart degree of sorrow, before ever they come to settle; but all are serious and anxious. There is certainly a difference; some men's conversion is more gentle, others more violent. To some, Christ comes like an armed man, and doth powerfully vanquish Satan in their hearts; to others, there is a great deal of difficulty and conflict, which must needs impress a notice of itself. Some are sweetly drawn, others are snatched out of the fire. To some the Spirit comes with a mighty rushing wind, to others by a gentle blast, sweetly and softly blows open the door. God opened the heart of Lydia; we read of no more, Acts xvi. 14. But when he comes to the jailer, he had more horror of conscience, and more sorrow and desperation, and was ready to kill himself, saying, 'What shall I do to be saved?' ver. 31. The Lord bids us to put a difference, to have compassion of some, and to pluck others more violently out of the fire, Jude 23. So here, the Lord's work is various, it is to some more gentle, but to others it is with a greater horror.

4. I answer—That no certain rule can be given as to this different dispensation, why some are so gently used, and others so violently brought home to God. Sometimes they which have had good education, and less errors of life, have less terrors of heart, as being restrained from gross sins; at other times they have had most terrors, because they have withstood so many means, and because they do not know when God works upon them. Sometimes those which are called to greatest services have had most terrors, that they may speak more of the evil of sin, having felt the bitterness of it: 2 Cor. v. 11, 'Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.' Sometimes it is quite otherwise; they which have been called to some eminent public service for God may not drink so deeply of this cup, but are spared, that they may be kept more entire for their public work, which serves instead of sorrow and trouble of conscience. Again, sometimes men and women of most excellent and acute understandings are most humble, as having clearest apprehensions of the heinousness of sin and terror of wrath. At other times, on the contrary, these horrors and fears come from ignorance, as fears arise in the dark, and weak spirits are apt to be terrified, and have a knowledge of the remedy as soon as they know their disease; the work may be more gentle. Sometimes these terrors fall on a strong body, as being best able to bear them; sometimes on a weak, the devil taking advantage of their weaknesses and manifold infirmities. Many times in hot and fiery natures their changes are sudden, carried on with extremities; but sometimes soft natures,

whose motions are slow and gentle, by degrees are surprised, and impressions of grace are made insensibly. Thus God acts as he will, but in the general all are serious and solicitous.

5. Because no certain rule can be given, the measure must not be looked after, but the effects; we are not so much to look to the deepness of the wound, as the soundness of the cure. The means only respect the end, therefore the end must be considered; and many times the effects are visible and more evident in fruit and feeling. Now, if we give sound proof that we are converted, I am contented. If the work be done, that sufficeth, which way soever it be done, though usually it is done by some notable and powerful impression upon the heart. Look, as the blind man said, John ix. 25, 'Which way my eyes were opened I know not; but this I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see.' So if the renewed soul can say, How the work was done, I cannot tell; I have been waiting upon God, and have felt the fruits of his grace upon my heart.

6. The effects of this first work are these:—

[1.] A hearty welcoming of Christ Jesus into the soul; they do not take up with comfort on this side Christ. Men's troubles are known by their satisfaction. If honour satisfied men, then disesteem and disrespect were their trouble, however they did palliate it with religious pretences. If riches satisfied men, then poverty pinched them. If the prosperity of the world satisfied men, it was worldly adversity was their trouble, though it crept under religious pretences. But if we see the necessity of a saviour, receive him into our hearts, and believe in him with all our heart's desire, and delight, and all is carried after Christ and after the refreshings of his grace, and are satisfied with none but Christ, and our hearts pant for him 'as the hart panteth after the water-brooks,' you ought to bless God that he hath left the impression of the effect, though he hath not left the impression of the way, Ps. xlii. 1. But now, when desires after Christ are either none at all, or cold and faint, and easily put out of the humour, and only provoke you now and then to put up a cold prayer, or express a few faint wishes or heartless sighs; that though you have a desire after Christ, yet it is easily diverted, and controlled by other and higher desires, and you can be satisfied, and take up with something beneath Christ, and Christ is not the precious and only one of your souls, you have not that impression which amounts to a hearty work.

[2.] Another impression is a thorough hatred of sin, and serious watchfulness and striving against it; when you seek to cast it out of your soul with indignation, Hosea xiv. 8; to 'hate every false way,' Ps. cxix. 104; when you are continually groaning under it, Rom. vii. 24, and seek to weaken it more and more; for 'they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof,' Gal. v. 24. This is a sensible impression left upon the soul.

[3.] A lively diligence in the spiritual life. Though you cannot tell how God brought you in, yet if you keep up a lively diligence in serving God, and with 'the twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night,' Acts xxvi. 7, and you are always 'working out your own salvation with fear and trembling,' Phil. ii. 12, and you are hard at

work for God ; if this holy care be the constant business and drift of your lives, you have the effect of this conversion, though the first impression of it not so sensible.

SERMON XCIX.

I am thine, save me : for I have sought thy precepts.—VER. 94.

IN these words you have—(1.) David's plea, *I am thine.* (2.) His request, *save me.* (3.) His argument to make good his plea, *I have sought thy precepts.* His plea is taken from God's interest in him, 'I am thine.' His request is for safety, to be saved either from wrath to come or from temporal danger, rather the latter ; for he seeth trouble lie in wait for him, therefore 'save me.' And then the evidence of that interest, which may serve as an argument to set on the request, 'I have sought thy precepts.'

Let me speak of these in their order, and first of David's plea, 'I am thine.'

Doct. 1. That God hath a special people in the world, whom he will own for his.

David, as one of this number, saith to God, 'I am thine.' By a common right of creation all things are God's : 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 'Heaven and earth is thine, and all that is therein.' He made all, and therefore by a just right he is lord of all : Ps. xxiv. 1, 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.' Now, as to this general right, God is no more bound to one than to another ; there is no great privilege in this to be God's in this sense, for so are the cattle upon a thousand hills, as we are his by creation. We cannot say with David, 'I am thine ; save me ;' for he that made them will not save them, if they have no other title and interest in him, Isa. xxiii. 11. Thus by creation all things are God's, but more especially men : Ezek. xviii. 4, 'All souls are mine.' God hath a peculiar interest in the reasonable creatures, as their maker, governor, and judge. And yet further, his church is his by general profession ; all the members of the visible church may say, Lord, we are thine ; and that is some kind of plea for their safety and protection : Isa. lxiii. 19, 'We are thine ; thou never barest rule over them, they were not called by thy name.' So may all the members of the visible church speak to God. Yet more particularly there is a remnant in the world that are his by a nearer interest, and they are the saints or new creatures, who are his peculiar people, Titus ii. 14, *λαός περιούσιος.* All the world else are but as the lumber of the house, but these are his treasure. A man is more chary of his treasure than of his lumber ; yea, they are 'his jewels,' Mal. iii. 17. precious and dear to him, and of special interest in his heart and affection ; they are 'the first-fruits of his creatures,' James i. 18. The first-fruits were the Lord's portion. Now these God doth peculiarly take to be his portion, and valueth them more than all the world besides.

Let us see the grounds of his special interest in them ; wherefore are they his ?

He hath elected them before all the world : John xvii. 6, 'Thine they were, and them thou gavest me.' They were his by eternal election and choice, and they are purchased and bought by Christ, therefore called a purchased people, bought with a price, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, and upon this ground they are said to be Christ's, 1 Cor. iii. 23. Now, as they are Christ's and God's by purchase, they are also his by conquest and rescue from Satan. Prisoners in war belong to the conqueror, Luke xi. 21. The strong man that holdeth captive the carnal part of the world, they are his goods ; but the stronger than he shall come and bind him and take away his goods. They were Satan's, but by rescue and conquest the prey falls to Christ : Col. i. 13, 'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.' Once more, they are his by effectual calling and work of his grace : Eph. ii. 10, 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,' &c. So the title is changed by the right of the new creation. Again, they are his by covenant ; we choose him to be our God, and the Lord chooseth us to be his peculiar people, Hosea ii. 23. They acquiesce in him as their all-sufficient portion, and surrender and give up themselves to his use and service. This is that which is chiefly intended here, namely, that we are his by contract and resignation ; for so David saith, 'Lord, I am thine.' All this doth abundantly make good God hath a special people in the world whom he will own for his. The grace by which we are inclined to resign up ourselves to God, that flows from election, through the redemption of Christ, by sanctification of the Spirit ; but the grounds, reasons, and motives for which we dedicate ourselves to God, they are his right in us by creation and redemption. It is but fit God should have what he hath made and bought ; we are his creatures, his purchase, therefore we are his.

Use 1. For trial. Are we of the number of God's peculiar people ? As David said to the Egyptian, 'To whom belongest thou ? whence art thou ?' 1 Sam. xxx. 13. So, if the question should be put to you, Whence are you ? to whom do you belong ? Can you answer, 'Lord, I am thine,' I belong to thee ? If it be so, then :—

1. When did you solemnly dedicate yourselves to him ? If you be God's, can you remember when you first took your oath of allegiance to him ? There is a solemn time of avouching one another, when God avouched you to be his people, and you avouched God to be your God : Deut. xxvi. 17, 18, 'Thou hast avouched this day the Lord to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and keep his statutes, and his commandments, and judgments, and to hearken to his voice : and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people.' When did you give up the key of your hearts to God, and lie at God's feet, and say, 'Lord, here I am, what wilt thou have me to do ?' Acts ix. 6. They that are God's come in this way, by resignation or spiritual contract, by entering into covenant with him.

2. What have you that is peculiar ? Have you the favour of his people ? Have you the conversation of his people ? God's peculiar people have peculiar mercies ; at least their hearts and spirits are

carried out after them: Ps. cvi. 4, 'Lord, remember me with the favour of thy people.' Common mercies will not serve their turn, but they must have renewing and sanctifying mercies, and special pledges of his love; not increase of estate, honour, or esteem in the world; these are not things their hearts run upon; but, Lord, the favour of thy people; or, Ps. cxix. 132, 'Do good unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.' There is a goodness which God vouchsafeth to all his creatures; to the men of the world he gives a plentiful portion; their bellies are filled with thy hid treasure; but, Lord, let me have the comforts of thy Spirit, the manifestations of thy love and good-will to my soul in Christ Jesus. As Luther said and protested, God should not put him off with gold nor with honours; I must have his grace, his Christ, his Spirit; *Valde protestatus sum me nolle his satiari*. If you have such peculiar spirits, your hearts would be carried out after these distinguishing mercies. A man may have common mercies and go to hell and be cast away; but God's peculiar people have peculiar mercies; then they will not be contented with a common conversation: Mat. v. 47, 'If you love them that love you, what do you more than others?' There is *τί περισσόν*, something over and above, that should be seen in a Christian's life. It is a fault, 1 Cor. iii. 3, 'Ye walk as men.' In the new creature there should be something more excellent. God's peculiar people, as there is a difference between them and others in point of privileges, so also in point of conversation; they should live at a higher rate, more heavenly, meek, mortified, more charitable than others. Christians should walk so as to convince the world, and make them wonder at the beauty, majesty, and strictness of their lives. You harden carnal men when you profess yourselves to be God's peculiar people, and there is no difference between you and others.

3. Doth your resignation appear in your living and acting for God? Is holiness to be written in visible characters upon all you do? Zech. xiv. 19, 20. The impress of God is upon his people, it is upon the horse bells, upon all the pots of Jerusalem; it is upon all they have, all they enjoy, 'Holiness to the Lord;' they spend their time as being dedicated to God, they spend their estates as being dedicated to God. Do you use yourselves as those that are Christ's, improving your time, relations, talents, interests for his glory? This may be discovered partly by checking temptations upon this account: 1 Cor. vi. 15, 'Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them to be the members of an harlot?' This body is Christ's, and therefore must be kept in sanctification and in honour; this time I misspend, this estate is Christ's; and so you dare not give way to the folly and sin with which others are transported, for you look upon all that you have as Christ's. And so also are your contrivances and projects for God's glory; you will be casting about how you may honour Christ by your estate and relations, and everything you have: Neh. i. 11, 'Grant me mercy in the sight of this man: for I was the king's cup-bearer;' that is, he was considering what use he might make of this authority and esteem which he had with the king of Babylon, and what use he might make of it for God. God hath advanced me to such honour and place; what honour hath God had? Look, as David, 2 Sam. xvii.

2, 'I dwell in a house of cedar, and the ark of God dwells within curtains.' Here the Lord hath abundantly provided for me, but what have I done for God? When you are in all things seeking the things of God, and laying out yourselves for the glory of God, and if God needs anything that is yours, you freely and willingly part with it.

Use 2. To persuade us to resign up ourselves to God, and to live as those that are God's.

First, To resign up ourselves to God: Isa. xlv. 5, 'One shall come and say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.' Come and subscribe to the God of Jacob, give it under hand and seal, enter your names in his muster-roll, that you are one of his subjects and servants. Motives are these:—

1. You owe yourselves to God, and therefore should give up yourselves to him: Philem. 19, 'Thou owest unto me even thine own self.' It is true with respect to God; thou owest all that thou hast to him, thou hast nothing but what he gave thee first. God calls it a gift, 'My son, give me thy heart;' but it is indeed a debt, for God gave it, not to dispossess himself and divest himself, but gave it for his use and service. He gave you yourselves to yourselves, as a man gives an estate to a factor to trade with, or as a husbandman scatters his seed upon the ground, not to bury it there, but expecting a crop from thence. So God scatters his gifts abroad in the world, gives life and all things; not to establish a dominion in thy person, but only a stewardship and a course of service. Hast thou life? Man is not *dominus vite*, but *custos*—not lord of his life, but only the guardian and keeper for God. Now what is said of life is true of estates and all things else; there is no proper dominion we have.

2. God offers himself to thee, and therefore it is but reasonable thou give up thyself to God. In the covenant there is a mutual engaging between God and the creature to be each other's, according to their several capacities; 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' The great God, *Quantus quantus est, totus noster est*, as great as he is, he becomes ours; all in him ours, his wisdom, power, strength; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are our everlasting portion. God the Father will be our portion for ever, he will give his Son to be our redeemer, and his Spirit to be our guide; all the persons, with all their power and strength, are engaged for our use. Look, as when Jehoshaphat made a league with the king of Israel, this was the manner of it: 1 Kings xxii. 4, 'I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.' They mutually made over their strength one to another. So when God offereth to make over himself to us, this is the tenor, 'I will be for thee, and thou shalt be for me,' as Hosea iii. He makes over himself with all that is his. Now, when God offers to make over himself to us, and all that belongs to him to our use, his strength, power, and love, shall we stand demurring upon so blessed a contract, and not give up ourselves to the Lord? God, that needs us not, will engage himself to us to be for us, if we will be for him. Oh, then, let us resign up ourselves, and put ourselves under the power and sovereignty of God!

3. You never enjoy yourselves so much as when you give up yourselves to God; it is not your loss, but your gain; it is a kind of receiving: for you give up yourselves to become his people, to be sanctified, to be preserved by his grace, and governed by his Spirit; and all these are privileges, they are rather a gift for us. For a beggar to give up herself to match with a prince, she gets by giving; you give up your hearts to God to be better. Other things that are dedicated to God are only altered in their use, as gold and silver dedicated to the sanctuary; but when a man is given to God, he is altered in his nature, he is governed and fitted for God's use. If there be any pretence of loss, it is this, a right or power to live according to your own will. Ay! but that you never had by virtue of your creation. You are bound to live according to the will of God; God's precepts bind as a law where they are not received as a covenant; and therefore you have no power to dispose yourselves; you are God's, whether you give up yourselves to him or no. When you consider how much you gain, you are interested in all the privileges of the Lord's grace; it not only establisheth your duty, but your comfort and encouragement. If there were nothing but this free leave to go to God in all our straits and dangers, 'I am thine, save me,' this were a benefit not to be valued. If God be yours, you may expect salvation, temporal, eternal; therefore the benefit of this gift is not God's, but ours; you give up yourselves, not to bring aught to God, but receive from God.

4. You cannot give other things to him unless you give up yourselves to him. 2 Cor. viii. 4, it is rendered as a reason of their forwardness in a good work, 'They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.' When a man hath given himself to God, all things else will succeed more easily in the spiritual life; as a woman and man in the conjugal relation, they are easily kind one to another when they have bestowed themselves one upon another. As Quintus Fabius Maximus, answering to the ambassador that offered him gold, that it was not the fashion of the Romans to have gold under their power, but they were under a power that were owners and possessors of their gold. Apply it; the first thing God looks after is the person.

5. It is your honour to be in relation to God, therefore give up yourselves: Ps. cxvi. 16, 'O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid.' He repeats it thrice, as if he were wonderfully pleased with the relation. Mean offices about a prince are accounted honourable in the world; so to be in the meanest degree of service about God is a great honour; therefore give up yourselves to God.

Secondly, Live as those that are God's. The first thing we should do is to determine whose we are, then to make good that relation. You are not your own, that is clear, 1 Cor. vi. 19; therefore not to live to your own will, your own ends, your own interest. All the disorder that is in the world comes from a man's looking upon himself as his own: Ps. xii. 4, 'Our tongues are our own;' and therefore they take liberty to speak what they please. And saith Nabal, 'My bread and my wine.' When we are so eager to establish our own dominion and propriety, then we miscarry. As Bernard saith, *Horreo quicumque*

de meo ut sim meus—we should be in utter detestation of living to ourselves, and rather be God's bondmen than our own freemen. And as they are not their own, so not the world's: John xv. 19, 'Because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hates you.' The world hates the godly because they have other principles and other ends. You should not conform to the world in judgment or practices, for you are not of the world; you are not of the flesh: Rom. viii. 12, 'We are not debtors to the flesh;' therefore this should not be your care and study to pamper and please the flesh. You are not Satan's, for you are taken out of his power, Col. i. 13. Whose are you? You are the Lord's; therefore your business should be to please God and honour God. It is easy to say, I am thine; do we make it good in our practice? This may be known two ways:—

1. When we make his glory to be the scope of our lives: Phil. i. 21, 'To me to live is Christ;' that is my business and employment, not to seek my own things, but the things of Christ Jesus. Do you give up yourselves to be governed and ordered by his Spirit, acting and living for his glory?

2. When we walk so as God may own us with honour; take his law for our rule, as well as to fix his glory for our scope. Exod. xxxii. 7, saith God to Moses, 'Thy people whom thou hast brought up out of Egypt: thy people; God would not own them when they had corrupted their ways. We would say to God, Lord, I am thine; but alas! we act not as the Lord's, but as if we were of the flesh, as if we belonged to Satan, to lust, and passion, and anger; by those cursed influences are we acted and swayed in our conversations. It is as sweet an argument and as forcible a reason as you can use to God in prayer to say, Lord, I am thine, if we could use it in good conscience, saith Chrysostom. All men are so, but how few can thus speak to God; for, saith he, his servants you are whom you obey; and the servant of sin lieth when he saith, I am thine. Alas! most every kind of sin may say, Thou art mine; lust and covetousness and ambition may challenge us. It is not words, but affections and actions that must prove us to be the Lord's; then we are his when we seek to please him in all things. Judas was Christ's in profession, but the devil's in affection. David saith, 'I am thine,' but presently adds, 'I seek thy precepts,' I endeavour to do thy will. Oh! then, live not as your own, as of Satan and the flesh, but as the Lord's.

Let us come to the ground of his plea, 'Save me.' David doth not say, 'Thou art mine, save me,' but, 'I am thine.' These two are correlates; he that speaks the one speaks both; if we be God's, God is ours: 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine;' and yet David saith, 'I am thine,' but doth not say, Thou art mine, for four reasons:—

1. Because this is first in our apprehension. We know God to be ours by giving up ourselves to be his. His choice and election of us is a secret till it be evidenced by our choice of him, till we choose him for our portion. Well, then, a believer cannot always say God is his, but a believer is always resolved to be the Lord's by his own choice and dedication; they resolve to be his, and not their own. Though you cannot discern your election, that God hath chosen you, yet it is

comfortable to renew your resignation of yourselves to God. Resignation, that is our act, and is more sensible to conscience than God's election: 'Lord, I have none in heaven but thee, and whom do I desire in comparison of thee?' God will not refuse such a soul that is thus willing to tack himself upon God, will not be put off: 'I am thine.' As the Campani, when they begged the Romans to help them, and they refused, they came and gave themselves and their whole estates to be vassals to the Romans, with this plea, If you will not defend us as your allies, defend us as your subjects. Thus a gracious soul will tack himself upon God, and will not be put off: I will not be my own, but thine.

2. 'I am thine;' he saith so, because this was the best check to the present temptation. David was then in fear of his life when he spoke this, when the wicked lay in wait to destroy him, ver. 95; they wanted neither malice nor power to do it; then saith David, 'I am thine.' In afflictions God seems to break down the hedge, and lay his people open, in common with others, to the fury of the judgment that is then upon them. In regard of God's outward dealings, little appearance different between us and them; but then we must say, Lord, I am thine; though involved in the same judgment, yet, Lord, thou canst put a difference, 'I am thine.' 2 Peter ii. 9: 'The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation,' how to put a distinction and difference between his own and others; so that our distinct interest, 'I am thine,' is a relief to the soul.

3. Saints observe a difference when they speak to God and when they plead with their own hearts; when they speak to God, then they mention their own resignation, Lord, I am thine; but when they would revive their own drooping souls, then they say, God is mine. Compare the text with Ps. xlii. 11, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' &c. He is my God; God is mine, and wilt thou be troubled? But when they speak to God, 'I am thine;' so they raise their hearts in a holy confidence. The interest is mutual. In dealing with our own unbelief, it is best to urge our interest in God: He is mine; but when in prayer, God's interest in us: Lord, I am thine.

4. This is the more humbling way, to urge our own resignation. See Ps. cxvi. 15, 16, 'Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints;' then presently, 'Ah, Lord, truly I am thy servant,' &c. God's children may be exposed to hazards alike, but their blood is precious to God. Now though the world thinketh lightly of their death, yet God doth not think so. How doth David apply this comfort, 'Precious in the sight,' &c. He doth not say, as the force of the words would seem to carry it, Lord, I am one of thy saints; but, Lord, I am thy servant; he takes a more humble title. There is many a man fears and doubts to apply the privileges of God's children under some higher title, yet they should apply them in a title suitable to their condition and measure. So did David; he presumeth not to say, Thou art mine; that were a higher challenge, but yet such as God's condescension will warrant him; but he doth aver and assert his own resignation, which is a more dutiful and humble way of confidence. Again, he doth not say, I am thus and thus, but, I am thine. He doth not plead property or good qualification, but he pleads God's

property in him; Lord, I cannot say I am perfect and upright as I should be, yet I am thine. It is good to own God in the humbling way, and take hold of promises on the dark side; so doth Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying,' &c.; as if he had said, Nay, if that be a faithful saying, then I can put in a plea, I am sinner enough for Christ to save. Thus by these lower ways of application we may derive and take out to ourselves the comfort of the promises.

Doct. 2. God's interest in his people is the ground of his care for their safety.

It may be pleaded as a ground of his care for their safety, Lord, I am thine, and therefore save me; this is David's plea in a time of danger. And so Christ, when he was to leave his disciples to the troubles of a furious opposite world, how doth he plead for them! John xvii. 6, 'Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; therefore keep them through thine own name.' We may pray to God with more confidence for our safety in a time of danger when we can plead his interest in us.

How doth his interest prove a ground of confidence and plea for prayer in a time of danger?

1. God's knowledge of them: 2 Tim. ii. 19, 'The Lord knows those that are his.' He hath a particular exact knowledge of all the elect, and who they are that shall be saved; they are engraven as it were upon the palms of his hands; he takes notice of them, and of the condition in which they are: John x. 3, 'He calleth his own sheep by name.' Christ knows them by head and poll.

2. His care over them and his affection to them. Interest in general is a very endearing thing. That which is mine doth more affect me than that which is another man's: 1 Tim. v. 8, 'He that careth not, and provideth not for his own, is worse than an infidel.' It is an unnatural thing for a man not to affect his own; and will God suffer that which is his own to be snatched out of his hands, and used by evil men according to their pleasure? A man is careful of his own children, to dispose of them in a safe place, and careful of his own jewels: the saints are not as God's lumber, but as his jewels; they are dearer to God than all things else: Isa. xliii. 3, 4, 'I am the Lord thy God, thy saviour; I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee; since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life;' that is, if the sword must drink blood, let it go to Seba and Ethiopia, to Arabia, and to Egypt; he strikes the king of Assyria in his wrath, and the sword shall be diverted that way, rather than they should be given up to be destroyed. But this is not all. The way how we come to be his own doth, exceedingly endear us to him; as, for instance, we come to be God's by eternal election; now this must needs endear us to God. A woman that carries her child in her womb but nine months, what a tender affection bath she to it! Isa. xlix. 14, 15, 'Can a woman forget her sucking child?' &c.; Eph. i. 4, 'He chose us from the foundation of the world.' We lay in the womb of his decree from all eternity, and therefore we are very dear to God, namely, as we are his by election. Again, as we are his by redemption; they were bought with a dear price, therefore they are

a precious people; God hath a high esteem and value for them. That which cost dear, we will not lose it lightly. The saints are valuable, not so much in themselves, as in Christ, by whose precious blood they are purchased with God, 1 Peter i. 18. Adam sold us for a trifle, but Christ did not redeem us at a cheap rate. Then the work of the Spirit, who hath drawn the image of God upon us; God will not suffer his own work to be destroyed, Ps. lxxiv. 6. They came to God, and complained of the defacing of the material temple, that the carved work, the curious work which was wrought by the special direction of God's own Spirit, was destroyed (for the Spirit of God directed Bezaleel to work in brass and all manner of curious works); certainly the temples of the Holy Ghost, which are formed for God's praise, God will not suffer them to be destroyed and never look after them. Again, as they are God's by dedication, so they are dear to him. Common gold and silver was not so valued as consecrated gold and silver. Goat's-hair that was consecrated to the uses of the temple was more excellent than all other things that was for common use. We are dedicated, consecrated to God, set apart for himself: Ps. iv. 3, 'The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself.'

3. He hath a peculiar eye to his own. Why? Because he expects more work from them than from others, therefore they have more protection; God is known, glorified and owned among them. His revenues to the crown of heaven from the world come to little in regard of what he hath from his people and his church: Ps. cxlv. 10, 'All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee.' God hath most of his praise from his saints. His creatures show forth his glory, but his saints bless him. The common sort of people smother the glory of God in their atheism, security, and unbelief; but those only are the people that keep up his praise in the world, therefore he preserves them.

4. Because by covenant all that is God's is theirs, for their use. His strength is theirs: Eph. vi. 10, 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' And his salvation is theirs: Ps. lxxviii. 20, 'He that is our God is the God of salvation.' If God be a God of salvation, he is our God. If he hath salvation to bestow, it is ours. A believer hath full right to make use of all that God hath.

Use 1. To press you to get this interest in times of danger. We should now be more careful than at other times to get and clear up our interest in God. Oh, it will be no advantage to say, This and that is mine, but a great advantage to say, God is mine. When desolations are on the earth, there is great havoc made of great estates, and outward supplies will come to nothing; but this will be an everlasting comfort to say, God is mine. See 1 Sam. xxx. 6, 'But David comforted himself in the Lord his God;' Hab. iii. 18, 'I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation.'

2. It presseth you to make your interest more evident by fruits of obedience; as David, 'I am thine.' How makes he it good? 'I sought thy precepts.' We would have mercy, but neglect duty. Therefore saith David, 'I sought thy precepts.' It is an emphatical expression. To seek God's precepts is more than barely to do them; to seek them, that is, with all diligence. We labour after the knowledge of them, and

grace to practise them ; it is to give up our minds and hearts ; it notes earnest study and affection to them, will, and care, and all to the practice of God's will. Where there is an honest and earnest endeavour to obey God's command in all things, this proves a believer's interest. In times of trouble you must expect your confidence will be assaulted. Now when Satan or conscience represent God as putting thee off thus, What ! come you to me ? thou art a grievous sinner ; but, Lord, I am thine. How prove you that ? I seek to know thy will. ' How to perform that which is good, I find not,' Rom. vii. We cannot always find it ; that is, serve God with exactness of care ; but if this be the bent of our hearts, if we seek it, we may come with confidence, and look God in the face, and say, Lord, I am thine.

3. We may improve it with confidence in prayer, I am thine, save me. God saves man and beast, Ps. xxxvi. 6, therefore will save his own, he that is our father and our God : ' I know that my God will save me,' saith David, Ps. xx. 6-8. There are some God will not save : ' They are not mine, therefore I will break down their bulwarks.' In the Book of Chronicles it is said, ' Why transgress you the commandment of God, that you cannot prosper ?' There is an utter incapacity when men will be sinning away their protection. Here is your great plea in time of danger, in adversity, go to God and say, I am thine ; Lord, save me.

SERMON C.

I have seen an end of all perfection ; but thy commandment is exceeding broad.—VER. 96.

IN this verse the scripture, as the charter of our hopes, and the seed and principle of our spiritual being, is recommended above all things in the world as that which doth chiefly deserve our respect and care. Consider the word by itself, and you will find it excellent ; but consider it by way of comparison with the vanity and insufficiency of other things, and the excellency thereof will much more appear. As in a pair of balances, when things come to be weighed together, you will soon see the difference, and which is heaviest ; so here in the text both scales are filled ; on the one side there is the world and the perfections thereof, and on the other side the word of God and the benefit that we have thereby, and sensibly the beam breaketh on the word's side ; in the one scale there is limited perfection, which will soon have an end ; in the other, a happiness that hath length and breadth, ' I have seen an end,' &c.

In the words there is a thesis or proposition, and then an antithesis, or something said by way of opposition to that position. The thesis, ' I have seen an end of all perfection ;' and the antithesis, ' But thy commandment is exceeding broad.' Both together will yield us this point :—

Doct. That the serious consideration of the frailty and fadingness of all natural and earthly perfections should excite and quicken us to look

after that better and eternal estate which is offered to us in the word of God.

I shall make good this proposition by going over the circumstances of the text as they are offered to us.

First, I begin with the thesis or proposition, *I have seen an end of all perfection*; and there you may take notice—

1. Of the subject or matter here spoken of, it is *perfection*; understand it in a natural and worldly sense, the most excellent of all the creatures, and the greatest glory of all natural accomplishments.

2. The extent, *all perfection*, whatever it be.

3. The predicate, *hath an end*.

4. The confirmation from sense, *I have seen*. It is either *dictum experientie*, I have often seen it fall out before my eyes; or *dictum fidei*, I could by faith easily see to the bottom of the creature, see vanity in it whilst in its greatest glory. Let us open these things.

Mark, it is not said in the concrete, I have seen an end of perfect things; but in the abstract, I have seen an end of all perfection itself. The most perfect of worldly things are but imperfect; man, in his best estate, is altogether vanity, Ps. xxxix. 11.

And then mark the extent of it, it is ‘all perfection;’ not only some but all perfection; wisdom and learning, as well as beauty and strength, wit and wealth, honour and greatness; I have seen an end of all of it. Many will readily grant that some kind of perfections are slight; but all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Here is a meditation fit for persons of all sort and conditions. For great ones that they presume not; for mean ones, that they repine not; for the old, whose vigour and strength is gone, in whom it is verified; and for the young, or those that are in the vigour and freshness of youth, in whom within a little while it will be verified; for the rich, that they trust not in uncertain riches; for the poor, that they be not over-dejected; for the honoured, that they please not themselves overmuch with the blasts of popular breath and vain applause; the disgraced, that they may make a sanctified use of their afflictions. All perfection, first or last, will wither and decay.

And then here is the predicate, *hath an end*; the word also signifieth limit or bound; there is an end in regard of length, duration, and continuance, and an end in regard of breadth and use; that also must be taken in; for the narrowness of worldly comforts and the breadth of the commandments are often opposed one to the other. I will show you—

First, That all earthly perfections have their bounds and limits as to their use and service; they are good for this and that, but not for all things; but ‘godliness is profitable for all things,’ 1 Tim. iv. 8. They are not able to bear full contentment to the mind, or give full satisfaction to the heart, at least in all conditions and sorts of afflictions; riches will help against poverty, and health against sickness, but ‘godliness is profitable to all things.’ There are many difficulties and dangers in which the limited power of the creatures cannot help us; but the word of God, applied and obeyed, and followed with his mighty Spirit, will yield us relief and comfort in all cases and conditions. All the pleasures and profits, and honours of the world are nothing to this. As, for instance, all these perfections cannot—

1. Give us any solid peace of conscience and rest to our souls; in the midst of all our fulness there is something wanting; carnal affections must be mortified before they can be satisfied. Grace must do that for you; it is godliness that brings contentment to the heart of man: 1 Tim. vi. 6, 'Godliness with contentment is great gain.' Alas! wealth can never do it; our desires are increased the more we have; and the way to contentment is not to increase our substance, but to limit our desires; as in a dropsy, the way to cure the man is not to satisfy him with drink, but to open a vein to take away his thirst. We expect too much from the creature, and then the disappointment breedeth trouble; and therefore, Eccles. i. 14, why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Outward things do not bear a thorough proportion with all the wants and desires and capacities of the soul, and therefore cannot give solid peace to our souls.

2. It cannot make you acceptable to God, neither wealth nor beauty, nor honour, nor strength; it is grace that is of great price in the sight of God: 1 Peter iii. 4, 'The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price.' This is a beauty that doth never fade nor wax old: 'Since thou wert precious in my sight, thou wast honourable, and I have loved thee,' Isa. xliii. 4. God loveth his people for the grace he putteth into them, not for the outward gifts he bestoweth upon them. It is grace that makes us amiable to God, and fit objects of the divine complacency; you are not a jot the more pleasing to God when rich than when poor. No; but the more hateful to him, if you are not rich towards God, Luke xii. 21.

3. It cannot stead you in your greatest and deepest necessities, and therefore they are but limited. There are two great necessities where-in all creature comforts will fail:—

[1.] In troubles of conscience. Men do pretty well with their worldly portion and happiness till God sets their consciences awork, and begins to rebuke man for sin, and reviveth the sense of their own guilt and liableness to the curse. In such a case, all the glory and profit and pleasure of the creature will do no good; it cannot allay the sense of God's wrath scorching the soul for sin: Ps. xxxix. 11, 'When thou with rebukes doth chasten man for sin, thou makest his beauty to consume like a moth.' Tell him of honours, friends, estates, pleasures, all is nothing; the virtue of that opium wherewith he laid his soul asleep is now quite spent. Trouble of conscience arrests the stoutest and most jovial sinners, and layeth them under sadness and horror. Judas threw away his thirty pieces of silver when his guilt stared him in the face: 'I have sinned in betraying innocent blood,' Mat. xxvii. 4. When God is angry the creatures cannot pacify him and make you friends. As when a man is going to execution with a drooping and heavy heart, bring him a posy of flowers, bid him smell them, and comfort himself with them, he will think you upbraid his misery; so in troubles of conscience, what good will it be to tell a man of riches and honours. The remedy must be according to the grief; so that if outward things could satisfy the heart, they cannot satisfy the conscience; our sore will run, among all the creatures, and there is no salve for it.

[2.] They will not stead us at the hour of death, when a man must

launch out into eternity, and set sail for an unknown world. Can a man comfort himself then with outward things, that a man is great, rich, and honourable, beautiful or strong, or that he hath wallowed in all manner of sensualities? If men would look to the end of things, they would sooner discern their mistake: Deut. xxxii. 29, 'Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!' So Jer. xvii. 9, 'At his latter end he shall be a fool.' He was a fool before, all his life-long, but now he is so in the account of his own heart. So Job xxvii. 8, 'What hope hath the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God cometh to take away his soul?' The poor man would fain keep his soul a little longer; no, but God will take it now; and he doth not resign it, but God takes it by force. And I Cor. xv. 56, 'The sting of death is sin.' The dolours and horrors of a guilty conscience are revived by death, and then the weakness of worldly things doth best appear; our wealth and honour and pleasure will leave us in the dirt. When the soul is to be turned out of doors, our vain conceits are blown away, and we begin to be sensible of our ill choice. If conscience did not do its office before, death will undeceive them: Ps. xlix. 17, 'When a man dieth he shall carry nothing away with him, his glory shall not descend after him.' He shall be eaten out by worms as others are, when he cometh to go the way of all the earth; then for one evidence for heaven, one drachm of the favour of God, as Severus the emperor cried out, I have been all things, but now it profits me nothing.

4. It is of no use to you in the world to come. Gold and silver, the great instruments of commerce in this world, are of no value there. All civil distinctions last but to the grave. Some are high and others low, some are rich and others poor; these distinctions will last but a while, but the distinction of good and bad lasts for ever. Their works follow them, but not their wealth; outward things cannot save your souls, or bring you to heaven.

5. In this world it will not prevent a sickness or remove it. The honourable and the rich have their diseases as well as the poor; yea, more, they are bred upon them by their intemperance. All your houses and lands and honours and estates cannot ease you of a fit of the gout, or stone, nor an aching tooth, nor keep off judgments when they are epidemical. There were frogs in Pharaoh's bed-chamber as well as among the meaner Egyptians, and all the king's guard could not keep them out.

Well, then, all these things show it is of a limited use; indeed they serve to make our pilgrimage comfortable, and to support us during our service—that is the best use we can put them to; but the use the most put them to is to satisfy a sensual appetite or please a fleshly mind, Ps. xvii. 14. The utmost that these things can procure is a back well clothed, and a belly well filled. This is but a sorry happiness, to feed a little better than others, to provide a richer feast for the worms, yea, a prey for hell. Take all created perfections, not as subordinate to grace, but separate from it, it serveth but to please the appetite or the fancy, make the most or best of it.

Secondly, by their time and period as to continuance. All these

things perish in the using; like flowers, they wither in our hands while we smell at them: 'The fashion of this world passeth away,' 1 Cor. vii. 31; and whosoever liveth here for a while must look for changes, and reckon to act several parts in the world. Whatsoever was wonderful in former ages is lost and past with age; things that now are are not what they once were: Ps. cii. 26, 27, 'They shall perish, but thou shalt endure for ever,' saith the Psalmist, speaking to God; 'yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years have no end.' Christ, he hath no end, but men will soon see the end of all perfection. The world and all things were made *ea lege ut aliquando pereant*—that they might at length fail and come to an end. That which you now have you cannot say it shall be yours this time twelvemonth, or it may be a month hence; we hold all things by an uncertain tenure. God may take away these things from us; for man is compared to grass, and the glory of man to the flower of grass, 1 Peter i. 24. What is the glory of man? Riches, wisdom, strength, beauty, credit, all these things are called the flower. Now the flower fadeth before the grass, and withers; the neglected stalk remaineth. When the leaves of the flower are shed, you may be gone and they gone. If they continue with you till death, then you must take your final farewell of all your comforts. Thus you see all perfection will have an end.

And then, here is the confirmation from sense, *I have seen*. Consider it—(1.) As it is matter of sense or experience; (2.) As it is an observation upon experience.

1. The vanity of the creature is matter of sense and plain experience. We have seen, and others have seen, all outward things come to their final period; goodly cities levelled with the earth, mighty empires destroyed, worldly glory blasted, honours vanished, credit and esteem shrunk into nothing, beauty shrivelled with age, or defaced by sickness; yea, all manner of greatness laid in the dust. We trample upon the graves of others, and within a little while others will do the same over ours. All things have their times and turns, their rise and ruin; there is no man that converseth with the world, but he will soon see the vanity of it. David found it not only by clear reason, but by his own experience, 'I have seen,' saith he; and so will you say too within a while; these things will fail when you have most need of them. Credit and honour before the world; what is more uncertain than the people's affections? They that cry, 'Hosannah,' to-day, will cry 'Crucify him,' to-morrow. Pleasures are gone as soon as they come; and when they are gone, they are as a thing of nought, but that they leave a sting in the conscience, and a sadness in the heart: 'Riches take wings and flee away,' Prov. xxiii. 5. You can be no more confident of them than of a flock of wild fowl that pitcheth in your field. Honour is soon gone. Haman is one day high in favour, the next day high upon the gallows. Strength and beauty are soon assaulted by diseases. It will be matter of sense; better believe it than try it; then it will prevent a great deal of vexation, and the shame of disappointment. Seldom doth a man act the same part in the world for a year together; now joyful, anon sad;

now children, then none ; now married, anon in a widowhood condition. It is much in the desire and thoughts of natural men to have a perpetual enjoyment of this life and the comforts of it ; but it will never be. They perish, and we must die ; and when we are gone, our glory will not be remembered. Solomon recordeth his experience of the vanity of all earthly things. Oh, that we would believe it, without trying conclusions ! You that are so eager after the world, what will you think of it when it is parting from you, or you from it ? Will they then be found to be such excellent things as you once deemed them to be ? Oh, no ! At last you must come to this, ' I have seen an end of all perfection ;' and then you will say, Oh, how hath the world deceived me ! I have laboured for nought !

2. ' I have seen ;' that is, with a spiritual eye ; this should be observed and improved by faith. Many are sensible of the vanity of the creature, but are not a jot the wiser : Ps. xlix. 13, ' This their way is their folly, yet their posterity approve their sayings.' They are sensible of the folly of their ancestors, but yet do not mend by it. We should not only see with our eyes, but understand with our hearts. When the wise man went by the field of the sluggard, he saw it overgrown with thorns and nettles, and the stone wall thereof broken down : Prov. xxiv. 32, ' I saw it, and considered it well ; I looked upon it, and received instruction.' We should profit by everything. In this sense we may gather figs off thistles and grapes off thorns. Especially should we observe the vanity of all sublunary things : Eccles. vii. 2, ' It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting ; for this is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart.' We should make a good use of these occasions ; a man seeth his own end in the end of others, and by their death is admonished of his own frailty and mortality. It is a sad sign when this is not considered : Isa. xlii. 25, ' Yet he laid it not to heart ;' Isa. xxxvi. 11, ' Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see.' They shall be forced to take notice of what now they will not, when God's hand is upon them to their utter confusion.

3. ' I have seen.' Happy they that have such eyes ! But alas ! there is a great deal of difference between the sight of the senses and the sight of the understanding. When we see things with our eyes, there is a natural blindness or brutishness, or a veil upon our hearts, that we mind them not. Men have eyes to see, but they have not a heart to see. So God complains, Jer. v. 21, ' They have eyes and see not, ears and hear not.' So Dent. xxix. 3, 4, ' The great temptations which thine eyes have seen, and the signs and those great miracles : yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day.' So Isa. vi. 9, 10, ' And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not : make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears.' Though things be never so plainly delivered, so powerfully pressed, so apparently verified ; and so they see and hear, and receive no more benefit than if they had never heard nor seen it, God withholding and withdrawing the efficacy of his Spirit, whereby it might be beneficial to them for good. So Isa. xlii. 20, ' Seeing things,

but thou observest not; opening the ears, but thou hearest not.' They see the wonderful works of God, but do not consider them as wise people ought to do: Isa. i. 3, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider;' Ezek. xii. 2, 'Thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not, they have ears to hear, and hear not;' that is, they make no use of them, but strive and endeavour to put it out of their minds. So John ix. 39-41, 'And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and they that see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say we see, your sin remaineth.' There is a great deal of difference between the sight of believers and unbelievers; the one sees with an understanding heart, the other without it. In the one there is a free, ready, and sincere use of their disciplinable senses, that they may learn his word and walk in his ways, that they may profit in the knowledge of God, and so get understanding and spiritual prudence. The other are brutish, ignorant, or idle, negligent, and forgetful; they shut their eyes, and their ears are uncircumcised, and so they know not what they know. The causes of this are, first, non-attendancy or inadvertency, prejudicate opinions and rooted lusts, hinder their profiting. Look, as the sun, moon, and stars, though they move with a most swift and rapid motion, seem to a vulgar eye to stand still, or at least to move very slowly, so these sublunary things, though they are always passing, yet the inward thought of worldlings is that they shall endure for ever. Oh, labour then for this spiritual and heart-affecting sight! If a man could behold this world in the light of a divine knowledge, he would find it to be but a vanishing shadow. Though the vanity of the creature be a plain truth, and taught by daily experience, and is easily and commonly acknowledged, yet it is not easy to make this truth have a deep impression upon the hearts of men. They are naturally unwilling to admit thoughts of a change, Amos vi. 2, because they are unable to sanctify themselves and look after a better and spiritual estate. But let us not grieve the Spirit of God by our unteachableness in so plain a point. When we are told of the frailty and slipperiness of worldly comforts, we shake our heads and confess it to be true, but improve it not, at best conceive some weak and faint resolutions, but they soon vanish, and we are as worldly and carnal as ever we were; and therefore pray as David, Ps. xc. 12, 'So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.' You have seen the first part of the text—here is perfection, all perfection; then all perfection hath an end: and this is to be seen, it is liable to sense; and it should be improved by grace. If all creature perfection hath an end:—

Use 1. Let it moderate our desires; for who would court a flying shadow, especially when these pursuits hinder us from looking after better and eternal things? Jonah ii. 8, 'They that seek lying vanities forsake their own mercies;' that is, they might have been their own, if they had chosen them. Within a while the world will be but a stale jest, and the laughing fit is over, and then our sorrow cometh;

the feast will be at an end, and then we begin to feel the gripes of a surfeit.

Use 2. Let it moderate our sorrows and fears. Our sorrows; when these things befall us, it is no strange thing, 1 Peter iv. 12; it is no more strange than to see the night succeed the day, or to see a shower come after sunshine; it is no wonder to see a light thing move upward, nor a heavy thing to move downward. So our fears; when the power and strength of the world is turned upon us, there will be an end of all our evils, but not of the word of God. We shall everlastingly find the effects of his truth and promise, though our enemies excel in worldly pomp, and seem to be grounded upon an immutable foundation; but as powerful as they seem to be, they shall at length come to an end: Job v. 3, 'I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his habitation;' when the foolish, that is, the wicked, seemed to get rooting, then I cursed, not by way of imprecation, but by way of prediction.

Use 3. It serves to moderate our delights. No day so pleasant but the night puts an end to it, no summer so fruitful but a barren winter overtaketh it. The Philistines were sporting on their holiday, but their banqueting-house became their grave and place of burial; and Jonah's gourd was soon withered and dried up. Worldly riches serve men as long as they live, and after death do some service in conveying their bodies to the grave by a pompous funeral; but there it leaves them. But the word of God supports us against all temptations while we live, and conveys us to death with comfort, and the fruit of it abideth with us; after we are dissolved the soul immediately hath benefit by it, and afterwards, at the resurrection, the body. We do not hold worldly things *durante vita*—during our life, nor *quamdiu bene se gesserint*—as long as we shall behave ourselves well in our places; but only *durante beneplacito*—as long as God pleaseth. How often is the most shining glory burned into a snuff, turned into ignominy, and honour into contempt, and our fulness into the want of all things! A cobweb that has been long a-spinning is soon swept down. Yea, the time will come when the lust of these things shall be gone, 1 John ii. 17, and the time will come when we shall take no pleasure in them. As soon as we have the creatures, many times we are weary of them, 2 Sam. xiii. 8; as Amnon hated Tamar when he had satisfied his lusts; and David longed for the waters of Bethlehem, and when he had it, he would not drink it. When we come to consider these things, the imperfections that before lay hid are discovered by fruition.

Secondly, Let us now come to the antithesis, *but thy commandments are exceeding broad.*

Before I come to discuss the words in particular, I observe—

First, that the stability of the word of God is often opposed to the vanity of the creature: Isa. xlv. 8, 'The flower fadeth and the grass withereth, but the word of God abideth for ever.' So 1 Peter i. 25, 'All flesh is grass, and the glory of man is as the flower of grass; but the word of God liveth and abideth for ever;' and 1 John ii. 17, 'The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever.' So Luke x. 41, 42, 'Martha, thou art

careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall never be taken away from her.' Now, what doth this teach us, but that when we see the vanity of earthly things, we should be informed what better things to set our hearts upon? The hearts of men cannot be idle, their oblectation must be upon something; when pleasures, and riches, and honours are found vain and perishing, there is a more enduring substance to be looked after.

Secondly, That these better things are discovered by the word of God, now 'life and immortality is brought to light through the gospel,' 2 Tim. i. 10, and he that doth the will of God shall increase his knowledge, he that doth the will of God shall know what doctrine is of God. This doth direct us in making our choice; the independent heart of man will choose something to adhere to. Now, in the word of God we have direction what to choose. The use of all things present is temporal, but the use and benefit of the word is everlasting; this will do us good another day. All things visible have their own perfection in their kind, and do extend, some of them to one temporal use and some to another; but the word of God extendeth in its kind to all uses; as godliness is profitable to all things; it bringeth blessedness in this life and in the world to come. 1 Tim. iv. 8. A man may satisfy himself in the contemplation of any truth and virtue that is visible; but here are unsearchable riches, such deep wisdom, such rich comforts, perfect directions, that we cannot see to the bottom of them. Every perfect thing in the world hath an end, but the word endureth for ever.

More particularly in this antithesis I observe—

1. The subject, or thing spoken of, *thy commandment*; that is, the whole word of God.

2. The predicate or attribute, what is said of it; *it is broad*.

3. The amplification of this attribute, *it is exceeding broad*; you cannot easily understand the use and benefit of it.

1. The subject, or thing spoken of, 'Thy commandment is exceeding broad.' This breadth must be spoken of with respect to the former clause; it is broad for its use, and then it is broad for its duration and continuance.

[1.] It is broad for use. A man may soon see to the bottom of the creatures, but the wisdom and purity and utility of the word of God, and the mysteries therein contained, and the spiritual estate that we have thereby, you cannot see to the end of that; it extendeth to all times, places, persons, actions, and circumstances of actions; it hath an inconceivable vastness of purity and spirituality. But you will say, There is a set number of precepts, how say you then 'it is exceeding broad'? Their use is large; and it is here put for the whole word of God. *Adoro plenitudinem scripturarum tuarum*, saith Tertullian. Here are remedies for every malady, and a plentiful storehouse of all comforts, satisfaction to every doubt; nothing pertaining to the holiness and happiness of man is wanting; nothing more requisite to direct, comfort, and support men in all conditions, prosperity, adversity, health, sickness, life, death. What shall I say? It is the word that sanctifies all our comforts, 1 Tim. iv. 5; it is the word that maintaineth

our lives, Mat. iv. 4; it is the word that fitteth us to an immortal being, 1 Peter i. 23. We cannot easily express the comprehensiveness of it, and the benefit we have by it. When all earthly things fail, the word will be a sure comforter and counsellor to us; it doth not only tell us what we should do, but what we shall be. In short, the word of God describeth the whole state of the church and the world, and what shall become of it in the world to come. There is a foolish curiosity that possesseth many in the world, who desire to know their destiny, and what is in the womb of futurity; as the king of Babylon stood upon the headways to make divination. Now, let this curiosity be turned to some profitable use; nothing deserves to be known so much as this, What shall become of us to all eternity? If the question were, Shall I be rich or poor, happy or miserable in this world? it were not of such great moment, for these distinctions do not outlive time; but the question is of great moment, whether I shall be eternally miserable or eternally happy? It is a foolish curiosity to know our earthly state, the misery of which cannot be prevented by our prudence or foresight; but it concerneth us much to know whether we are in a damnable or saveable condition, while we have time to remedy our case; and this the word of God will inform you of assuredly. Well, 'the commandment is exceeding broad.' This is the word that discovereth to you the nature of God and the holy angels, the souls of men, the state of the world to come. Who is the author of scripture? God; 'thy commandments.' The matter of scripture? God; it was not fit that any should write of God but God himself. What is the end of this word? God. Why was this word written but that we might everlastingly enjoy the blessed God? As Caesar wrote his own commentaries, so God, when there was none above him of whom he could write, he wrote of himself; by histories, laws, prophecies and promises, and many other doctrines, hath he set himself forth to be the creator, preserver, deliverer, and glorifier of mankind; and all this is done in a perfect manner. Men mingle their imperfections with their writings; though holy and laudable for their names, yet they discover themselves in all they do; their words and speeches are never so perfect but there is something wanting, and here you can find nothing but God; here God hath written a book whose words are perfect, nothing can be added, nothing taken away. To say there is an idle word in scripture, is great blasphemy, saith Basil. We have no reason to run to human inventions, for the word prescribeth every duty, everything that is to be believed and done in order to salvation. Open the gap once, and there is no end; one brings in one thing, and then another, and from hence comes all the ceremonies that do abound in the church. It is not only most perfect, but most profitable, and containeth all kinds of learning. Common crafts will teach us how to get our bread, but this how to get the kingdom of heaven. Law preserveth estates, the testament of men; this the testament of God, the charter of our inheritance. Physic cureth diseases of the body; this afflicted minds and distempered hearts. Natural philosophy raiseth men to the contemplation of the stars, but this to the contemplation of God their maker. By history we come to know of the rise and ruin of kingdoms, states, and cities; by this, the creation and consummation of the

world. Rhetoric serves to move affection ; this to kindle divine love. Poetry causeth natural delight ; this delight in God : no writing like this.

[2.] As it hath a breadth for use, so for duration and continuance ; it is the eternal truth of God, that shall live for ever : Mat. v. 18, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the law shall fail.' So Mat. xxiv. 35, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but thy word shall not pass away.' But how doth the word continue for ever ? Not the word itself, but—

(1.) The obligation and authority of the word continueth for ever. It is an eternal rule of faith and righteousness to the church, that is more stable than heaven and earth. Let me show you how the doctrine is perpetual. The original draught is in God himself. The substance and matter of the moral law is perpetual, namely, the perfect love of God and of our neighbour ; but the form is not ; we shall have no need of precepts, and prohibitions, and promises, and threatenings in the light of glory, which we have need of in the light of grace. Fierce horses need a bridle, and there is other kind of discipline for children when grown up than when young. When they are young, we correct their bodies ; but when they are grown up, we correct and punish them by disinheritance. The prop is removed when the thing standeth fast upon its own basis. When we come to heaven, we have intuitive apprehensive knowledge ; we shall have no other bible but the Lamb's iace. Many things that are necessary by the way are not necessary when faith is changed into vision and hope into fruition. Scripture is necessary, as letters to the spouse from her beloved while absent, when present there is no such need. We need not a bond when payment is made ; so scripture is the indenture between us and God here ; but when that is past, we shall not need scripture.

(2.) It is eternal in the fruit ; it bringeth forth the blessing of eternal life to them that keep it and obey it : 2 John 2, 'For the truth's sake that dwelleth in us, and shall be in us for ever.' So John viii. 51, 'He that believeth in me shall never see death.' Why ! holy men die as well as others ; but they have a being in the world to come ; and therefore the word of God is called 'the word of eternal life,' John vi. 68 ; that is the end and use of it, it maketh them capable of eternal life that obey it. So 1 Peter i. 25, 'The word of God abideth and continuaeth for ever.' It is the seed and principle of eternal life ; it is the charter of their everlasting privileges they shall enjoy in the world to come. But how doth the word endure for ever ? It is not meant subjectively, but effectively, because it assures us of eternal life upon obeying it, and threatens eternal death to all that reject it.

Use 1. Oh ! then, let us be much in hearing, reading, studying, and obeying this word, that makes us everlastingly happy. If the commandment be so exceeding broad, why do we make no more use of it ?

1. Let our hearts be more taken up about it ; that should be our main care wherein to busy ourselves day and night, Ps. i. 1. Our delight should not be in vain books and empty histories, but in the law of God : we should often look into the charter of our great hopes.

2. Be directed by the word of God, it will direct you in every business ; Ps. cxix. 105, 'Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.' Here is direction for you in prosperity and adversity.

3. Study it that you may be sanctified by it: John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.' This is the great benefit that we have by the word, it is the instrument of sanctification.

4. Be much in the study of the word, that you may be assured by it, that you may make out your own qualification to the kingdom of heaven: Acts xiii. 46, 'Since you put away the word of God from you, you judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life.' When you let God's book lie by neglected, and never hear it, nor read it, nor meditate on it, the thing is past all question, you judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life.

Use 2. Let this commend the word of God to us, that eternal life is in it. Other writings and discourses may tickle the ears with some pleasing eloquence, but that is vanishing, like a musician's voice. Other writings may represent some petty and momentary advantage, but how soon shall an end be put to all that? so that within a little time the advantage of all these books shall be gone. The statutes and laws of kings and parliaments can reach no further than some temporal reward or punishment; their highest pain is killing of the body, their highest reward is some vanishing and fading honour, or perishing riches. But God's word concerning our everlasting estate, our eternal well or ill being, eternal life and death, is wrapt up in these laws and commandments; these are rewards and punishments suitable to the eternal majesty of the lawgiver. Here is life and immortality brought to light, and offered to them who have so miserably lost it, and involved their souls in an eternal death; therefore let us have a precious esteem of the scripture, which shows us the way of escaping that misery into which we have plunged ourselves, and a way of obtaining eternal blessedness. Do not, then, go to a wrong guide and rule; nothing more necessary to be known than what our end is, and the way that leadeth to that end. The most part of men walk at random, and run an uncertain race; they have neither a certain scope nor a sure way. Men's particular inclinations and humours are an ill guide, for they incline us to please the flesh, and so we shall miss of everlasting blessedness, and wander in a by-path that leadeth to destruction. Naturally man is more addicted to temporal things than spiritual, and to worldly vanities than to spiritual enjoyments; and it is in vain to persuade men to look after better things till the carnal affections be mortified; and one way and great means to mortify carnal affections and inclinations is to consider the vanity of the creature; and when our affections are weaned from the world, we must look after some better things to set our hearts upon. That good which satisfieth all the desires and capacities of man had need to be an infinite and an eternal good. Now, these better things are only discovered in the word of God. The word of God discovers that there is such an estate as everlasting glory and blessedness. The word telleth us plainly and peremptorily who shall go to heaven and who to hell. Well, then, if you would have this comfort, you must see whether you have embraced it with that reverence, faith, and obedience which the importance of it doth require.